STUDENT PORTFOLIOS:
A VIEW FROM INSIDE THE CLASSROOM
DISSERATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Philosophy in the Graduate
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By

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****

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To My Parents
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Robert J. Tierney taught the first course I took as a doctoral student and many of my subsequent research courses; he served as my dissertation adviser for three years. It is difficult to estimate fully his influence on my life as a practitioner and researcher. Conversations with him are always occasions for inquiry and discovery. As he works with his students, he continually offers his latest insights and most current theories about literacy learning. Students often appropriate his ideas into their own thinking and are so excited by their new discoveries that they forget who got them thinking in a particular direction in the first place. That was certainly my experience in the writing of this study. One conversation of exploration and discovery followed another. In each instance, Dr. Tierney generously supported my thinking and suggested avenues of inquiry that had not occurred to me.

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INTRODUCTION
Focus of the Study

This case study is a record and an interpretation of the processes that fifth-grade students and their teacher used to develop individual portfolios within a classroom. It is a naturalistic study that reveals the intricacies of the social, cultural, and thinking processes that were at work as students developed and used portfolios in daily classroom life. The teacher in the study is also the researcher. Perspectives in this study include the views and interpretations of students and their teacher, who are the participants and chroniclers of events within the study, and those of theorists, whose ideas are drawn upon in forming interpretations of classroom events.

At times these interpretations extend beyond the scope of portfolios themselves and into aspects of classroom language, culture-building, learning processes, and children's reasoning abilities in a more general sense. For example, an unanticipated feature of portfolio use in this particular classroom implementation was the opportunity it afforded children to build and argue cases in a quasi-legal fashion. Such reasoning, part of the class's decision-making processes regarding portfolio selections, was present in individual portfolio work as well. In this instance, the
data reveal information not only about self-assessment processes as they relate to portfolios, but also suggest how the children in this study reasoned and conducted arguments in a more general sense.

The style in which this case study is presented has been influenced by the data collected, the analytical processes used, and the time span of the study. The children's natural inclinations to make multiple uses of portfolio processes, with social and intellectual ends often interwoven, required the use of multiple theoretical lenses to account for the range of what could be observed in the data. Also, because it is a situated study with data collected and analyzed over a two-year time period, evolving meanings and interpretations exist side-by-side in the final written account of the study. The resulting text is a representation, rather like a Cubist painting, comprised of juxtaposed voices, stances, interpretations, and syntheses as they occurred at various points in time.
PART ONE

Portfolio Contexts: Conflicting Needs, Interests, Assumptions, and Research Agendas

Introduction

School portfolios, which are generally assumed to be collections of student work selected for particular purposes, are facing an unusual amount of attention in both instructional and political arenas. Criticisms of traditional standardized assessment procedures such as norm-referenced testing, for example, have finally been acknowledged to the extent that politicians, policy makers, and educators are all saying that we must improve the ways in which we track the progress of students in school. Student portfolios, with their work samples and demonstrations of learning, appeal to almost everyone. There is something close to a national imperative to “do something” with portfolios, at least with the aspects of portfolios that might be compared, ranked, and scored.

This study features portfolios that aren’t destined for the local or regional portfolio scoring center, however, but remain in the classroom with their creators. In taking this view of portfolios, the study attempts to provide evidence to begin answering an important question that has been largely unexplored in discussions of portfolios as part of a national assessment policy: How do portfolios work?
Part One begins with a survey some of the conversations about portfolios that are occurring in journals and other publications. The national discussion about portfolios is an important backdrop for this study, because the tension that exists between local versions of portfolios and national efforts at standardizing definitions and scoring procedures could impact local portfolio implementations at some point in the future. CHAPTER I identifies the issues, the arguments, and some of the key players in the development of portfolio approaches and suggests how these national professional discussions have filtered through school district initiatives and personal interests into individual classrooms like mine. CHAPTER II details the methods and processes that I used as a teacher-researcher in this study to gather data on the development of portfolios within an individual classroom.
CHAPTER I
PORTFOLIOS EVOLVING

Portfolios in the National Debate Regarding Assessment

Portfolios have generated intense interest among a wide range of educational stakeholders. They have been embraced by policymakers and legislators (State of Ohio, 1994), K-12 educators (Voss, 1992; Wolf, LeMahieu & Eresh, 1992) university faculty (White, 1994; Belanoff, 1994), early childhood educators (Salinger & Chittenden, 1994), state departments of education (Mitchell, 1992; Ohio Department of Education, 1992), testing companies (Council of Chief State School Officers, in press; Mitchell, 1992), teacher educators (Hansen, 1992), national subject-matter organizations (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1993), educators of gifted students (Hadaway & Marek-Shroer, 1992), professional certification boards (Richardson, 1994), and ESL educators (Murphy, 1994; Fu, 1992). Much has been written about the capacity of portfolios to provide fair and realistic indicators of student achievement and to drive curriculum and instruction in positive, thoughtful directions. (Belanoff, 1994; White, 1994; Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1992). The potential of portfolios to show work developed over time, tracing progress through revision and redesign processes, has made them the centerpiece of The New
Standards Projects and some state-level assessment reforms aimed at boosting achievement to "world class" standards. (Viadero, 1994; State of Ohio, 1994)

One index of the growth of interest in portfolios exists in the amount of attention given to the topic by a subject-matter and research-oriented organization like the National Council of Teachers of English. In the *Handbook on Teaching the English Language Arts* (Flood, Lapp, Jensen & Squire, 1991), jointly sponsored by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, portfolios are mentioned three times and given the equivalent of a single column of space in an 843-page text. The entire October, 1994, issue of *Language Arts* published by the National Council of Teachers of English, however, is devoted to articles on portfolios. This treatment of the topic shows a range of sophisticated portfolio adoptions and discusses issues that have arisen in long-term use of portfolios.

Portfolios are also featured in some so-called high-stakes assessment plans. Portfolios in writing and mathematics figure in the statewide testing system developed through the Kentucky Education Reform Act. In January, 1995, Kentucky's schools will begin receiving cash rewards or negative consequences for students' performances on several measures including the statewide testing system (Olson, 1994, p. 15).
Assumptions about Portfolios: Important, but Often Unacknowledged Differences

For all the publicity surrounding various state- or institutionally sponsored portfolio projects, however, it has often been individual teachers or administrators who have brought portfolios and the processes for developing them into particular classrooms, hopeful that they can be used to capture accomplishments in literacy and in other areas. Practitioners like Case (1994) emphasize more of the constructive aspects of portfolio and draw upon their own anecdotal evidence that portfolios provide opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to engage in reflective thinking. Case (1994) expresses concern over the national trend toward more standardization in assessing portfolio products:

As a teacher, I know the promise of authentic forms of assessment. Portfolios and exhibitions show what students can actually do—something exams and standardized tests have never done. Still I am worried. Classroom portfolios are effective in a way that institutionalized portfolios probably never can be. In fact, mandating portfolios on a system wide or statewide basis may destroy one of their greatest assets: allowing students to reflect on their learning and feel a sense of hope and control (p. 46).

To some, this grassroots development of portfolios is both an asset and a liability. As popular as portfolios appear to be with various groups, their flexibility and the variety of possible implementations seem to work against them when demands for high degrees of standardization exist (Smit,
1994). Herman & Winters (1994) are concerned with rating the end products of portfolio processes. They maintain that for "important decisions about students, teachers, and schools," (p. 49) adequate "technical quality" needs to be maintained. After surveying the research available, they conclude:

... a dearth of empirical research exists. In fact, of 89 entries on portfolio assessment topics found in the literature over the past 10 years, only seven articles either report technical data or employ accepted research methods. Instead, most articles explain the rationale for portfolio assessment; present ideas and models for how portfolios should be constituted and used; or share details of how portfolios have been implemented in a particular class, school district, or state. Relatively absent is attention to technical quality, to serious indicators of impact, or to rigorous testing of assumptions (p. 48).

Herman and Winters's (1994) perspective serves to emphasize the differences between those who focus on evaluating the end products of portfolios (Herman & Winter, 1994; Linn, Baker & Dunbar, 1991) and other researchers and theorists (Tierney, Carter & Desai, 1991; Graves and Sunstein, 1992; Johnston, 1992) who emphasize classroom contexts for learning, the documentation of unique profiles of development for individual students, and the cognitive constructions that take place during portfolio processes. In a recent article, which is primarily a discussion of inter rater reliability in portfolio evaluation, Herman & Winter (1994) also give several examples of "portfolio" implementations. These examples begin to suggest the problems that are likely to result from the unacknowledged differences
(unacknowledged in this article at least) that exist in approaches to portfolio development. They begin the article with a description of “Ms. Jackson’s” classroom portfolio implementation:

Ms. Jackson is implementing portfolios in her classroom. Every month or so, she gives her students a new writing assignment. Sometimes the assignment is creative; sometimes it asks students to use information from their science or social studies work; sometimes it involves research in the community. First, the students engage in a variety of pre-writing activities and write drafts. Often, to supplement Ms. Jackson’s routine feedback, students convene in small groups for peer review.

Students keep all their writing in a folder, periodically identifying the best pieces for their “showcase portfolios.” Students then take home their portfolios to discuss their progress and favorite pieces with their parents. At the end of the year, Ms. Jackson sends the portfolios to a central scoring site where she and other teachers participate in a statewide scoring effort. The state then plans to make the results public to show how well the schools prepare students in writing (p.48).

Later in the article, Herman & Winter (1994) describe the portfolio projects in grades 5-12 in Pittsburgh schools:

Pittsburgh students in grades 5-12 developed their portfolios over a year, a process that required them to compose, revise, and reflect upon their writing. The reflection component was especially extensive and included student comments about the processes they used, their choices and writing purposes, the criteria they used in assessing their writing and their focus for future work.

The portfolio contained at least six selections that met such general categories as “a satisfying piece,” “an important piece,” “a free pick,” and so on. Students included drafts and reflections with their finished work (p. 50).
Even a cursory reading of these approaches suggests students in these two classrooms would experience portfolios quite differently. It is surprising that Herman & Winter (1994) never discuss the implied differences in approaches to writing instruction in these two "portfolio" descriptions or the possibility that various approaches to the portfolio selection process might produce portfolios that are quite different in character.

While Herman and Winter evaluate the "fairness" of students submitting work in their portfolios that was done in a group (p. 52), their concern with fairness in end-product evaluation does not extend to a consideration of the possible variability produced by other factors that typically operate within portfolio processes (e.g., assigning writing topics on a monthly basis versus self-selected or group-selected topics; the amount and type of activities devoted to reflective thinking).

Ironically, such differences in instructional practices, contexts for writing, and portfolio construction processes may be the very issue that would keep evaluators from reaching agreement on the evaluation of particular student portfolios. Presumably work accompanied by reflective analysis could provide more information about the end-products to be judged, thus enabling an evaluator to make a fairer (more technically sound) judgment about the work.

Looking at the issue of inter rater reliability from a slightly different perspective, university faculty who have holistically scored college students' portfolios report that
agreement on ratings for collections of writing is much more difficult to achieve than on single compositions (Elbow, 1994). The complexity of trying to aggregate judgments about the different pieces of work a portfolio might possibly contain may makes long-term improvement in scoring agreement not only unfeasible, but undesirable as well (Elbow, 1994). Thus the appropriateness of portfolio for large-scale accountability assessments continues to be hotly debated (Koretz, McCaffrey, Klein, Bell & Stecher, 1992; Simmons, 1992).

Such calls for more technical rigor seem to be aimed at standardizing what the portfolio itself contains and how it can be judged once it is removed from the classroom. Critics frequently offer advice on how portfolios can be made more acceptable to various constituencies. Calfee & Perfumo (1993), for example, advocate more systematic approaches to development and caution that portfolios may wane unless they can be developed in a way that meets "internal classroom needs . . . while satisfying external policy demands" (p. 537).

Some researchers question the intent of the suggestions being offered to make "unstandardized" portfolio processes more acceptable. Wile & Tierney (in press) see the debate over appropriate formats for portfolio and the standardization of evaluation as a battle for control over not only classroom portfolios, but larger curricular issues as well. In their view, the different attitudes toward portfolios in evidence at this point are more than small
misunderstandings between classroom teachers and those who work primarily outside classrooms, but wish to make decisions about the uses of portfolios. The differences represented in Case's (1994) stance versus the stance evident in Herman and Winter's (1994) discussion are fundamental and irreconcilable differences in how teaching and learning processes are viewed. Wile & Tierney (in press) suggest that this tension occurs when constructivist processes are conscripted in service of a positivist mission:

We . . . suggest that the chasm between constructivist and positivist orientations is itself situated within a larger, more political context. What is more, we find attempts to marry these orientations with their ideological counterweights: production, quantitative inquiry, and positivism as ethically untenable. Thus, a discussion of portfolios might be regarded as a political front in the ongoing reconceptualization of schooling. To disregard the political aspect of assessment is to decontextualize portfolios. This can potentially result in trying to use portfolios for ends other than those intended—ends that are estranged from constructivism. Further, we address those who direct criticism at portfolios using criteria which should not be applied to constructivist portfolios. We suspect that much of what amounts to the misapplications and misrepresentation of portfolios, originates from an obfuscation of these theoretical, ethical, and political issues (p. 2-3).

The demands coming from many quarters for increased systematicity, validity, and reliability (Linn, Baker & Dunbar, 1991) also appear to be at odds with portfolio's origins in the creative arts (Tierney, Carter & Desai, 1991; Mitchell, 1992) Antecedents of the school portfolio, artists' or photographers' portfolios, for example, continue to emphasize creativity, craftsmanship, and surprising turns
of the human mind. In commercial uses, as Mitchell (1992) notes, portfolios were developed originally to "carry around samples of artwork to show prospective buyers" (p. 105). Attempts at sterilizing individuality from these portfolios or stripping them from the context of their creation are rare. Portfolios come from a culture that values the singular, the memorable, and the iconoclastic. It is a world of "intensity" even "anxiety" in which creative individuals are driven by a need "to see, explore, understand, experience, and to go beyond what is already known" (John-Steiner, 1985, p. 60). Portfolios in authentic use are the focal point of conversation and ideas. They are received and responded to because they reveal how an individual creates and thinks. In this sense, the portfolio also offers glimpses of what its creator might be able to do at some point in the future.

Even within a school context, the standards applied to visual arts portfolios differ from those being discussed for the current accountability-based portfolios which are being required to respond to "external policy demands." Walter Askin, who has had much experience in rating Advanced Placement art portfolios, summarized what he looks for in a visual arts portfolio in this way: "What you're really after is a mind at work, an interested, live thinking being. You want to see engagement. Recognition of it comes from long experience, and you intuit it" (Mitchell, 1992). Askin also observed (Mitchell, 1992) that it is common for Advanced Placement art portfolios to be "unbalanced," that is, to
contain strong works along side weaker ones. In a homogenized institutional version of portfolios, the ability to take risks and to conduct an honest examination of one's own work, which Askin has seen in his portfolio evaluation experiences, may be compromised.

**Recent Insights about Portfolio Use**

While some teachers, schools, and school districts involved in K-12 education are still studying portfolios for possible implementation, other literacy programs, particularly college writing programs, have experienced problems in portfolio assessment that have caused a reevaluation of their use (Fueyo, 1994). Composition teachers, who began using portfolios several years ago are reexamining their effectiveness in the evaluation process. Some college teachers have already moved away from portfolios, finding that portfolios implemented within writing courses offer little improvement over traditional grading. The student's purpose for engaging in the revision process was often to raise a final grade for an end-of-course portfolio rather than to learn to write more effectively for various audiences and purposes (Raither & Hunt, 1994). It is also the case that most discussion about portfolios has focused on **assessment** issues and fairly narrow ones at that: what goes into portfolios; how to conduct standardized evaluations of them. It is widely assumed that the primary purpose of portfolios is to enable evaluators (including classroom teachers) to make judgments about student work (Herman & Winters, 1994). In the majority of
discussions currently underway, whether they occur in the context of college writing programs, educational journals, or at staff meetings in school buildings, portfolio is often characterized as a supportive assessment process, more sensitive to individual differences and useful in documenting acceptable levels of literacy. In college writing courses, for example, portfolios often become the basis for the final course evaluation (Hunt & Raither, 1994). Some research (Baker, 1993) has attempted to determine whether portfolio approaches influence the quality of the final writing products submitted for evaluation. Less is known or said about the instructional nature of portfolios; that is, what students might learn in the process of keeping a portfolio and how this process might contribute to students’ development in a broader sense.

Instructional possibilities for portfolios are just beginning to be examined as more is being written about the nature of various classroom implementations. Ironically, as the rhetoric demanding greater standardization of portfolios and more overt comparisons of student work increases (Herman & Winter, 1994), information about variations in portfolio implementations and differences in beliefs about how portfolios are best used is just beginning to surface. These differences are quite evident in an issue of Language Arts that is devoted to portfolios (Fueyo, 1994; Keiffer & Morrison, 1994; Salvio, 1994; Wolf & Gearhart, 1994). Definitions have evolved from "collections of student work that were to be saved for evaluation," (Keiffer & Morrison,
1994, p. 416) to "a possible container for the kind of assessment that really matters . . . processes—that is, expectations, questions, collection, selection, containment, organization, and reflection [that] encourage and support authentic assessment of reading, writing, speaking, and listening." (p.411). Another classroom uses the "cultural literacy portfolio," in which children, "[bring] in objects from beyond the borders of the classroom [casting] the portfolio as a cultural script that children [use] to remember discuss, and write about the social contexts that [shape] their identities as literate people" (Salvio, 1994, p. 419). Keiffer & Morrison (1994) indicate that this is the direction in which their portfolios appear to be evolving, as well: "Ultimately, we want to connect portfolios across the curriculum and extend them over a period of years so that we can build whole life portfolios that really represent individuals as learners" (p. 417).

Researchers who have worked with classroom-based portfolios since their inception have voiced concerns over some trends in portfolio use that seem to be emerging. Graves (1992), commenting on mandated use of portfolios, notes that there is not enough known yet about how portfolios work and how to engage students effectively in developing portfolios. He cautions:

"Portfolios are simply too good an idea to be limited to an evaluation instrument. Early data that show their use as a medium for instruction is more than promising . . . Without careful exploration, portfolio use is doomed to failure." (p. 1)
Graves’s concern that portfolio may become a "rigid process" is echoed by Tierney (Crumpler, 1994) who has observed:

Traditional forms of assessment are in some senses counterproductive to portfolio use. There is a tendency for people to develop rubrics, but I would prefer something that keeps the integrity of portfolios by dealing with their personal or idiosyncratic nature. Most assessments have an a-priori feature to them that predetermines what you’re going to look for so that you end up with a uniform perspective on all students. This is a hangover from positivistic thinking, and it doesn’t really fit with portfolios which come out of a more constructivist view (p. 49) . . . My key concern is not that teachers use a particular kind of portfolio, but that they develop a classroom-based assessment system with their students that is client centered—-one which advocates for students in partnership with them and not in some detached manner as a way of retaining authority over students. (p. 50)

Elbow (1994), both an advocate and critic of portfolio use, has challenged the trend toward assigning single holistic rating scores to portfolios. In practical terms, he has found it difficult to get agreement on a single score for a diverse collection of writing; this realization echoes Askin's (Mitchell, 1992) experience with weak and strong samples within individual visual arts portfolios. Elbow (1994) sees the portfolio as too personal, too real for such detached assessments:

When students experience writing only as fodder for evaluation, they don’t take risks or engage in the other kinds of behavior that make the biggest difference in learning . . . Portfolios are inherently more personal than other forms of assessment. When we read only one text per student [in a writing test situation], we can easily forget the complexity of the person behind the paper and thus be more comfortable scoring it with a single
number. But when we read a portfolio, we get a much stronger sense of contact with the person behind the texts: an author with a life history, a diversity of facets, a combination of strengths and weaknesses, someone who had good and bad days (p. 53).

Language Arts editor, Bill Teale, observes in the introduction to the portfolio issue (October, 1994):

... But the sheen is definitely gone from portfolios. I think that as with other "innovations" in language arts education, many people regarded them as a new educational messiah, a technique that would finally move language arts curriculum and instruction away from a lock step, skills-based approach that finds teachers spending enormous amounts of class time trying to get children to perform well on high-stakes, standardized testing programs. Portfolios didn't do that, and they won't in the future.

The sheen is gone in another way, too. In some cases the orthodoxy of portfolios is replacing the orthodoxy of standardized tests. Portfolios have been limited to functioning as assessment instruments rather than being seen for the larger role they can and should play in language arts curriculum and instruction. In addition, they are being implemented in rigid ways in many schools. This tendency toward narrow and fixed applications of portfolios is even more pronounced when they are employed for large-scale assessment.

Educators have actually moved quickly into portfolio use. Perhaps too quickly. The fact that the sheen is gone is not the fault of portfolios. We should have recognized from the start how hard it would be to realize their potential. We have much more work to do. But if we do the work, it will pay off in the end. That's a big if, however. A friend of mine in measurement and evaluation told me that many of the researchers in that field who, ten to fifteen years ago, were doing cutting edge work on this new approach to evaluation have moved away from portfolios. They found the topic is too complicated and that it's very difficult to get portfolios to work in the real world (p. 400).
The Personal Context for This Study of Portfolios

Teale's (1994) introductory letter accurately summarizes much of what I've experienced with portfolios in the last 7 years. During this time period, I've changed my role as an educator several times. Each time my role changed, my perspective on portfolios shifted as well. In this process I have blundered into many discoveries and many of the dilemmas associated with portfolio use. As a state language arts consultant at the time portfolios were being discussed initially, I advocated the incorporation of portfolios into a state model curriculum for "competency-based" language arts instruction. This curriculum was developed in response to a legislative mandate.

Later, as a classroom teacher, I served on a district portfolio/competency testing committee (which was charged with responding to this same legislative mandate on the district level) for 4 years, studying the possibility of mandated district wide portfolios. Many of us serving on this committee felt the pressure of a "national movement" that suggested "everyone was going to portfolios."

The results of the committee work were countless hours spent photocopying samples of students' work, holistically scoring writing samples, and writing out evaluations of each piece selected for the portfolio; all of which left me exhausted and dismayed over my own negative feelings about portfolios. I wondered out loud at a committee meeting, "Why are we doing this? Who's going to use this?" Living through this experience diminished the sense I once had as a
consultant that strong district incentives (like mandating portfolios as part of the testing program) would be a good way to get many teachers using portfolios with their students.

In trying to figure out why this mandated system felt so uncomfortable, I reviewed Tierney, Carter & Desai’s (1991) work on classroom portfolios and discovered that my questions were closely linked with the chapter they had written on “Evaluating Portfolios.” In their discussion, I found a series of continua that helped me frame what my objections were to the proposed mandated district portfolio process. These continua centered on four key sets of decisions that need to be made about portfolios: Nature and Use of Portfolios (Central-Peripheral), Degree of Differentiation in Performance (Multiple-Singular), Flexibility/Arbitrariness (Variable-Rigid), Amount of Teacher Student Involvement (Collaborative-Detached) (p. 149). In my estimation we had never thought through these issues. Therefore, the resulting pilot portfolio program in my district was a model with its use undefined, its samples of performance rather limited and undifferentiated, its format rigid, and its degree of student-teacher collaboration unspecified.

I was concerned about these issues because at the same time we were piloting the district’s portfolios, I was also developing classroom-based portfolios with my fifth-graders. These portfolios seemed to exist in another universe. Messy, unstandardized, idiosyncratic, they often left me with a nagging feeling that I must be doing something wrong, because
it was almost impossible to make comparisons of student achievement by looking at these portfolios. At the same time, I wanted to protect these messy, problematic collections from the rigor of a systematic, district wide implementation, because students seemed to be so fully invested in them. My intuition as a teacher suggested that this variability and non-standardization was good for students, but I wasn’t really certain why. If someone were to have asked me in what ways were portfolios enhancing students’ abilities to think and learn, I wouldn’t have had the specifics to answer the question yet.

During this time period, I also worked as a freelance consultant, giving presentations for other educators on portfolios and other trends in alternative assessment. Each time I was asked to speak about portfolios, I seemed to be in a different place with them. The tentativeness of my presentations was sometimes unsettling to teachers and administrators in the audience. They wanted guidance in the nuts-and-bolts of portfolios, not stories about how despite my efforts to set uniform standards initially, many students’ portfolios grew rather tenaciously in non-standard, often non-linguistic, ways.

After four years of various incarnations, the district’s portfolio/competency testing committee (on which I still served) decided to meet the state requirement for grade-level competency testing in reading and writing by developing a portfolio-like collection process for elementary students’ work. Teachers were to use a general impression scoring
guide to make a judgment of "proficient" or "not yet proficient" in reading and writing. A random sample of these collections was to be scored holistically by a committee of teachers to provide more detailed information for a program evaluation. As a committee we were responding to our sense of national trends in assessment: "progressive" educational agencies and states (e.g., National Assessment of Educational Progress; Vermont, Kentucky, California, and Maryland) were evaluating samples of student work for the purpose of determining "competence." Several of us on the committee insisted that we not call this testing process a "portfolio," but as the new model was introduced, many teachers perceived the required collection of student materials to be a district-mandated portfolio.

As the district's testing model went into implementation, I experienced relief that my version of classroom portfolios still seemed capable of existing outside the district testing requirement. I began to realize how much I agreed with Elbow's (1994) characterization of portfolios as too real, too personal to be subjected to holistic scoring procedures. I also began to see that this is how practitioners experience the "battle" for control of portfolios that Wile & Tierney (in press) discuss. Typically we are invited into the process and asked to construct something around constraints we have been given by someone further up the educational chain of command. The real issues about control and purpose of the assessment are rarely articulated. Teachers tend not to discuss the political and
ethical ramifications of the whatever assessment or curricular task they have been given. To refuse to participate in such a district project is construed as not being a team player. So we help create standardized assessment procedures that we believe will do the least damage and hope that we will be left alone once more to teach.

I believe the situation in our district, in which multiple understandings of portfolios produce a variety of classroom implementations and district assessment requirements, mirrors the conflicting perspectives Herman and Winters (1994) reveal in their article on portfolio research. There appears to be very little consensus on defining what a portfolio is and what it might be capable doing in the various situations in which it might exist. For this reason, there is little discussion of the possible harm that mandating uniform portfolio procedures might cause as potentially productive features of portfolios are accidently eliminated from or ignored in a district assessment plan.

This study offers evidence that avoiding these discussions, which focus more on the instructional dimensions of portfolio, could result in versions of portfolios that are in effect cobbled by a loss of opportunities for children to grow in their independence as thinkers and learners. Portfolios use is a complicated issue, but it is one which most teachers are left to figure out on their own. This study documents the serious thinking it takes to begin
to see how portfolios work. It is the record of my developing capacity to understand portfolio implementation as less a kind of linear recipe to follow and more a multi-dimensional, holographic experience in which participants use rules and patterns of language, culture, and thinking to construct their own meanings.

As I continued to "figure things out on my own," it also became clear that an observer would see different things depending upon where within the hologram he or she stood. This study is an attempt to stand in several different places within the portfolio process as it was created and experienced by my students and me and to record those observations with some interpretations as to what they might mean.

There have been a number of steps or phases in this journey toward a more complex view of portfolio processes. I returned to classroom teaching four years ago, after nine years as a curriculum and language arts consultant, primarily because I wanted firsthand experience with the approaches to teaching and learning that everyone seemed to be talking about: student-centered learning experiences, alternative assessment, and thematic teaching and learning.

In my transition from consultant/expert to classroom teacher, I had many challenging, even painful, moments in translating theories into interactions with real children. This study focuses on my own learning in the area of portfolios, but it should be noted such experiments-in-progress have existed simultaneously in other
areas of my teaching. Portfolio experiences seemed to turn my thinking upside down on a fairly regular basis, however, a feature that certainly figured in my decision to make this aspect of my teaching the focus of more formal research.

One of the first dramatic shifts in thinking that I experienced, as I suggest earlier, was my view of portfolios as accountability receptacles giving way to an increasing awareness of the effect that classroom portfolio processes might be exerting on children's thinking. This transformation was guided by on-going challenges to my assumptions that various students and their portfolios presented. This was the beginning of my "trying to figure things out on my own." I probably learned the most from students who resisted school, resisted my efforts to make them school-literate, yet developed portfolios on their own terms that were full of ownership and voice. (See Allen's portfolio narrative in CHAPTER III, Lines 067-076 for an example.) I observed each class adopt the portfolio process in a slightly different way. I learned that portfolios weren't merely "kept." They were cultivated in an environment characterized by negotiations and recastings to fit particular purposes, purposes which were often unique to individual students. Initially, I viewed this as a sort of "slippage" from the standards I was trying to set for student portfolios.

Dyson (1994) uses the metaphor of the fish unaware of its watery environment to characterize one of her key findings about writing process classrooms. It was quite some
time before I noticed that portfolio development was swimming in a sea of classroom talk. The talk (conversation) that supported portfolios as they developed often appeared to be unpredictable, although it occurred in participation frameworks (usually sharing sessions or other portfolio activities) that seemed to insure unanticipated things would happen. The language of these events was often so casual, however, that its link to deep thinking, reflection, and authentic problem solving might have been missed.

I began this study almost 2 years ago with the idea that I might be able to track "growth" in the context of portfolios. At that stage I identified with a more traditional line of research (Baker, 1993) that was studying the effect of portfolios on the quality of final products: Did keeping a portfolio lead to the development of higher quality work? I also began to notice, however, that what students were saying about their portfolios in discussions and sharing sessions was at least as interesting as the artifacts they selected to place in the portfolios. In fact, when they talked about what they selected for their portfolios, the artifact often seemed to represent something grander, more complex, or more significant than the artifact standing by itself was able to indicate. I also perceived a consistent pattern in which students moved in the course of a year from little reflection in their oral language to striking examples of metacognition in which they talked about how they and their work had changed or what they knew and how they had come to know it. I observed, too, the emergence of
distinctive, authoritative voices in some students during sharing sessions and other portfolio activities. And I began to sense that portfolio processes might constitute a distinct cultural experience with its own features that co-existed with or perhaps influenced other culturally determined classroom events.

This interest in everyday language as a mediator of deep thought is not unique to studies of portfolios. Heath (1991) has studied natural language situations, Little League baseball teams, for example, to examine reasoning ability as it appears in baseball "problem-solving narratives" (p. 101). She found outstanding examples of higher level thinking and reasoning in the scenarios of possible plays that coaches and students constructed during baseball practices. She also addressed issues of culture-building when she described the overall environment of team play in this study as having an ethos of continual improvement through problem-solving created within the language and actions on a baseball field.

As I considered how to go about such a study of the classroom workings of portfolios, I noticed as others have (Herman & Winters, 1994; Graves, 1992) how much of the literature on portfolios addresses either how to set up portfolios in terms of contents (Wolf, 1989; 1987/88; Jongsma, 1989; Valencia, 1990; Krest, 1990; Paulson, Paulson & Meyer, 1991; Milliken, 1992; Hebert, 1992; Hanson, 1992) or how to evaluate the products in portfolios after they had been assembled. (Mitchell, 1992; Simmons,
In the calls for more systematic approaches to portfolios (Linn. Baker & Dunbar, 1991; Koretz, Macaffrey, Klein, Bell & Stecher, 1992; Herman, 1992; Perfumo & Calfee, 1993; Herman & Winters, 1994), there were two implicit assumptions that I thought should have special significance to teachers, like me, who were trying to develop classroom portfolios: First, that a portfolio procedure can somehow be transmitted to students in a standard way with the resulting products lined up and compared systematically; that is, with care in development, it would be possible (and desirable) to get everybody doing just about the same thing with their portfolios. Second, there must be a great deal of variability existing now (Tierney, Carter & Desai, 1991; Graves and Sunstein, 1992; Black, Daiker, Sommers & Stygall, 1994) because so much concern has surfaced about controlling this aspect of portfolios.

These policy-driven assumptions about portfolios ignore recent research on the social, cultural, and thinking dimensions of classroom life (Kantor, Miller & Fernie, 1992; Resnick, 1991; Zaharlick & Green, 1991). Constructivist and anthropological research perspectives suggest that ordinary classroom events such as reading lessons don't just happen (Green and Meyer, 1991). Rather, they come into being through a set of complex interactions among all the participants. It is unlikely, therefore, that an artifact such as a portfolio, with its sophisticated, real-world...
origins, can be made to simply appear in classrooms without a series of complex interactions, negotiations of meanings, and constructions that vary from class to class and individual to individual.

In examining "growth" (the initial direction of my research) in the context of portfolios, it made sense to include an aspect of portfolios that I had already observed was occupying a proportionally large amount of time in the portfolio processes within my classroom: the talk (conversation) that surrounds portfolios as they are developed. In combining the idea of "growth" with how I thought such evidence might be manifested in my classroom through language, the primary question in the study then took on a case-study aspect: How do portfolios work in a particular classroom?

Overview of the Findings

In the process of analyzing the data, I discovered that the primary question about the portfolio implementations in my classroom could be asked in two slightly different ways: How do portfolios work? and How [well] do portfolios work? The first question is a socio-cultural one and can be explored through the work of language and socio-cultural theorists (Bakhtin, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978; 1986; Wertsch, 1991; Green & Zaharlick, 1991). Answers to the second question, which deals with children's thinking, can be found in the case studies of individual students, in which it is possible to see evidence of reasoning (Toulmin, 1958) and the
development of self through interactions with other participants and self-narratives (Bruner, 1986; 1991). Applying the work of these theorists to an analysis of the transcripts revealed results that formed distinct themes. These themes shaped the major chapters of this study:

1. **Construction.** Students and their teacher constructed notions of portfolios that evolved over time (Chapter III—"Constructed Views of Portfolios").

2. **Culture.** Students used the initial approach to portfolios provided by the teacher, but appropriated and transformed portfolios through socio-cultural processes (Chapter IV—"Culture: Explicit and Tacit Norms at Work").

3. **Speech Genres.** "Portfolio talk" constituted a distinct speech genre within classroom language events. Sometimes students took on distinct roles as "speakers" within portfolio processes (Chapter V—"Conflict: Communicating through Speech Genres").

4. **Reasoning.** Students used quasi-legal arguments at several points in the process of portfolio development (Chapter VI—"Cases: The Construction of Arguments").

5. **Narratives.** A narrative feature can be discerned in some portfolios that shows students constructing an image of who they are as learners (Chapter VII—"Consolidation: Individual Constructions within Portfolio Processes").

One of the key features of portfolios in this classroom was the language that surrounded the development of portfolios. Transcripts of videotaped classroom episodes offer a view of language as a mediator that keeps portfolios in a continuous state of development. Language also offers a window on the possible effects that participation in a portfolio culture may have on students' thinking. This examination of oral language and on-going interactions suggests that variability is likely to be a normal aspect of
portfolio processes. The data also suggest that portfolio's value in extending students' thinking and sustaining a community of learners may be equal to or greater than its potential value in providing standardized assessments of student performance.
CHAPTER II
HOW THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

Type of Study

This examination of a particular classroom instance of portfolio implementation is a case study situated in qualitative and ethnographic traditions. Heath (1982) characterizes the ethnographer’s work in this way:

[The ethnographer’s work is to] . . . to describe the culture of the group being studied, and to identify specific cultural patterns and structural regularities within the processes of both continuity and change (p.35).

In both its initial design and the subsequent analyses that were conducted, this study recognizes that a socio-cultural perspective is critical to understanding the dynamics of a portfolio implementation.

Zaharlick & Green (1991) provide a complementary description of ethnographic work:

. . .Ethnographers seek understandings of the customary actions, beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes of a social group as reflected in the ways of engaging in everyday life (p. 207).

They also note that an ethnographic stance has as its goals establishing contextualized descriptions of the following “ways of living” in which a group is engaged:

*accomplishing the everyday events of daily life;
*interpreting actions and interactions;
*establishing, checking, interpreting, modifying, suspending, and reestablishing the norms and
suspending, and reestablishing the norms and expectations for daily life adhered to by members of the group;
*the nature range and role of artifacts (i.e., materials, items of culture such as books, written materials, visual documents, buildings);
*establishing and limiting the range of possible action;
*constructing roles and relationships that exist within the group;
*defining the rights and obligations that membership in the group places on members;
*developing the cultural knowledge required for appropriate participation;
*and exploring how particular cultural practices function within the social group (e.g., literacy, formal schooling, child care, ability grouping).
(p.207)

An emphasis on group formation, rules, expectations, negotiated understandings, and artifacts informed this study in all phases. Green & Zaharlick (1991) note, as well, that it is possible for ethnography to take a "focused" look at a particular topic. They conclude, "The difference between a topic-oriented and a comprehensive ethnography is in the scope of the study and the types of questions being examined. When looking at the research question addressed in this study: How do portfolios work in a particular classroom? some boundaries are placed on the portion of everyday life in the classroom that will be examined.

**Researcher's Role**

Delineating the researcher's role in this study introduces constraints on the possibility of claiming a purely ethnographic perspective for this study. These constraints have to do with trying to maintain a dual role of ethnographer/field worker and classroom teacher. While not
mutually exclusive, attempts to combine these roles produced some problems to work through in the analysis of data.

In the proposal for this study, I stated that I hoped to be a "participant observer" (Spradley, 1980) in my own classroom. While the classroom teacher’s perspective in such a study is an emic one, some understandings among participants exist outside the teacher’s awareness. There are some inherent conflicts between the role of teacher and that of participant-observer. The role of teacher, by definition, is that of someone who influences the outcome of events in the classroom. Teachers hope to shape the behavior of participants around learning goals they have identified as being worthwhile. The participant-observer generally tries to maintain a more unobtrusive role, observing rules, seeking involvement in the activities of the group, but generally not taking the level of responsibility for the group’s activities that the teaching role requires.

There are many advantages that a teacher/participant-observer brings to a research setting. The chief advantage is legitimate access to numerous sources of information about participants and events. These sources are as varied as observations of whom a child plays with during lunch recess or what a child’s parents say during parent-teacher conferences about their aspirations for their son or daughter. When an event occurs in the classroom, frequently the teacher has some sense of its antecedents. There is also a bond of caring between students and teachers that in general insures participants will have a degree of trust in
the teacher-researcher and offer a level of candor in their responses.

Some limitations of the dual role of teacher/participant observer became apparent, however, when I began to analyze my data. I experienced fluctuations between my roles as teacher and participant-observer that Spradley (1980) describes as the “insider/outsider experience” (p. 56). Spradley (1980) suggests that ethnographers experience the emotions and sensations that “ordinary participants” experience, but at the same time they also view the events and themselves as objects. Heath (1983) and Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines (1988) struggled with this dualism in their studies as well.

In the teacher/participant-observer roles as I experienced them, however, there was at least one important difference that had to do with how time functioned in the study. In Spradley’s (1980) notion of participant-observer, there is a purposeful attentiveness to the meanings of the experiences as they are occurring. The researcher who is a participant observer is busy participating and attempting to make transparent the hidden rules of participation. This is not to say that analysis is completed or even attempted at this point in a study, but it is to acknowledge the purposefulness with which the ethnographer approaches the research situation.

In this study, I managed the data collection related to portfolios (with the help of the children who did most of the video taping), but within the study I functioned much more as what Spradley (1980) would term an “ordinary participant.” I
assumed that my automatic access to the research site as the children’s teacher made me an insider in the culture. This access did make me an insider in respect to many aspects of life in our school and classroom. But as my post hoc analysis reveals, a more completely emic perspective would have resulted if I could have concentrated more at the time on being able to see the various aspects of portfolios through the eyes of student participants. The discussion of implicit norms in CHAPTER IV makes it clear that in the research site, I did not have complete access to that perspective. I believe I confused my sense of closeness with my students with an insider’s ability to gain access to the hidden portions of their culture. Having acknowledged this as a constraint, however, I believe that I was still able to discover many instances of a culture operating related to portfolios. This study lacks a comprehensive ethnographic description and complete delineation of the rules, roles, and participation structures that surrounded students and their portfolios, however.

A second related feature regarding the researcher’s role in this study will also become apparent in the analysis of the data and serves to place many of the findings more into the category of qualitative rather than ethnographic research. CHAPTER V, in which a controversy that erupted during portfolio implementation is analyzed, is the best example of how the data forced me to move from my perspective as teacher into one of qualitative researcher. This transcript was not one that I had thought about initially as
a focal point for the study. In fact, my preliminary plan was to work primarily with a de-briefing interview transcript (which eventually yielded much of the data from which the case studies were constructed) because I thought it contained the most important data. This is a another sign that I was not attending to the meanings of the data during the collection phase. A transcript that contains a high degree of conflict (which is referred to as the “selections” tape elsewhere in the study) represents a sort of turning point for me within the analysis of the data. As a teacher, I considered this episode problematic. It was a class discussion of how portfolios should be redesigned and, in my view as “teacher”, the discussion didn’t go very well. I didn’t like the direction the conversation went, and I certainly didn’t approve of the way students ended up shouting at each other. I thought that the previous class (1992-93 academic year), which had conducted a similar discussion with great success (See CHAPTER III, Episode 6), provided a much better “model” of children negotiating the conditions of portfolio implementation. To determine the understandings that this subsequent group of students (1993-94 academic year) had constructed, I had to overcome my feelings as a teacher that I should have had better control of the class and find a new way to “see” this video tape.

This transcript proved to contain critical details indicating how children view and participate in portfolio processes, but it took a long, long time and the help of two theoretical frameworks Bakhtin (1986) and Toulmin (1958)
before I could see what the children were understanding about their portfolios and the kinds of language and thinking strategies they were applying.

The construct of “role” in this study then, produced two unanticipated effects: the construction the insider’s perspective on a limited basis though post hoc analysis and a related constraint of not being able to ask participants what sense they were making of the events that I deemed through later analysis were the most critical in understanding how portfolios work.

**Design and Implementation of the Study**

In some ways, paradoxically, the limitations of the all-consuming nature of the teacher’s role did keep the study within an ethnographic framework. Zaharlick & Green (1991) describe three phases of ethnographic fieldwork: planning, fieldwork or discovery, and the presentation of findings. Their assumption is that although plans for data collection and observations can be made, and initial theoretical frameworks should be identified, the data themselves are likely to influence the study in unanticipated ways. This was most certainly the pattern this study followed: a theoretically driven plan for data collection regarding portfolios was developed, data was collected in the field (although many of the discoveries were made in post hoc analysis), and data analysis shifted the understanding of both the initial research questions and how theory could be applied to reach deeper understandings of the phenomena
observed and experienced. Here are the highlights of how this process worked in this study:

**Planning Phase:**

Using video taped data from an initial study conducted during the last half of the 1992-93 academic year and theoretical frameworks derived primarily from Vygotsky (1986) and Bruner (1986, 1991), a plan to collect additional data on as many aspects of classroom life as it related to portfolio was formulated. This included video taping classroom event structures such as Authors’ Circle, introductory lessons on portfolio, portfolio work sessions, portfolio sharing sessions, presentations for visitors and any other events that might have some bearing on the portfolio implementation of this class. The chief artifacts to be collected were photocopies of the students’ portfolios. It was decided that to keep the study manageable, the context of the larger classroom culture should be used as a backdrop rather than a major data collection source and a focus should be kept on metacognition, that is, changes that might be observed in children’s abilities to examine their own thinking.

**Fieldwork Phase:**

The fifth-grade class featured in most of the transcripts in this study included 25 children, 12 girls and 13 boys. The school is located within a large city, but belongs to a suburban school district. Table 1 suggests how school personnel describe their student population in a grant proposal that was written the same year the portfolio study was conducted:
Table 1—Demographic Information on School Population

... Most of the school’s population lives in [city], and 7% of this population currently receive English as a Second Language services. These data indicate the diversity of our school population:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islanders</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Venture Capital Proposal, 1994)

The school population is somewhat transient and 34% of the families live in rental units. Approximately 5% of the population meets the federal requirement for free and reduced lunch.

During the course of the study, plans for collecting data on portfolio implementation were followed. The majority of events that had any relationship at all to portfolios, including, for example, the class’s construction of holistic assessment scales to evaluate their class work were video taped. This resulted in approximately 38 hours of video footage. Part of the original design was to develop case studies and to use students as part of the triangulation process. Nine students who represented a range of interests and abilities were asked to participate in this interview which was scheduled for the day after school let out. Five students were able to participate in this interview. This resulted in an additional 3 hours of video data related to portfolios. These 5 students allowed the contents of their portfolios to be photocopied. They became the pool of
candidates from which case study students were selected.

Shalendra and Vincent were selected to profile in case studies because of the contrasts in their attitudes toward school, academic achievement as measured by traditional grades and district-administered tests, differences in cultural and family backgrounds, and differences that were apparent in even a superficial examination of their portfolios. Both students could be described as participants who were engaged in the portfolio processes and indicated some degree of enthusiasm for the process.

Some additional artifacts that had bearing on the portfolio process were collected from the classroom:

Charts that represented the initial instructions to students regarding portfolio procedures

Charts that were constructed during the class’s efforts to redesign portfolios

Charts that were constructed as the class planned an introductory portfolio lesson for First Grade Buddies

Grade book

Anecdotal records of individual students’ class work, particularly in the language arts

Lesson plan book that could be used to verify dates and lesson content

Presentation of the Findings:

Using the Vygotskian framework outlined in the proposal for the study, a first step in data analysis was to select representative events from various points in the year that would allow a window on what students had constructed conceptually about portfolios. The introductory lesson,
presentations for visitors, redesign discussions, and a de-briefing interview held at the end of the year proved to be the best post hoc sources of the constructions at various stages. It should be acknowledged here that the decision to begin the study with a chronological reconstruction introduces an element of narrative into the presentation of data (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I believe, however, that we also experienced the development process as a narrative that grew more complex over time. In terms of my presentation of the portfolio concept to the children, it was offered quarter-by quarter in experiences that were almost like chapters.

Zaharlick & Green (1991), Spradley (1980), Wertsch (1991a, 1991b), and Resnick (1992) represent various perspectives on the socio-cultural construction of knowledge. In an effort to describe some aspects of portfolio development as a socio-cultural process, video taped episodes were selected for transcription that illustrated several types of shared understandings about portfolios and rules for portfolio participation. Examples of both explicit and implicit were rules for participation were located.

The "selections" transcript (which contained the example of conflict within portfolio development) was examined initially as an instance that might demonstrate the shared norms of the group regarding what should constitute a portfolio. For the previous class (1992-93 academic year), this activity did serve as such an example. This "selections" transcript showed much less agreement on the
surface, however. The episode was so dynamic and seemed so capable of illustrating something fundamental about portfolio processes, however. I felt that it needed to stay in the body of the study, although my first impression was that its primary function might be suited to showing what an “anomaly” could look like in portfolio development. In trying to account for what might have happened in this episode, I turned to Wertsch (1991a, 1991b), who combines Vygotsky’s thinking with that of Bakhtin to suggest how socially mediated constructions might develop within speech genres. This proved to be the first step in discerning a more comprehensive linguistic and cultural framework undergirding portfolio processes.

The episodes selected to represent case study students were determined using Bruner (1986, 1991) as a backdrop. This perspective required lengthy stretches of exploratory conversation in a situation with few time constraints, unlike comments made during a typical classroom sharing session. For this reason, the de-briefing interviews (combined with the photocopies of the artifacts in students’ portfolios) were thought to provide the best information from which to develop individual case studies.

**How Understandings Shifted During the Presentation Phase**

This study summarizes the presentation of the findings. I believe that it documents how the data began to force my thinking about portfolios into new areas. This is most evident in my shift from a practitioner role with the view of
the portfolio process as a set of sequenced steps and outlined procedures to an understanding portfolio, influenced more by research and theories, as a framework of possibilities governed by remarkably consistent features of linguistic, cultural, social, and thinking processes. I had seen glimpses of events like the occasional overt negotiation of meanings that were hints of the deep structures operating in portfolios, but I didn’t perceive many of the principles that now appear to me to be present fairly uniformly throughout this data set.

An important test of the methods of analysis and application of interpretive theories in this study comes in how well the framework that the concludes the study (CHAPTER VIII) is able to describe possible the mechanisms operating in portfolio processes for readers who have no knowledge of this particular class and its unique implementation of portfolios. Bakhtin (1986) might view this framework (CHAPTER VIII) as an “utterance” that awaits future responses in an on-going conversation about portfolios.

The Result: A Hybrid Text

Several factors contribute to the unusual style of this study. In the INTRODUCTION, I used the metaphor of a Cubist painting (Golding, 1994) to describe the impression this study might convey to a reader. This sense of both stasis and movement, I believe, is the result of the duration of the study and the evolution of perspectives that I, in the role of researcher rather than teacher, began to take on after the
formal data collection period had ended. Also, the more I worked with the data, the more I had the impression of activity teeming in many directions. The multiple dimensions of the experience make sense when we consider that there were 26 interrelated but individual experiences with portfolios going on simultaneously.

The Cubists (Golding, 1994) were preoccupied with the problem of acknowledging that painting was a two-dimensional medium attempting to account for volume in three dimensions. This problem of visual representation was similar to what I faced as the teacher/researcher writing a case study. The writing of such a study required taking a segment of life that had occurred in real time with its "volume" existing in the thoughts and actions of the participants, and recreating this experience in writing, a medium which is more like the two-dimensional space of the canvas. Like a Cubist painting which tries to represent movement by dissecting it into its component images, the study uses a linear, narrative style to convey events in the implementation of portfolios as the process occurred over time. A Cubist painting might also attempt to show a table from the top, straight on, and the side simultaneously. In this same way, the study is crisscrossed by various theoretical frameworks intended to bring some of the less obvious meanings of the portfolio events to the surface.

The study, then, is the kind of attempt that a Cubist painter might make to take a more linear, less dimensional form, writing, and use it to show events as they occurred in
their original depth as well as to trace their impact over
time. In another layer of complexity, this study also uses
the researcher’s shifting perspective on the events,
participants, and interpretations as a kind of overlay, what
the Cubists might call an “optical synthesis” (Golding, p.
53). The effect of viewing the same events from different
places in time and various theoretical stances may be
somewhat jarring. I believe, however, that this Cubist-style
representation is true to the discontinuities and harmonies
of the actual experience as we all lived through it.
PART TWO

How Portfolios Develop:
Constructs, Cultures, Conflicts, Case-Building

Introduction

This portion of the study looks at transcripts of classroom conversations and interviews for evidence of how portfolios develop. Data and analysis are focused on answering the socio-cultural question, "How do portfolios work?" Transcripts show students who have had minimal exposure to the concept of portfolios as they encounter portfolios in school for the first time. In studying students' language in this and subsequent encounters, it is possible to make inferences about their constructs of portfolios as they evolve, their understanding of and membership in a culture that uses portfolios, their initiation and resolution of conflicts that arise within portfolio processes, and the unusual language opportunities they are sometimes afforded as they develop their portfolios.

CHAPTER III in this section looks at the movement of portfolios from an abstract concept to a discernible presence in the classroom. This analysis takes a Vygotskian perspective: a process and the physical entity that is ultimately called a "portfolio" is shaped through a series of interactions and negotiations mediated through language
(Wertsch, 1991a). The process involves forming and modifying understandings through language and then acting upon them. There are 6 classroom episodes in this analysis:

1) The introductory portfolio lesson involving the teacher and all students;

2) A reflection in which selected students recall their impressions of this introductory portfolio lesson;

3) A discussion about assessment that took place midyear in which some understandings about portfolio surface;

4) Explanations of the portfolio process that students gave to visitors and other students;

5) Final impressions of portfolios students gave during the de-briefing interview.

6) A formal opportunity to negotiate portfolio procedures that occurred with an earlier class and showed much about how the responsibility for constructing portfolios is shared among students and teacher;

The second analysis, CHAPTER IV, extends Vygotsky's notion that the construction of understandings through mediation is chiefly a socio/cultural process by focusing more explicitly on the cultural aspects of portfolio. Green & Zaharlick's (1991) essay on ethnographic research in the language arts is used as a backdrop for analyzing the culture-building processes evident in portfolios. The cataloging of explicit rules of participation and the discovery that tacit norms of participation (Spradley, 1980)
also existed within the group suggest that each portfolio implementation may foster unique patterns of participation. This discovery begins to account for some of the variability that is seen in portfolio implementations, even when the intent is to standardize procedures.

A third analysis, CHAPTER V, looks at a transcript ("selections") showing participants engaged in conflict during the portfolio process. Initially, this episode appeared to be an anomaly when contrasted with typical patterns of conversations experienced in previous portfolio implementations. A Bakhtinian framework (1986), however, helps to explain how such instances of energized, confrontational language can be predicted when portfolio development is approached as an open system.

Bakhtin (Wertsch, 1991a) also contends that while utterances are made in the unique voice of the speaker, they aren't necessarily original. In every utterance, consciously or unconsciously, speakers both echo and speak for others. This characteristic, "ventriloquation" (Wertsch, 1991a) receives particular attention in the analysis of this transcript. It is possible to see how this feature of speech genre theory--speaking for others--accounts for much of the conflict that surfaces in this event. Many of the students in the "selections" transcript appear to speak for others as well as themselves.

The fourth analysis, CHAPTER VI, uses this same "selections" transcript to examine children's reasoning as they operate within portfolio contexts. The analysis uses
Toulmin's (1958) work on argument structures (evidence, warrants, and claims) to examine a particular type of thinking that surfaced in this conversation. The findings of this analysis are then discussed in regard to other reasoning opportunities within portfolios.

One difficulty in using multiple and complementary perspectives to examine several different transcripts is that each theoretical framework may have something to say about all the transcripts. Therefore, in an effort to account for the general trends in the development of portfolios in this classroom, theorists are sometimes brought in to supplement a primary interpretation. For example, Bakhtin may be used initially to shed light on the sources of conflict the "selections" transcript, but Vygotsky's thinking is also useful in analyzing what seems have been constructed conceptually among the participants at that stage of portfolio development.
CHAPTER III
CONSTRUCTED VIEWS OF PORTFOLIOS

Vygotsky (1986), one of the chief influences on constructivist views of teaching and learning (Perret-Clermont, Perret & Bell, 1991; Bruner, 1986), sees human mental functioning as "inherently situated in social interactional, cultural, institutional, and historical context" (Wertsch, 1991a; 1991b). A Vygotskian perspective construes mental development as the product of three intersecting forces: natural maturation, social interactions, and a larger culture that influences how individual social interactions will be conducted (i.e., culturally determined rules of participation and valuing). Vygotsky believes that higher order mental functions (e.g., using a portfolio to keep a reflective record of one's work) are developed through modeling and trying out various types of thinking presented by older or more experienced members of a community. In such situated learning events (Lave, 1991) language, the tool of social interaction, actually shapes an individual's interior life. Vygotsky also contends that the mental shifts associated with growth in thinking occur for each individual in a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1986). This zone of possible learning is the range in which a learner can solve challenging problems with assistance.
The larger the zone of proximal development, Vygotsky contends, the greater the child's success in learning (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 187). Resnick (1991) characterized the power of constructivist theories in this way:

[C]onstructivism forces students of many social phenomena to treat social processes as cognition, leading them to analyze the ways in which people jointly construct knowledge under particular conditions of social purpose and interaction (p. 3).

Constructivist principles form a template useful in examining the processes through which classroom portfolios develop. When studying the talk (that is, classroom conversations and discussions) that surrounds portfolio development, such a perspective can be used to locate assisted shifts in thinking in that occur in interactive sessions. Over time, such talk may also contain information about both the group as it forms a cultural and conceptual view of portfolios and individuals as they grow and change.

In this particular classroom situation, students had had little experience with portfolios. I began with an approach teachers often use initiating portfolios by discussing real-world examples of people who might use portfolios (Tierney, Carter & Desai, 1991; Seger, 1992). In Vygotskian terms, such an introductory lesson moves from familiar to unfamiliar, as an "expert" presents a more complex type of thinking. In the introductory lesson analyzed here, students were asked to recall examples of portfolios they may have encountered, the characteristics of these examples were examined, and several examples of actual portfolios were
shared. This introduction not only suggests a procedure (typically types of selections for the portfolio are specified and reflective questions are given) for keeping a portfolio, but attempts to show the historical/cultural roots of portfolio, as well. Constructivist theory holds, then, that such talk and the shared meanings that develop in some instances begin to move inward influencing both thought and later outward actions as students engage in physically constructing of their portfolios.

**Episode 1—The Introductory Portfolio Lesson**

The following transcript represents excerpts from the introductory portfolio lesson which contained four distinct segments:

1) Teacher and Students Brainstorming and Discussing Possible Real-World Portfolios;

2) Teacher Sharing Her Portfolios and Those of Two Former Students with the Class;

3) Teacher Explaining Initial Procedures and Requirements for Portfolios;

4) Students Working in First Session to Compile Portfolio Selections.

Because of the length of this lesson, approximately one and a half hours, representative segments from the four phases have been transcribed or summarized.
Segment 1

001 Teacher: When have you ever heard the word "portfolio" used--not so much by me, but outside of class? [pause] George?

002 George: On a MacDonald's commercial.

003 Teacher: No kidding!

004 George: [inaudible] . . . and they were checking if they got everything.

005 Teacher: Okay---[student laughter]-----What an interesting thing to start with. [writes "MacD's" on board] What kind of portfolios were they? What were these people involved in?

006 George: Umm . . . I have no idea. [more laughter]

007 Teacher: Okay. . . . They were going to a business meeting or something?

008 George [and several other students]: Yeah!

009 Teacher: Okay, Rennita, what do you think those portfolios were about?

010 Rennita: Maybe about some of the work they'd done at their work, you know like they were [inaudible]

011 Teacher: There's like a missing piece in what you said. I think you are telling us in what you said that you use the portfolio to save things. Because you said it was the work from what they'd done. What kinds of stuff--and these are adults or kids in the MacDonald's commercial?

012 Students: Adults. [indicates several students were familiar with this commercial]

013 Teacher: Adults. Now, why would they need a portfolio and why would that be part of their business? Carey?

014 Carey: Well it would be like maybe to keep track of where all their stuff was and they wouldn't want to leave it or they'd get fired.

015 Student: [whispering] Fired! Fired!

016 Carey: To organize their stuff.
Teacher: Okay, what's the difference between a portfolio and say a briefcase? Because most business people carry briefcases, right?

Carey: Portfolio's cheaper--


Taylor: Well, ah, they're sort of like portfolios, but they're not. They put different things in there.

Teacher: Okay, so you put different things in there. You might have your calendar; you might have pens; you might have reports; you might have journals that you were reading--

George: --Your dissertation--

Teacher: [laughs] --Your dissertation. Actually, your dissertation might go into your portfolio if you chose to do that. Joe?

Joe: [barely audible] Well last year my dad had this thing, portfolio. It's kind of like a briefcase, but it's not.

[Discussion interrupted by two students having side conversation; teacher tells them this is inappropriate]

Teacher: Joe, you were saying that your dad has a portfolio. Tell us a little bit about what he has in it.

Joe: Well I really don't have any idea [laughter] [inaudible] Last year Mr. Emery [fourth grade teacher], he had this portfolio and you put all your stuff in it. Like from college, you bring it and you show people.

Teacher: Okay, Mr. Emery, as a fairly new teacher, I believe he had to do a portfolio. He finished college and then he went to job interviews and he did exactly that with his portfolio, Joe. He had his best lessons in there and probably some photographs of working with kids. He might have even put in a videotape. But it was supposed to be a collection of all his best work that he could show the person who would be interviewing him. It was in some ways his ticket to getting a job.

[Several more comments made; teacher attempts to shift discussion to other types of people who might maintain portfolios.]
Teacher: Has anyone ever seen an artist's portfolio? Carey, what were you saying about an artist's portfolio?

Carey: They keep like all their sketches and stuff in it.

Teacher: And usually, if you're an artist and you're doing that, why are you keeping a portfolio?

Carey: So you'll remember how to draw it.

Teacher: Okay . . . and, again, that's a thing you can take on job interviews. If somebody's getting ready to hire an artist, they want to know what you can really do. It's like, "Show us the real stuff!" Well, here is my portfolio and in it are all these kinds of projects and designs that I'm capable of doing. And usually when a person has a portfolio they're able to talk about what's in it: how they designed what they designed; what their idea was; the different steps and stages of the processes they went through. George?

George: Well umm, maybe an artist can use a portfolio, like say he drew something like two things and he wanted to compare it to something.

Teacher: You could say something--you could really make some judgments about how talented the person was by looking at their portfolio. The other people who keep portfolios are models, both male and female. And they need to keep portfolios of how they look in photographs. And so they would take them in, and if a famous clothing company is getting ready to hire them, they want to be able to look at all these different photographs and get a sense for how the person is going to photograph. So models use them [writing on the board]. And the other sort of real use--Taylor?

Taylor: Well another thing like models [inaudible] you shouldn't say like she said [possibly referring to another classmate's comment] they look ugly but they don't look as pretty as they do in their pictures. So it's how they photograph, basically.

Teacher: Yeah, that's very true. There are some models who are very ordinary-looking, but they are extremely photogenic. [inaudible] George?

George: Car designers could use a portfolio.
038 Teacher: [writing] Ah, yes. Two different things really. Someone working on the line might have a portfolio of different things they'd done or if your job is designing cars, you'd want to take your stuff in. It's like here's my [inaudible] of cars. Vincent probably wants to save this car of the future [pointing to car drawing hanging on front chalkboard] because maybe he's going to end up being a car designer. Then he could really and truly put this in his portfolio as the very first car he designed--or maybe one of the first ones. Brian?

039 Brian: Well a doctor could have a portfolio.

040 Teacher [writing] In what way? I hadn't thought about that.

041 Brian: Well if somebody has a heart attack, and then you have other problems, you might have a file of things.

042 Teacher: Oh, okay, I guess that would be a kind of portfolio that's a history of your health. Hadn't thought of it that way. But that tells the story of your health. Interesting. Shalendra?

043 Shalendra: Architect?

044 Teacher: [writing] Okay, how would an architect use a portfolio?

045 Shalendra: Like designing buildings.

046 Teacher: Okay, that would be the way you'd get your job, right? Now if you were interviewing somebody, what would you want to see? Would you like to see . . . grades? Would you like to see portfolio samples? If you're going to hire somebody as an architect to design a building for you, would you want to look at grades in college? Would you want to look at their portfolio? [different opinions voiced simultaneously] Okay, for the people who said portfolio, why would you rather look at portfolio? Mark?

047 Mark L.: Well because you can see the stuff that they've like designed or built instead of how smart they are or something, and you don't know what they can do. And if you have pictures [inaudible] of what they designed or even built, then you would know what they can do.

048 Teacher: Can anyone think of other people who might use portfolios?

049 Joe: [inaudible]
050  Carey:  Shoe maker?

051  Teacher:  Ah!  In what way?

052  Carey:  Well they would like design the shoe so it like fits your foot.

053  Teacher:  Yeah!

054  Carey:  And like comforts your foot.  And like [inaudible] runs so there's support in the back.

055  Teacher:  You might as a shoe designer, you'd probably have a lot of photographs, and some designs and charts and those kinds of things and what your specifications were. And you might even have the actual sample. Very interesting.

[Discussion continues with students nominating other individuals who might keep portfolios: journalist, lawyer, TV news anchor, scientist, engineer, baseball player, someone's sister in middle school]

**Segment 2**

056  Teacher:  What I want to do is give you some examples of portfolios that have been done.

057  Rennita:  Is that yours?

058  Teacher:  One of them is mine.  I have some from the first year.  This one is mine and I sort of debated.  I was going to take all the stuff out of it.  I've kept this--this will be my fourth year.  And I do portfolio with my class at the same time as you guys.  So when there's a portfolio assignment and I say, "Select one of these and one of these," I do the same thing.  So you know, you can keep track of what's going on in my life with my work.

059  George:  Yours is huge.

060  Teacher:  Well mine is big because I've been doing it, I mean we do portfolio every quarter for three years.  So if I just put three things in every quarter for three years that would give me  [student estimates voiced]  I should have at least 36 things in here and I think I do have pretty close to that.

[I share selections from my portfolio including sheet music I've learned, written work, talks I've given, drawings, poetry written in class or for my family, letters, a]
Teacher: If you look at my portfolio--and I invite you to do that--it'll be in the room and if you want to see the kinds of things I've been writing--I've got letters of recommendation I wrote for people--It's writing and designs and music and things that are significant to me that help me tell my story. And that's what I'm doing in collecting things.

Carey: Now people will know what you're like.

Teacher: Pardon?

Carey: Now people will know what you like to do and stuff.

Teacher: That's right. And now that I've been doing it, I love doing it because I go back and I'm thinking, "Oh thank goodness I have this, I didn't throw it out. It's all in one place. Frequently, I'll be trying to find something and then I'll remember it's in my portfolio at school . . .

[I prepare to share Allen's portfolio, which I consider to be an unconventional one with a distinctive voice.]

Carey: Oh [inaudible]! He lives in my court. [recognizing the name on the outside of the portfolio]

Teacher: Yeah! This is Allen's portfolio--

Carey: It's huge!

Rennita: Carey!

Teacher: --which he left with me and probably still expects to get back from me. But I wanted to show you what he put in his portfolio, 'cause his is real different from mine. Now mine is a lot of writing, and Allen had interests that were quite different from mine. This is [holds up artifact with attached card] a wordless book he made at the beginning of the year and he said, "I put this in my portfolio because it took me a lot of time and work, but I liked making it. When I was making it I felt like a publisher." Okay, this is a drawing that Allen put in here, and Allen said, "I picked this picture to put in my portfolio because I think it's good and I put lots of work into it. Two more reasons I put this in: first, I liked it; second, I needed something to put in my portfolio. When I was doing this, I felt like an artist because it's good and easy to draw."
071 Student: [inaudible]

072 Teacher: This is--[stops to respond to preceding comment; the issue may have been raised that Allen has not generally been known for his success in school] Oh well, Allen was a terrific student to have in here. Very interesting. He had strong interests--This is an Indian rattle that he made when we were doing Native American studies. "I put this in here because it looks neat. When I made it, I felt like a real Indian boy that is an expert at making Indian rattles."

Allen, during the course of the year, Allen decided to build [laughs] this test slope in the room to see how fast model cars would go down an inclined plane. [student laughter]

So he did a whole set of data collection [shows data folder]; he designed the format and he did all these different trials with model cars.

073 Carey: [inaudible]

074 Teacher: And here's what Allen says. I've always really liked this. This is his journal that went with what happened with the slope. This called "Feelings about the Slope."

"I remember when we first got the slope up. Majed and I were so happy. We couldn't wait to tell and show Mrs. Fenner what we had accomplished. I felt proud and happy. I also felt like I couldn't wait until the future. I think the slope stuff went really well. I'm also like mad and/or angry because I had to make rules for it to work in order for it not to be wrecked."

--And what happened is typical of what happens in classrooms: they build this thing and then everyone started to abuse it. So they had to make a list of rules for kids if they were going to use the slope--

"I took down my slope because no one was obeying the rules and it needed help bad or it would be completely wrecked and it could not be fixed. I feel sad that I took it down, but I can't wait until it's done in my house."

--He took it home and set it up at his house--

"On Friday I learned about the weight of the cars that it's not always true the more it weighs the faster it goes. It's true sometimes, but not always.

"The slope is nothing like what we planned. It was supposed to be on a mountain and look like a skiing slope. That's how it got its name, but I'm satisfied."

--This is his summary--

"I've always heard that the more it weighs, the faster it goes. But I learned that's not always true. It's true some
of the times, but not always. I also thought through thought out my ideas about the slope and got them on paper. When I'm 35 years young and a famous chef I can look back at this stuff I wrote about the slope. Maybe I will even look at this paper and think, 'I wanted to be a chef? I was a crazy kid when I was 10,' I might say, if I hated cooking then."

When Allen was in fifth grade he really wanted to be a chef and open up his own restaurant. So I hope that he still gets to do that. What he said when he wrote his annotation card on this project, "I think this shows that when I grow up I can actually plan and own my own restaurant. It also helps me build up courage so I can own my own restaurant."

[Teacher continues to share artifacts from Allen's portfolio including his plans for a class fiesta, walking journal responses to the fiesta, several reading logs, a letter to Jean Craighead George, an Ohio studies notebook, and a letter from his mom and step dad.]

So this is a different kind of portfolio. It's quite different from mine. I mean, I didn't put the artifacts, I didn't put a rattle in mine or I didn't put a little book in mine. Mine are mostly things that an adult would put in a portfolio. But what I wanted you to see is that your portfolio is supposed to be your story about the things that you're most interested in and the things you do well and the things that really tell your story when you were in fifth grade. You will be amazed at how much fun it is to have these and look back on them.

[Teacher shares one more portfolio from another student, Nathan, who has sibling in this class; it is a very thick portfolio filled with detailed stories, reading logs and journals entries. Portfolio elicits small gasps from students.]

But again, now when you look at Allen's, Allen's is mostly projects, things that he made, things that he planned, a few written things, but mostly an emphasis on planning and doing and building. Nathan's portfolio has a real strong emphasis on writing. In fact, as I look through this, I think almost everything in here is writing rather than projects or those kinds of things--and he did some wonderful projects as well, but they didn't end up being things in his portfolio.
Segment 3

I introduced a chart showing the "requirements" for portfolio selections for the first sharing session, which was to follow in a week. They included the following:

1. A POLISHED WORK or PROJECT, something that makes you look grown up.
2. Your best READING LOG.
3. Something that shows an INTELLIGENCE [Gardner, 1993] other than verbal or mathematical.
4. An example of GOOD THINKING or PLANNING.

Requirement #3 needed a short explanation from another chart regarding Gardner's (1993) ideas about multiple intelligences. Examples of each intelligence were discussed.

Some questions about particular examples of work and whether they would fit the requirement were raised. For example, Leah asked if the plans she had done for a surprise party would fit under "good planning." Joe asked where on the intelligences chart would an person gifted in psychology fit.

The questions for writing the reflective annotation cards were also given at this time:

1. Why did you select this piece/project?
2. What did it feel like to work on this?

Optional Questions:
3. Did you have an inspiration for this work?
4. What did you learn from this?
5. What intelligences can you identify in this work?

A sample annotation card [enlarged] that I wrote to accompany a poem I had written in class with students was also
displayed on the front board.

Segment 4

This was a video tape of the first work session in which students selected works for portfolios and wrote out annotation cards. The tape is quite noisy and individual conversations are barely distinguishable; transcription was not possible. Taylor can be heard asking for a copy of a letter she had written to me earlier. Students can be seen with portfolio folders and index cards (for annotations) out and sheaves of paper on their desks. Everyone is busy and appears to be addressing the task at hand. One student (Charlie) goes up and looks at the questions on the chart hanging at the front of the room. He spends several minutes standing and looking at the chart.

In general, the snippets of conversation that can be heard, however, are not related to portfolio in any significant way. This was a pattern that held true throughout the year when students were involved in selection activities. That is, the talk that surrounded the physical act of compiling the portfolios had very little to do with them. In de-briefing interviews students gave their explanation for this feature; it turned out to be a deliberate choice. Their explanation reveals a norm the class was constructing even in this early segment about how participation in portfolio would be conducted. The transcript articulating this norm appears in the next section of analysis (CHAPTER IV), which deals with the ethnography of communication and the formation of group norms.
Analysis

In this lesson, I intended to build upon students' previous experiences with portfolios and move into more refined understandings, which was my interpretation of "working in the zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1986) during this activity. I attempted to define portfolios through multiple examples, highlighting the characteristics in the examples students gave that matched my conception of portfolio. Bruner (1986) describes such efforts to match and extend students' understanding this way:

[Vygotsky's] basic view . . . was that conceptual learning was a collaborative enterprise involving an adult who enters into dialogue with the child in a fashion that provides the child with hints and props that allow him to begin a new climb, guiding the child in next steps before before the child is capable of appreciating their significance on his own (p.132).

Such attempts are evident in the different responses to the exchanges in Lines 043, 045 with Shalendra and in Lines 039, 041 with Brian. The response to Shalendra suggests that I thought she offered a viable portfolio example when she mentioned "architects." Brian's example, a doctor's record (which was really a patient's record) receives a slightly different response which attempts to interpret his example to fit within the constructs of portfolio I was trying to define. Because I was trying to reinforce the portions of students' comments that constructed a particular image of portfolio, there is a traditional initiate-respond-evaluate
discourse pattern (Mehan, 1982), in much of the interaction. I tried to challenge students’ preoccupations with a portfolio as a type of carrying case, which figured in some early comments: Joe (Line 024), for example, says his father has one, but he has no idea of what's in it. Students seemed to be confusing a briefcase that might be carried by a business person with a portfolio which might be used by a business person for a different purpose (Lines 010 and 014). This led to an attempt to get students to differentiate between a portfolio and a briefcase (Lines 017-023). The examples that occurred later in the discussion--shoe designer, journalist, news anchor--began to show an understanding that portfolios, in part, are about collecting notable or memorable work. I interpret these as shifts in students’ thinking as a result of the construction of various examples in the discussion.

An example of a Vygotskian shift in thinking mediated by language (Wertsch, 1991a) may exist in Carey's comments. After George and Shalendra have given examples that fit more closely with the construct of portfolio I had in mind (Lines 037 and 043), Carey moves from an earlier hypothesis that an artist would keep a portfolio to be able to remember how to draw certain things (Lines 029, 031) to proposing that a "shoe maker" might have a portfolio with evidence of designing for "comfort" and "support" while running (Lines 052, 054). In a Vygotskian sense, there is a subtle change in understanding--Carey’s example implies that the "shoe maker" would be preserving a special design or innovation
that is somehow geared to an audience—that is revealed in
the talk at this point. This contrasts with his earlier
example in which he suggests an artist would be the primary
audience for his own portfolio and would be keeping items to
remember how he drew them. My response (Line 055) attempted
to build on what Carey had said by giving him additional
examples that an individual in this field might have
available. There is no evidence in this transcript of the
effect of my additional examples on Carey's thinking,
although it can be hypothesized that my response constituted
a positive evaluation of his thinking. The "shoe maker"
example fit the construct I was trying to develop. Mark L.
also joins the process of refining the portfolio construct
when he articulates why it might be better to see an
architect's portfolio rather than her college grades (Line
047).

Another feature of this transcript worth examining is
what I do with Allen's portfolio. In a preliminary analysis
of the role of student negotiation in developing portfolios,
I had concluded that I began portfolio processes by giving my
rules and specifications and that students tended over time
to subtly wrest control away from me and my specifications.
This may have been true of implementations in other years,
but here I seem to give permission from the outset to develop
a "different" kind of portfolio. In comparing Allen's
initial selections with the selections and questions I gave
the class as a starting point, there are some significant
differences from what I said I hoped to see in their
portfolios. I intended that more of their work would be linguistic. None of Allen's initial selections (wordless book, rattle, picture) came from a linguistic base. I am unable to document the immediate effect of having set up this dual track of expectations, but in the next transcript, which is a recollection (in June) of the introductory lesson, Vincent identifies the student portfolio examples as the ones that had the most impact on his ability to conceptualize portfolio initially. Vincent's own portfolio, which will be discussed in the case study section of this paper, did resemble Allen's portfolio in some ways.

**Episode 2--Students' Recollections of What They Constructed During the Introductory Lesson**

We move forward in time in this segment to the end of the year to get the students' perspective of this introductory lesson. Transcripts of de-briefing interviews conducted at the conclusion of the school year show that this introductory lesson was not a matter of merely transmitting background information to students. My explanations and comments saying the "right things" about portfolios figure so strongly in the preceding transcript that it might be assumed that most students were able to construct a thorough and well-illustrated concept of portfolios. This next transcript reestablishes the meaning construction process from the student's perspective. For most students, portfolios represented an unfamiliar way of thinking, one which they did not yet fully understand. At the outset of the process some
students apparently constructed shaky frameworks of what they understood portfolio to be. This construction was in reference to other school experiences they had had, particularly those experiences related to assessment. The meanings of portfolio evolved over time, but having an immediate assignment to make selections and complete annotation cards within a week for a sharing session forced them to wrestle actively with their tentative constructions. The following transcript shows a group of students who were asked in June to view a videotape of the introduction to portfolio they had experienced the preceding November:

101 Teacher: Okay, now what do you think about that [introductory lesson]? Is there anything you remember from that lesson?

102 Taylor: I remember . . . . It was like you were asking us if we ever had seen portfolios and that's where [unintelligible] that commercial and stuff and we started writing down . . . .

103 Shalendra: And then you asked what job we thought would use portfolios.

104 Teacher: Okay, now what were you thinking during . . . . is there anything you can remember thinking about during that lesson? It was a long time ago, I realize.

[brief pause]

105 Elizabeth: I was thinking that I never saw the McDonald's commercial [that showed portfolios].

106 Vincent: I was scared.

107 Shalendra: Yeah.

108 Student: You were?

109 Vincent: I had no idea what it was.

110 Elizabeth: I thought I was going to mess up.
Teacher: That's interesting. You thought you were going to mess up?

Elizabeth: I did.

Teacher: [pause] So that was sort of a frightening lesson?

Elizabeth: I thought I was going to get graded on it and I was going to mess up.

Taylor: I don't know exactly how I was feeling at that particular time, but I didn't know like what we were supposed to put in there.

Vincent: It felt a lot like my first reading log. I wrote my first reading log--it was so hard to write. Then after the first week of doing this, I think I got the hang of it, but . . .

Teacher: It is extraordinary to me to hear you guys say this because, of course, you ended up doing most of the presentations for visitors when they came in. And I was always very curious about how you became so knowledgeable so quickly. There were times when I thought, "Well this must not be hard to learn at all because they've learned it so quickly and they're able to do it" . . . so this is kind of eye-opening for me.

Shalendra: I think--

Vincent: I think the most important thing about when we first started was you sharing, not necessarily your portfolio but the other kids' [portfolios], kids from other years. Because those were kids' and it gave us an idea of what they actually would put in, because yours [portfolio] is more dissertation and things we would never actually put in.

Teacher: Right. I wanted you to [unintelligible]

Vincent: Well the point is you're actually doing it when we are.

Teacher: Which is a killer. I used to . . . [it] was my "stay up late at night and do it" [activity]. . . but I still think . . .
123 Vincent: That [student portfolios] and you giving us the list [selections and questions] because when we first did it there was no possible way we could do it ourselves.

124 Shalendra: The first time we did it, I didn't know why we were doing it.

125 Vincent: I mean, I thought this was an intelligences study because you kept talking about all the different intelligences [Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligences theory].

126 Shalendra: Actually, I didn't really know what to think about. I--usually what you do in school, what you do, you do it for a purpose. Like for an intelligences study or something. I had no idea why we were doing portfolio. Why were we doing portfolio? Is it going to help us or whatever.

Analysis

This transcript reveals students' first translations of what portfolios mean. Their confusion suggests that despite my efforts to provide examples and to work in their zone of proximal development, some students experienced portfolio initially as an adult thinking model being imposed upon them. From this initial event, multiple meanings were constructed. Students describe their largely independent efforts to establish a context for portfolios and to integrate them into their previous constructions about school experiences: activities are usually done for grades (Lines 106, 110, 114, 126); there should be some purpose for school work; failure is a possibility. At the time, their uneasiness about the process went unvoiced and the sense that this was an area for negotiation remained unarticulated.

Vincent (Line 119) notes that it helped to have the
models of more experienced participants (Vygotsky, 1986) to begin to understand how to think within this process. Interestingly, he identifies the student "expert" as a more accessible model than the adult. These students confirmed my impression of the initial phase of portfolio: they focus mostly on the procedural aspects. Portfolios in my class typically begin as an algorithmic process, one that appears to cause dissonance for some students.

**Episode 3--A Conversation about Assessment**

When Vincent observed that the class would have been incapable of taking the portfolio process over at the beginning of the year, he hints that students did, ultimately, begin to question the procedures and the model for thinking about portfolio that they had been given. They asked for more control in making the process mesh with their own thinking. In a Vygotskian sense, at least two things appeared to have happened: First, the adult model of eliciting reflective thought by writing answers to questions like: "Why did you pick this piece?" "What did it feel like to work on it?" "Did you have an inspiration?" was being internalized. Second, it became clear that for some students, these internalized questions were not working effectively.

In this next segment, which occurred in January, a group of students begins to negotiate (i.e., construct a new meaning through the interactions of the group members) the questions that are used for the annotation cards written
about work that goes into portfolios. The students draw on their own experiences (what Vygotsky would view as their inter psychological world) in using the questions to assemble their portfolios. This discussion, which was about portfolio as well as other assessment issues, occurred after students had been asked to pilot-test and critique a proposed competency test procedure for reading and writing "collections" that the district assessment committee I had served on had developed. The students themselves saw the link to their classroom portfolios and began to critique not only the district procedure, but our classroom processes as well.

01 Teacher: What do you guys think about what you had to write in the letter [part of the writing/reading collection requirement was to write a letter of introduction to the readers of the collection]?  

02 Student: That wasn't hard.  

03 Teacher: So that was fairly simple to do?  

04 Carey: I think there were too many questions.  

05 Teacher: There was too much that you had to [do]? Okay what would you take out, Carey?  

06 Carey: Probably how you felt [when you wrote a particular piece] . . . It doesn't tell--what would that tell about whether you are smart or anything?  

07 Teacher: Umm [pause] It just depends on the writer and the work. Sometimes you get real high level observations about how the person thinks about writing. If it's going to show something--I don't know how to say this. It's sort of like an x-ray--If something comes through, it will be real clear, like "Wow!" . . .  

08 Carey: But I mean I thought I had to write a lot on that, because I was writing [unintelligible]
09 Vincent: [who is operating the video camera] I'd like to say something.

10 Teacher: Let's let Carey finish his thought. Are you finished, Carey?

11 Carey: Yes.

12 Vincent: I'd like to [unintelligible] what Carey is saying, like how he's saying there's too many questions. How you're supposed to answer them?

13 Teacher: Okay.

14 Vincent: Instead of asking like how you felt--I really don't sit there and think about, "Oh how do I write?" I just write. I mean I get an idea in my head. It just starts going. I write. I'm not thinking about what's going on or what it feels like. I just start writing.

15 Teacher: You know what, Vincent? See the interesting thing about that is--and maybe when you do it [describe the process] just by yourself, it doesn't make much sense. But when we have that discussion in portfolio, what's real interesting is it's that part that is not the same for everybody. And then you sort of learn about what your strengths are and what you can do that's special. But maybe having you just write about it yourself isn't real valuable, because all you hear is your own voice saying, "Here's how it was for me."

16 Carey: Like when I do that--sometimes I feel bad because I have to lie--

17 Teacher: Oooh! [reacts in surprise]

18 Carey: Because I can't think of anything to say.

19 Teacher: Yeah, Joe got all hung up on that. He couldn't remember how it felt and he felt like he couldn't make something up.

20 Carey: I just try to make it seem right.

21 Teacher: And really, if it's making you make up stuff, it's just to answer the question, and that's not good. Joe, what did you want say?

22 Joe: I agree with Carey because for my portfolio I kind
of--I thought that I had to do it and for one I either thought this way or I thought this way, but really it's kind of hard because some of the stuff people pick at the beginning of the year--and we think it's our best--but really we can't figure out what it felt like because it was like six months ago. We can't remember.

23 Teacher: It sounds like the question that gave everybody the most difficulty was "How did you feel while you were working on it?" which, again, is kind of a standard portfolio question. But maybe it's not good for this task.

24 Joe: And what would you call the thing. I mean like some people take the approach, "In my folder . . ." but what would you really call this? It's like a test.

25 Teacher: What would you call this? Well, we were calling it a collection--reading/writing collection. That was sort of its working title.

26 Carey: Well I think it's a good idea. I think it's much easier than the CAT test. I like the idea of it.

[More discussion of relative merits of this type of testing occurs.]

27 Mark L.: Well I know what like Joe and Carey are talking about. You might--you--I don't think you should really ask us what you feel like. I don't know how to say, but like if you are writing, you might think that like, "I could become an author"--like what might happen when if like you were writing a story that was really good so like you are thinking, "I could become an author." It's not really what you feel like. It could be kind of like that, because I think most people think, "Did I feel like I was a scientist or I was really this person?" I think it might be what might happen is what they're mostly thinking.

Analysis

In this segment, it emerges that some students have had difficulty with a standard question that I had given them in the portfolio process to elicit reflection. Students like Mark L. have made a translation that makes sense for the way they experience writing or other creative processes. His interpretation of this question links his present work to
possible futures. Joe, Carey, and Vincent discuss the reasons why this particular question is not useful to them. Each has attempted to answer the question and found that it does not fit their experiences. The fact that they can make this determination seems to indicate they are thinking metacognitively, however.

Joe's comments are interesting because in comparing this pilot test to his mental model of a portfolio, he finds that the two are different. In Line 24 he says, "... but what would you really call this? It's like a test." Carey and Joe both seem to struggle with how this experience meshes with their perceptions of the purposes of testing. Carey wants to know how the reflective questions would show you are "smart," which is what he assumes testing is supposed to be about. His concern with portfolio, however, is that he hasn't been able to be honest in developing portions of it. He decides to volunteer this information now. He implies that he should be able to be honest in filling out his annotation cards, that he thinks it's not right to go through the motions just because it's an assignment. It's interesting to speculate on what this conversation suggests about who "owns" the portfolios at this point, especially in comparison to their views of who owns the "test" they had just taken. A shift appears to have taken in which students like Carey, Joe, and Vincent feel they have some "rights" in determining the compositions of their portfolios.

This transcript also suggests some apparent constructions about audience that have taken place. Carey
has been answering the question about processes for portfolio sharing sessions in the classroom. What causes him to raise the objection seems to be the audience and purpose for the test: "tests" are supposed to show "how smart you" are for an unknown audience outside the classroom. By implication, in Carey's mind, portfolios must function differently. They are not exercises in showing how smart you are for an external audience, therefore portfolio practices do not seem appropriate for testing. It's possible to conclude, however, that Carey doesn't think portfolios have the significance of a "test." Yet, he is worried that he's had to "make things up" on the annotation cards, indicating that he takes the audience for portfolios seriously.

**Episode 4--Explaining Portfolios to Others**

Our class was fortunate in that we had a steady stream of visitors who were interested in how we developed and used portfolios. We devised a format for presenting the portfolio process we were using to visitors informally. This generally involved two students explaining what a portfolio was, how we got started with the process, and showing samples of work from their own portfolios. A wide range of students volunteered to give these presentations for visitors. In comparing the various presentations that were given during the year, it is possible to see some shifts in the constructs and assumptions that undergirded our portfolio processes.

This first explanation of portfolios took place in November, 1993, five days after the introductory lesson had
taken place. Two visitors from New York had joined our class for our first portfolio sharing session. George and Taylor volunteered to give explanations of the portfolio process:

Taylor: Well the reason we have portfolios to share is that we just put all of our work--everything that is special or something that we've worked really hard for--we put them in our portfolios just to save them and like present them.

George: And we put like work if it took a lot of concentration or if it was easy or it was it was fun.

[Students then began to share their individual portfolios.]

The next opportunity to present an explanation of portfolios to a visitor (Mrs. J.) came in January, 1994. This time Shalendra and George teamed up to give the presentation:

Shalendra: Okay. How we got introduced to portfolios was Mrs. Fenner told a little bit about portfolios and then she asked us, "Where have you seen portfolios?" like in commercials or something, and George started saying he saw them in a McDonald's commercial. And we went on to say architects used them and like music teachers and stuff like that. Um--she told us that what really goes in portfolios is your best work that you think is the best. And you really like it. And so we started putting our best stuff in here. And she told us that to write a card [George holds one up as an example]--like that--how you--why you put it in here and what you felt like and stuff like that. And that's really how we do portfolio.

George: Well------and you put like how you felt when you when you did it. Like I'll do this one [pulls card from portfolio]: "I picked this because I like social studies. When I do the work and do the reading, it makes me feel like I'm an explorer. And you just basically put your best work in there and stuff you like.

Mrs. J: So are those things listed up there that you can put in [points to chart hanging in room]?

Shalendra: On your card.
Mrs. J.: So if you're doing one of those big language arts projects, do you just write a card and drop it in? Cause obviously you can't put a big project in there.

Shalendra: She brings in a camera and you take pictures of it, then you write a card.

George: People are doing jackdaws right now and jackdaws are [inaudible].

Mrs. J.: So you take a picture? Do you put things in your portfolio from all different subjects: math, science, social studies?

Shalendra/George: Yes!

George: Like you can put in science like say you put some food coloring with oil and you like what happens--how you wrote it. And you can put it in here with a card.

Shalendra: Something you are proud of.

George: Mrs. Fenner said you could like bring in stuff like from fourth grade or third grade.

There were several other opportunities during the year to present portfolios for others. One of the most significant of these for our class was the invitation to help our first grade buddies get started with their own portfolios. The class planned an introductory lesson which featured 14 students presenting the concepts of portfolios and sharing their own portfolios.

Here is the class's brainstormed list of what they considered important to include in an introduction to portfolios. Student facilitators led this discussion and recorded the results on chart paper:

Show List of items.
Ask them what their best thing is.
Showed our portfolios
Explain portfolio well
Sign up for volunteering  [list of who in our class wished to present]
Have a small group instruct them
Show everything in our portfolio
1st graders--maybe write one or two cards.
Vote and see who wants to tell about it
Best work not all of their work!

Very Important

[underlining and last phase written in red]

The lesson itself lasted almost an hour. Here is an excerpt from the introductory portfolio lesson they conducted in mid-April, 1994, for first-grade students. Vincent and Anna did the initial explanation this time:

Vincent: Portfolios are not just used in school. They are also used in places like, if you were an artist, if you were taking your work to somebody, you'd carry it in a big black--well--portfolio. Or if you're getting a job you would show them all the things you could do so that they could decide what to do. So portfolio's really kind of your best work and things you put in it that are special to you. Or something that you did that was important that shows [inaudible]. [gestures to Anna indicating that she should take over.]

Anna: Okay. And portfolio also shows things about yourself. You can put [inaudible] or you can put things that aren't real good but that you like or something that you really tried hard on.

Vincent: If you look to yourself [inaudible] our portfolios aren't just necessarily for your work that you got a good grade on or you did a good job on. You can do a portfolio [selection] that you did a bad job on and that it shows what wasn't right in it or what you should do better the next time. And so it's kind of like a little locker that you put all your things in that are really special to you. Except that you don't put big things in. It's mostly like papers or like journals. Like if you had something big--like we do jackdaws and some of them are back there [point to back of room]--we take a picture or something like that. Since you guys got all your stuff, I guess we won't need to do that [their teacher had saved papers and projects from the beginning of the year for her students]. You can put in your best pictures, and then when you get older, and you guys are
like 30 or so, you'll go back looking at these and you'll see what you were doing when you were little. And that's kind of like a record of your life of what you were doing at your age. You guys can think about that.

Mrs. D. (first-grade teacher): Can I ask a question here? Does the work in the portfolio have to be finished, or can it be work in progress?

Vincent: I have a story in my portfolio that never got past rough draft [See Appendix V.3].

Anna: I have some pictures in my portfolio that aren't completely done.

Vincent: And some of our things we put in our portfolio--like we're doing science stories right now and most of us did a card and got them ready to put in portfolio but we're not done. We haven't gotten them back [from the teacher] or some of us are still doing final copies, so I guess you could do that. Anybody have any questions?

The presentation continued with 4 fifth-grade students--Joe, George, Elizabeth, and Taylor sharing their portfolios. Other students went over what items the first-grade students might have available to put in their portfolios. Yet another team introduced the following list of questions with the suggestion that the first-grade students answer two or three on their annotation cards. (Fifth-grade students had agreed to write the cards for first-grade students as they dictated their responses.):

Questions

Why--do you think this is good?
Why did you put this in?
What is this?
What made you want to pick this?

The final team showed how to do an annotation card.
Analysis

There are some clear shifts in the understandings of the possibilities portfolios offer as students moved through the year. Although the same students did not present each time, it might be argued that each presenter's understandings were derived from experiences he or she had had with the class in developing portfolios during the year. An important piece of background information necessary to assess the significance of what individuals are saying is that we never "rehearsed" the content of what we would say to visitors. Students were picked to give the presentations because they volunteered to stand up and give their own explanation of what they thought portfolio was. Because we were dealing with a group experience in which a shared set of cultural norms was developing (see CHAPTER IV, "Culture: Explicit and Tacit Norms at Work"), it can be argued that students viewed this as a responsibility to speak on behalf of the group.

The first two presentations seem rather basic in their emphasis on "best work" and "something you are proud of." There are also efforts to convey how the annotation cards are done (George talks about showing "concentration") and what they represent. The April presentation for first graders has more subtleties regarding selections. The selections don't have to be a simple determination of "best work," but could be something less successful that the student has learned from or that the student "tried hard on," as Anna notes. Vincent also highlights a feature of portfolio that had received a brief mention in my introduction in the fall:
portfolios can be looked at when students are adults. In the introductory lesson, I mentioned how enjoyable it would be to look back on the portfolios. Vincent adds something significant, however, ". . . and it's kind of a record of your life and what you were doing at your age." He also compares a portfolio to a "little locker." To my knowledge, this was the first time this metaphor for portfolio had been used. Metacognitively, he is now able to stand outside portfolio and evaluate what it is accomplishing; this is a major shift away from participating in portfolios as a scaffolded, scripted experience. The students' notion of portfolios capturing a point in their own development also came up in de-briefing interviews, which were conducted in June, 1994 (see Episode 5 and CHAPTER VII).

Episode 5--Final Views on Portfolio

This next analysis provides a look at students' views after a year's involvement in keeping a portfolio. Five students were interviewed extensively about their portfolios the day after school concluded. These comments reflect both their experiences within the group's construction of a portfolio culture and the insights they have gleaned from assembling their own individual portfolios. The themes here echo those that can be heard in Anna and Vincent's remarks in April.

First is the sense of general accomplishment some students see portfolio establishing:
Shalendra: Portfolio is like sort of when I come back like a recollection of what I used to be like and [I can see] if I still would be like this. And I think it's really a reward, because if you really have a change you can see what your interests were when you were smaller and how is it has it affected you when you are older. And I think portfolio is a thing that you should do because it sort of makes the child feel proud of what they've done and what they have achieved. [Shalendra's comment also reflects a perspective that portfolio captures a point in development.]

Vincent emphasizes that for him portfolio existed outside of traditional school experiences. His portfolio selections also reflect this spirit of independence:

Vincent: [inaudible] what Shalendra said about what they put in there, because I don't really see portfolio as like school work. Because when I think of school, I think of As and Bs and grades, but um--portfolio's more of a funner thing and I think portfolio's a lot funner than normal school work like taking tests and math and things like that.

There is also a sense that portfolio has preserved something about their own development at this particular point in time. This indicates a metacognitive awareness that children's thinking somehow differs from adults' thinking. Students anticipate that they will leave this stage behind and their work will look quite different to them when they are adults. They also have an implied understanding that this work stands for a comparable level of quality they might expect to see in their work as adults. Vincent suggests that he can see changes in development in only a year's time:

Elizabeth: I think that I sort of agree with Shalendra, except that when a child looks back at it they might think they were stupid [Shalendra laughs] but then--well they might--but if they do, well it wouldn't have been stupid to them earlier. Like portfolio's a really good thing to do because you can see what you were like when you were little,
younger. And you can also see what your favorite things were.

Taylor: Right now, if I was looking back on it [the portfolio] now, I could probably just say, "Oh well, it's fine right now." But maybe when I get older, I look at what challenging things I did and I didn't do. So I mean, portfolio fits in very well, because you can have it for years and years and you will always remember what it is you did.

Vincent: I think it's fun going around, looking picking out different things I've done through the year. Looking at them . . .

Teacher: What's fun about that?

Vincent: I think it's cool because you can look and see---last night I was looking at the stuff I brought home from school. It was weird and I was looking these things I was writing at the beginning of the year that were hidden back in the back of my desk. And I was thinking they were so weird and they were stupid. But [when] I did them, I didn't think that. I obviously liked it while I was doing it. And so I think it's fun looking to see what I was doing, even though it was only a short time ago. Sometimes you forget the little things and then you come upon them and you think they're really neat.

There were also efforts to connect portfolio with previous procedures their families had followed outside of school to preserve notable work:

Taylor: Well when I was like in the lower grade, third grade or something like that, I always got good grades and stuff in the beginning of the year and then at the end of the year I decided to do more things and as time progressed I started to think that I was doing more, I tried to do a little better. And when I went back to all the things my mom kept for me, I could see a real time gap like of where I started out doing fine and then in the middle of the year, you could just see everything of what you did right and what you did wrong. And that's more like portfolio only you were doing it all the other years.

Vincent in particular thought through how family school archives were alike and different from portfolios:
Vincent: My portfolio I think is a little easier to understand [than the previous home-based collection] what I was doing at the time because it has a card on it telling you know what you know explaining things. But like my mom has boxed stuff up in my room and she has stuff from like third grade and it's harder to understand those because they don't have a little card on them saying, "I put this in my portfolio because I worked hard on it and because it was my best work. And I really enjoyed working on this."

Teacher: The stuff that went home [at the end of this school year] in a bag rather than in your portfolio---Is there a difference between that and what you have in your portfolio?

Vincent: Well it is not as good as quality, I think.

Vincent's remarks continue and he emphasizes that portfolio ought to reflect things that he has personally found to be enjoyable and rewarding:

Teacher: Okay, so it sounds like you have something in mind when you put it in there. What kind of qualities does it have to have to get in there?

Vincent: Something that I like to do. It's not just something that we had to do in class, and I had to do it and when it turned out, I didn't do a good job on it. Something that I really enjoyed doing or something--like I'm really proud of my drawings and designs. Something that I think looks good and it's my best work.

Teacher: . . . The stuff that didn't go in the portfolio, how would you describe that again?

Vincent: Scraps. Scraps and pieces from the year.

Teacher: And are you saving some of that or not?

Vincent: Yeah.

Teacher: Okay. And now why are we saving--you don't plan to put it [collection of "scraps and pieces"] in your portfolio [Vincent nods in agreement] you're going to save them in a different way? How come two different kinds of saving?

Vincent: Cause I guess because I started saving the scraps
and stuff like that before I started doing the portfolio. I never even heard of portfolio before fifth grade. And I guess this is sort of my mom's version of portfolio. I've been doing that for a long time. And I think it's very similar except portfolio is your best work and that's [other type of folder] some of your best work and some of your worst work and just some of just your regular work--stuff you did.

Finally, there was also discussion that it could be valuable to use portfolios to preserve some negative aspects of learning or mistakes to be avoided in the future:

Shalendra: Well I think [stops to reflect for moment] Okay, okay! You can see--portfolio is good because you can see you shouldn't have been this way and you'll never make that mistake again. When you look back on it you'll say, "Oh, this is how I did in fifth grade. I'll make sure I never do that again." So it sort of helps you not make choices like trying to go the easy way and stuff.

**Episode 6--An Earlier Example of Formal Negotiations in Portfolio Processes**

As hinted earlier, my previous class (1992-93 academic year) had also voiced criticisms of the portfolio process. The first I became aware of this class's dissatisfaction with my taking so much responsibility for specifying the contents of the portfolio was in April. Although I was somewhat surprised by this criticism of what was, from my perspective, a very open process, I was reminded of Boomer's (1992) stance on the need for a negotiated curriculum. He speaks to those of us who are well-intentioned and think we have involved students in classroom decision-making:
Now, even when teachers profess humanism, democracy, respect for the learner and horror at the mere thought of manipulative behavior, we have come to have doubts—not about the teachers' sincerity, but about their ability to perceive the power vested in them, simply because they are adults and control the dispensation of knowledge. . . We looked closely at so-called 'child-centered' progressive teaching techniques, where teachers purport to take a largely facilitative role. Here, teachers who still retain the significant, ultimate powers often pretend to divest themselves of power by giving limited decision-making opportunities to the children (p. 6)

This was how I understood the first "rebellion" I experienced within portfolio processes: I thought I had allowed for plenty of autonomy in making selections and so on, but the loud and clearly articulated consensus was, "Not so!" In the discussion itself, the word "freedom" was mentioned 3 times.

The the first formal experience with redesign actually took place with the 1992-93 class. The session was long, lasting over an hour and 40 minutes. Three pairs of student facilitators led the discussion and wrote down comments from their classmates. It was a rebellion, but it was a very civilized one. As this segment of transcript indicates, a chief concern was insuring more control in what they could put into the portfolio.

Scott: Instead of being like somebody kind of saying you have to have in your portfolio one of these and you have to have five of these . . . I think you should have like each person put in what they want.

Teacher: I just have a question for Scott and other people. I really like what you are saying, but I've been the person who's been saying you need one of these and one of these. If you were advising me as to what I should do with next year's
fifth-graders, about how I should start them off, what advice would you give me?

Mike: I think they sort of need to start off with maybe a couple of choices, but to have at least one thing that they might want to get in there.

Teacher: Did we start off with too much structure? We've done this [portfolio selection process] twice now. Was there too much of "you have to have this, you have to have this?"

Doug: Yeah, because it's like you didn't get to put in what you like thought about it. You had to put in a reading log. You couldn't say, "Well I got this and this was really important to me." It's more like "you got to put this, this, this . . ."

Teacher: Okay. Let me just double check, because we've never really said you can't put things in, have I?

Doug: No.

Teacher: I'm trying to think what we had the last time. We had reading logs . . . did we have "most polished writing", the one that made you look like an adult?

Mike: Last time we had one that we could pick anything that we wanted.

Teacher: "Good thinking" and "free choice", right [categories]?
I guess I need to know--

Doug: We need some more of that [free choice]. Maybe do more like three of them.

Mike: Maybe you should like depending on how much you do, you should have at least one that you [teacher] definitely want to get in there, so they don't get rid of it if it's really good.

Teacher: Okay.

Doug: Something that makes you think of you. Like Mike could put in one of his baseball stories because he likes baseball or something . . . I don't know . . . something like that [laughs].
Analysis

This transcript comes from the 1992-93 rather than the 1993-94 class, which is the major source of data for this study. A parallel discussion that occurred in the 1993-94 class is transcribed later in this study and appears in "Conflict: Communicating through Speech Genres" (CHAPTER V). This transcript is used here because it supports the general notion that students make assumptions that seem to gain force over time about the negotiated quality of portfolios. This class had reached a point where they had outgrown recipe-like formula for portfolio selection and sharing I had been giving them each quarter.

What I constructed from this episode was that if portfolios were truly implemented in a classroom, there was every likelihood that the "net" (my list of selection requirements) I formulated to strain out their "best" works each quarter might no longer fit the class's construction of portfolios. Scott, Doug, and Mike all seem to be saying, "Okay, we get what this is supposed to be about, now just let us get on with it." This left me with a new set assumptions that would influence my interactions with future classes:

1. Criticisms of the process are probably a sign that students have deep understandings of what constitutes portfolio practice and invested enough in the process to challenge the teacher's thinking; therefore, I should welcome the signal that they are ready to negotiate various aspects of the process.

2. Although it is my responsibility to start the portfolio process off at the beginning of the year with a plan and a standard procedure, if students experience difficulty with it or have ideas for how it can be changed, then this should
become an open negotiation with the class.

3. Students could serve as facilitators for a discussion process like this and in fact this is an important, authentic register for students to experience.

This episode has been transcribed is because of its relationship to subsequent analyses in this study. To analyze how portfolios work, I had to move beyond descriptions of events that took place during portfolio process to theoretical frameworks broad enough to encompass and even anticipate the variations I was experiencing with various classes. This transcribed event, the rebellion/restructuring experience, resulted in a major shift in my own thinking about portfolios and provided a critical look at how my "open" process was managing to produce so many constraints. But even after this experience I was still focused at the level of events and unable to see where such an event operated in a larger framework. This rebellion became a "step" I anticipated in the development of portfolios.

I interpreted the January assessment conversation with the 1993-94 class, a transcript discussed previously, as the signal the class was ready for the negotiation "step" in the implementation of portfolios. In truth, I wanted this class to give me such a signal, because I had been so impressed with the language, metacognition, and public display of knowledge regarding portfolio that had occurred with the previous class. The negotiation that followed the January conversation (and is described in "Conflict: Communicating
through Speech Genres") went in quite a different direction, however, and sent me searching for a framework to account for what this negotiation might represent within theories of language use.
CHAPTER IV

CULTURE: EXPLICIT AND TACIT NORMS AT WORK

A Vygotskian perspective is particularly useful in showing how new concepts and ways of thinking develop within a social framework and are taken up by learners to be used as part of their own “tool kit” for acting on the world. (Wertsch, 1991a; Bruner, 1986) In CHAPTER III, a changing mental representation of portfolios (that is, “construction”) becomes apparent when transcripts of initial discussions are compared with those that occurred at the end of the year. Detailed outlines of procedures, sets of selections and annotation cards, and personal reflections on the meanings of portfolios exist in the classroom physically and claim a conceptual space that was once occupied by a McDonald’s commercial. Language both mediates and reveals these conceptual shifts.

Vygotsky has less to say, however, about how the milieu, the culture that surrounds the learners and their language, operates. Dyson (1994) talks about the pervasiveness and near invisibility of this socio-cultural milieu when she compares a learner’s identity to that of a fish who, “knows itself only in its interaction with other fish in the taken-for-granted waters of its everyday life—and in the fish stories it tells and is told about the significance of its existence” (p. 16). Dyson’s (1994) study focuses on the
existence" (p. 16). Dyson's (1994) study focuses on the multiple purposes child writers are able to accomplish as participants in the complex social worlds of home and school.

The socio-cultural milieu that surrounds portfolio processes has this same transparency. Portfolios are more than physical folders accompanied by a set of underlying constructs. They generate a culture at the same time they exist within a culture. "Culture" is used here in an anthropological sense. Zaharlick & Green (1991) define culture as, "what is learned and held in common by members of a group" (p. 210). A class of students constitutes such a group. A class like any other cultural group is comprised of people who:

... engage in interaction with each other, over time, develop a set of norms and expectations, have rights and obligations placed on them for participating in the group, and develop roles and relationships among members of the group (Zaharlick & Green, 1991, p. 210).

The purpose of this analysis is to consider whether portfolios, like literacy events such as reading lessons (Green & Meyers, 1991), are surrounded by a kind of cultural envelope that has the potential to both enable and limit participation. This analysis is not intended to be a comprehensive ethnography of either classroom or portfolio culture. Rather, the strategy is to use an ethnographic perspective to examine the available data (transcribed conversations) and to look for indications of a distinct portfolio culture such as rules of participation, role definitions, common language or terminology, shared values,
and memberships. If portfolio implementations have a large cultural dimension to them, again, issues are raised regarding the standardization of their development.

As a participant in this particular conversation, I was presented with several startling revelations. Most of these revelations revolve around issues of tacit and explicit norms of participation. Many of the public norms of participation exist in previously examined transcripts like the introductory lesson, in which I stated expectations that students would be selecting works, writing out reflective annotation cards, and sharing these selections and cards with the class on a regular basis. The structure for sharing portfolio selections was a familiar one, appropriated from our Authors' Circle sharing sessions, which had been initiated in September: a student took his/her place at the front of the room, students were expected to be "attentive listeners"—a norm I often repeated, the student shared his/her work, students raised their hands to give responses or ask questions regarding the work, the student presenting his/her work called upon various students and the teacher to get their responses. I generally reserved the last comment for myself, but followed the convention of staying at my seat and raising my hand to be recognized. This expectation had been followed by previous classes with such uniformity that I assumed this was a transmission issue—a "standard" I could insist upon—rather than a norm that had to be constructed and agreed upon by the group.

In discussions of culture, however, the operation of
tacit norms (Spradley, 1980) are as important as explicit norms, like those just described for Authors' Circle and Portfolio Sharing. The tacit norms of a culture can be exposed at unexpected moments in "frame clashes" (Green & Meyers, 1991). In these instances, an observer's assumptions are contradicted as the unarticulated, shared assumptions of a group are revealed. An examination of one of the frame clashes that occurred during the de-briefing interviews will give a sense of how culture operates within portfolio processes.

This conversation was recorded on the day after the final day of school. It was a small group interview with five participants. I had asked each student to begin by sharing his/her portfolio as we normally did for Portfolio Sharing sessions; then all participants could ask the presenter questions. Vincent offered the following unprompted observation:

1 Vincent: I think this is the funnest portfolio sharing I've ever done.

2 Elizabeth: Do you know why? Cause there's not a bunch of people talking.

3 Vincent: Yeah, you don't have to sit for half an hour like this [raises hand in air to demonstrate hand signal teacher used to get class quiet].

4 Teacher: I worried about that all year!

5 Elizabeth: Well you can't really help it, because people aren't really going to stop talking just to let other people talk.

6 Vincent: Course not. I don't. No one else is.

7 Taylor: See, people know what's right from wrong. It's just that they don't want to do it.
8 Shalendra: Yeah.

9 Teacher: People seem to--

10 Vincent: --It's not like I'm stupid. I mean I'm [inaudible]

11 Teacher: I found in this class there were a lot of people in here that weren't prepared to give up something for themselves so that everyone had the same benefit. It was sort of like, "I've got mine now, and now I don't have to give anything to help anybody else out. And some of it really was the function of the large class. It's not nearly as much of a problem when we have 18 or 19 kids.

12 Shalendra: Yeah.

13 Vincent: But then they [the previous class] were awful different.

14 Teacher: The personality of the class was different, but there were less of them.

15 Vincent: I think we talk more [laughing].

16 Shalendra: There were so many people that were sharing, the kids they got restless; they don't want to hear everybody.

17 Vincent: They listen to their best friends or like I listen to Joe cause I want to see if he's designed anything new or anything like that. I don't listen to--I'm not picking on Shalendra--but I don't listen to Shalendra's.

18 Teacher: I will tell you, Vincent, in other classes, especially last year's which was smaller, there was more of a sense that everybody wanted to hear everybody else's [work]. Probably because it would take an hour less to get through the class. And I never did solve that problem [in this class] because the same thing happened in Authors' Circle.

19 Vincent: We also needed to do it on different dates.

20 Teacher: Well, we did break portfolio sharing up. Which you could see if we ever get to see these tapes.

21 Elizabeth: It's better that way.

22 Teacher: Except for the last session, where we went straight through, and that just couldn't be helped. But we
did break it up and that helped somewhat. If you only do five a day then people can sit.

23 Taylor: Then you sit and watch them [inaudible] but all twenty-five in a row--

24 Vincent: Sometimes like Elizabeth's idea of what something neat to share in a portfolio is very different from mine. So she's going to listen to other people's like Janelle--

25 Elizabeth: Don't talk--

26 Vincent: I'm not trying to put you down.

27 Teacher: What's the value of doing the sharing at all?

28 Vincent: Well I think there is because Elizabeth gets to hear Janelle's and all the other people's that she wants to hear and then I get to hear all the people I want to hear and everybody else gets to hear who they want to hear and it also lets you see because of your study or whatever you are doing. It lets you see what we think of other people. Sometimes the feedback is just, "Well I like yours" and you're just saying it to say something. But if you're--Rennita really listens to everybody and picks out the good things and stuff. And then there are people who kind of sit there and they're quiet the whole time.

29 Teacher: What do you think was going on with Rennita, cause that's my impression, too, looking at the tapes again. I mean she--

30 Elizabeth: She always raises her hand.

31 Teacher: She always raises her hand.

32 Vincent: She just [inaudible]

33 Elizabeth: [inaudible]

34 Taylor: She always gives comments. She's a person who just sits there and listens to everybody and gives them compliments on everything. She's the one who can listen and she really knows what they're talking about. So--

35 Vincent: She doesn't like to be interrupted--

36 Taylor: Yeah. So--

37 Vincent: If you're trying to talk to her and she's
talking to somebody else, she'll totally ignore you. It's not like you can say "Excuse me" . . . she just totally ignores them.

[Conversation moves in the direction of whether interrupting people is a good or bad thing to do.]

38 Shalendra: Most people's portfolio is really interesting if you're listening to what they are saying. Half the people aren't really listening to what they are saying.

39 Student: Yes.

40 Vincent: I don't.

41 Taylor: Vincent is right. You listen in on the people you want to listen to. Like when Charlie gets up there everybody listens to him, because he's a funny type person--

42 Vincent: He's comical. He has comical things to say.

43 Taylor: --But after a while you figure out which people you're going to listen to. Or some people might be boring to listen to.

44 Vincent: After the first sharing, you figure out which people put interesting things in there.

45 Taylor: So then the next time you do something then you'll listen in on those things, but--I can see when we have 5 or 6 people a day, but when we have 25 people going on constantly and they have like the same thing then after a while they get very boring.

46 Shalendra: And sometimes people will put the same things over and over again and it gets boring to listen.

[In another portion of the video tape students discuss how uncomfortable it was to look out during sharing times and realize that some students were not paying attention to their portfolio presentations.]

Analysis

This transcript offers fairly convincing evidence that a complex culture, one which functioned independent of participation frameworks I had given the class, undergirded the entire portfolio process. Practices and rules that I
thought I could impose upon the group still had to be accepted and incorporated into the group's norms for doing portfolio business.

A clear example of group-determined norms came out in the frame clash over attentive listening that this transcript highlights. The students' description of the situation during sharing sessions is quite accurate. Sharing sessions, while not utterly chaotic, were always marked by side conversations, unusual (in my estimation) numbers of students getting out of their seats, and on-going reminders to "put away anything that would distract you from listening." I tried my teacherly best all year to get students to follow what I explicitly called a "norm of attentive listening."

My interpretation of the group's behavior during portfolio sharing sessions, however, was that this class contained an unusually high number of "immature" and "easily distractible" students who had difficulty listening. This interpretation was challenged in Vincent's casual description of what the real rule for listening was. Vincent did not fit the profile of a "distractible" student at all; his concentration, in fact, was always quite good. It is indicative of how widespread within the class the understanding of this norm was when Elizabeth (Line 2) knew immediately which norm Vincent was talking about when he discussed the different atmosphere of the de-briefing interview. Elizabeth and Vincent were members of different groups within the class. Elizabeth belonged to a group of quiet, academically oriented female students. Vincent, who
was much more extroverted and not as concerned with academic symbols of success such as good grades, associated with entirely different groups of students. Vincent, in fact, begins to name the members of Elizabeth’s group when he speculates (Line 24) that she would prefer listening to Janelle. Taylor, another student not closely identified with Vincent, also confirms the existence of the norm of selective listening in Line 25. Earlier, however, Taylor (Line 7) acknowledged that class’s norm violated a school norm about listening that was well understood: “See, people know right from wrong; it’s just that they don’t want to do it.”

This transcript also gives some sense of the multiple layers that characterize a classroom portfolio implementation. It offers some insights into how identities, roles, and group memberships are brought to the portfolio process or defined within distinctive portfolio activities such as selecting and sharing sessions. Vincent begins spontaneously to group students by the interests reflected in their portfolios. He notes that Joe’s work is usually of interest to him (Line 17). Elizabeth and Janelle are an interest group identified in Lines 24 and 28. This discussion also indicates that although I insisted that all students be participants in portfolio processes, the existence of tacit norm of selective listening meant that some students were nearly excluded when it came to the reception their portfolios received. The careful listening and responding that I tried to model did not appear to affect this group-constructed norm. My examples and admonitions
may have been viewed as coming from a different cultural
group (adults). The responses that were more valued by
participants may have come from the student group.

In this transcript, Rennita and Charlie are both
identified as having distinct roles within the class.
Rennita assumed a role of "careful listener and valued
responder" early on in Authors' Circle and maintained this
role in her responses to other students during Portfolio
Sharing. Vincent's assessment (Line 28) of her role within
the class agrees with my own. I, too, saw her as "somebody
who really listens and picks out the good things and stuff."
She rarely said things "just to say something." Vincent also
alludes to another cultural practice in which some students
engaged: giving responses which were more social than
substantive and seemed to occur when students wished to
support their friends or determined that a student hadn’t
received enough comments and in fairness something else ought
to be said.

Charlie's role also transcended portfolio activities.
He could often be described as eccentric and socially
isolated, but as Taylor (Line 41) and Vincent (Line 42) note,
his humor and cleverness afforded him special status in both
Authors' Circle and Portfolio Sharing. Interestingly, in
other activities, e.g., playground games, both Rennita and
Charlie were sometimes treated as outsiders.

In my role as teacher, I appear to have had little
influence over some group-constructed norms. Vincent
indicates when he imitates my hand-raising gesture (that was
supposed to be the signal for the group to get quiet immediately) that my norm of attentive listening was often ignored or at best took too long to achieve. Taylor’s comment (Line 7) suggests that my norm was well understood, but deliberately ignored. The de-briefing interview group chooses to reveal this norm to me after school has ended, again, reinforcing the notion that in regard to some classroom rules, I am considered to be an outsider.

The way students describe this norm indicates a level of satisfaction with how it worked for the group. In the midst of all these frame clashes (many which were unpleasant surprises for me), Vincent makes an interesting judgment about the value of hearing classmates present their portfolios (Line 28). He describes an approach to listening that is almost consumer-driven. After dismissing the sort of polite listening rules I tried to promote in my role of teacher, he reveals that he has been listening carefully in his own way during the sharing sessions. He characterizes Rennita as an arbiter of quality work. Again, he seems satisfied with the norms for listening and participation the group had set and suggests tacitly that his own work had received a fair hearing.

The de-briefing interview, in which my role remained that of teacher/participant-observer (as evidenced by my explanation to students of how I had tried to structure sharing sessions so that they could listen to one another), served as an invitation to begin looking with a researcher’s eye beneath the surface of the portfolio implementation I had
experienced as teacher-in-charge. In retrospect, everything students described in this transcript, I had noticed during the year. My interpretations were quite different, however. I had attributed most of the negative aspects of student behavior to lack of self-control on the part of a few individuals. This cultural analysis suggests, however, that such difficulties may have been systemic. Because they were actually commonly understood but tacit norms and were judged by participants to be working efficiently, such agreements remained remarkably resistant to pressures from the teacher to behave more “politely.” I had not considered the possibility that there was a norm operating that provided certain students with a receptive audience for their portfolio efforts while other students went ignored. Similar rules for listening and responding during portfolio sharing sessions and the valuing of such sessions had not been revealed in previous classes. On the surface, it simply appeared that these earlier classes were following my rules. What this episode suggests, however, is that either the group agreed to accept my rules or rules operated and behaviors occurred that I could not see.

These nearly invisible cultural forces that began to appear in the de-briefing interview now appear as a means that students use to customize the portfolio experience into something they understand and own. From the teacher’s perspective, it’s like the question of whether you want student-lettered signs and projects up in your classroom. Such signs, with their inherent lack of uniformity, become
clear indicators of who owns the space. The portfolio implementation for this class had these same ownership markers, but in some instances, such markers may also keep portfolios from achieving their maximum positive effects.

In this same set of interviews, I was also able to do some probing about what students meant when they said something selected for or related to portfolio was "fun." The discussion of the norms of participation was precipitated by the remark that Vincent made about the interview being the "funnest" portfolio sharing. Elsewhere in the interview Vincent observes that portfolio is "funner" that regular school work. Students often included samples in their portfolios because they were "fun to work on." As I observed the word "fun" used repeatedly as a selection criterion, I began to hypothesize that it might be a shorthand term for more complicated values that the group held. There also seemed to be some relationship with Dauite's (1993) work on the importance of play among children who were writing stories collaboratively. Dauite (1993) found that students who played more as they composed their stories usually produced better stories. Taylor discusses her interpretation of what the term "fun" means in school:

Teacher: I noticed—and probably this is in other people's folders, too—I noticed lots of buddy projects and group work projects. How does that fit into the portfolio?

Taylor: I guess how we worked on it and how much fun it was. And what we accomplished.

Teacher: I'm going to ask you the same question I've been asking everybody. When you say "fun," which everybody seems
to say--it's almost as if things never get into portfolio---well I guess they do get in sometimes--but the preponderance of things that get into portfolio are things that people say are "fun" or they enjoyed. When you say fun . . . [what do you mean]?

Taylor: Well when I say fun I mean--well all right--you tend to remember the good things not the bad things when you are thinking about what you did for the whole year. Some people say it's the other way, but for me I think I just remember mostly things that I had fun [on].

Teacher: Now is this like "Ha-ha!" fun and everyone is laughing and having a wonderful time or is this---

Taylor: Well I guess since you're with your friends and you know you're supposed to have fun with your friends, it's just--I don't know--it's just your own type of fun.

Teacher: Well how is this different from--I don't know--do you think going to Karaoke Jukebox is fun? There seem to be different types of fun, and I'm trying to get different adjectives or descriptions that go with what we're calling "fun" here.

Taylor: Yeah.

Vincent: Fun in school.

Taylor: Well yeah. Most people tend to think that school's boring and stuff. And when you think about it, it's really fun. It's different than being out of school and being with your friends out of school. But just enjoying yourself in school is a lot different than enjoying yourself out of school. It's more special I guess I should say, because most people don't have a lot of fun in school and when you get those advantages you take them right away [laughs].

The group's construction of "fun" and the significance they give to "fun" activities parallels Dyson's (1994) finding about the significance of relational worlds for children writing in school. Some suggestion of how this student-determined purpose figured in portfolio processes surfaces in the following segment from the de-briefing interview, which focused on why very little of the talk that
took place during selection time related directly to portfolios:

Taylor: You know what I was just thinking about---you know when we had those [tape recorders] for each Tribe. I would love to hear those [tape recordings].

Teacher: I've got those. Not a whole lot came out on them. What I was after was conversations people were having while they were making their selections. But that's not what people were doing. So I kind of abandoned that idea and I'm still thinking through why it is that people don't talk about what it is while they're doing it.

Vincent: It's not fun talking about what you're doing, because--

Elizabeth: [inaudible]

Taylor: I think we're more social.

Vincent: It's more of a social time that it is [inaudible]. Well it is. If you ever would listen, people aren't talking about what they're putting in their portfolios.

Taylor: Unless it's portfolio sharing.

Elizabeth: I do-----Sometimes when I go over to Janelle's or she comes over [to my house] we talk about what we're going to put in our portfolios. But not very often though.

Vincent: I bet you-----I've never talked with anyone outside of school about what I'm putting in portfolio.

Taylor: We talked about it. Like we were just asking what we put in there--we have [inaudible] story. We were asking [inaudible] card--

Shalendra: Cause we have like joint stories. So were asking like who gets the copy and--

Vincent: Actually I don't talk about it with anyone [laughs].

Taylor: We did a lot of stories together so we were just deciding what we should put in our portfolio.

Teacher: Do you think those conversations ever helped? I mean that, you almost have to have [them], because if you have one copy that needs to be xeroxed--
Vincent: I think they [tape recorders] actually were a distraction because everyone was talking into them and making stupid noises.

Elizabeth: George was [inaudible]

Shalendra: In another respect, people were trying not to say something bad, because the tape recorder would pick it up and the teacher would listen to the tape and hear it and they'd get in trouble.

Elizabeth: George was talking about something and then he gave me a few ideas for more stuff to put in my portfolios.

Teacher: Oh, were these things that he knew for sure that you had or were they general things?

Elizabeth: No, he was just talking to Scott. He said stuff like he found out that Joe Montana or whatever his name is took dance lessons [group laughs] and then I was going to put in this one drawing I made of ballet shoes.

Teacher: I've heard Elizabeth say that she can kind of eavesdrop and work on portfolio at the same time. I thought I heard her say something like that . . . What do you think it means that most of the time--is it far to say that most of the time when people are doing their selection cards, they aren't talking about what they are doing?

Vincent, Taylor, Shalendra: Yes! [Jackie and Elizabeth nod their heads]

Teacher: What does it mean?

Vincent: That means it's more of a social time and it's very enjoyable because you can sit there and you can talk while you're doing your school work and it's a lot funner than having to talk about what you're going to put in there. Because the good thing everybody's going to find out about it [an individual's portfolio selections] when you go up to share. It's a matter of waiting a couples of days. Now you might go, "Oh cool look at this," while somebody's putting it in looking over your shoulder [inaudible] but unless they're talking to themselves while they're writing--which I sometimes do--that's really the only time that everybody really talks, unless you're Elizabeth and you go over to Janelle's house.

Elizabeth: Well once and then I did that twice this year.
Vincent: Well I don't even talk to my parents about this.

Shalendra: Well it's just like art [class]. Nobody talks about art. That's one of the reasons Mrs. C. got upset because people don't really talk about art when they're doing art.

Taylor: I think whatever like were doing at the time--

Shalendra: Yeah you usually don't talk about it.

Taylor: Like in music, of course, we're going to be like singing and stuff, but when you get the chance to talk to somebody, you're not going to be talking about music.

Shalendra: Yeah! [laughs]

Elizabeth: You're saying, "Oh I like this song a whole lot," hope we get to sing it.

Vincent: [laughs] None of the boys are saying that!

. . . Charlie and Daniel are always arguing about things being "brainless." Daniel tells Charlie what he makes is brainless and Charlie talks back and says, "Well no, it's really not . . . ." And then we all sit there and listen to that.

Shalendra: I know. It's quite amusing!

Teacher: Don't you think it's amazing that anything ever gets done in school? I've often thought that. What I'm focusing on is usually not what everybody else in the room is focusing on.

Taylor: People usually think you have so many things due by this point but you ought to be--you want to have fun with it too. So if you have such and such homework due by tomorrow you know that you have to get it done. So most people are like talking on the phone while they are getting it done, so they can have something more social than just sitting there doing their homework.

Rowe (1994) makes this observation about field work:

In general, when researchers are committed to studying naturally occurring events, they must be committed to waiting--waiting for events to reoccur and waiting for participants to provide clues to their perspectives (p. 244).
Her observation fits the experience of trying to capture the multi-dimensional aspects of a portfolio implementation. The possibility exists that the meanings of portfolios which students discuss during this interview may not constitute a complete picture of cultural norms in operation. The students being interviewed, after all, were part of a group of 9 students invited to come back to school to talk about their portfolios. It seems entirely possible that there were sets of rules for portfolio participation constructed by other groups students that remained completely hidden, because they didn’t happen to emerge in the de-briefing interview. What this analysis does establish, however, is that cultural processes did influence the implementation of portfolios in this classroom and that the effects of these processes were sometimes counter to what the teacher intended. It would appear that this cultural aspect of portfolio development is derived, at least in part, from the characteristics of the participants. Thus, it might be predicted that classroom portfolio implementations could vary a great deal, even if they were developed from a standard script. Participants would still be likely to construct both overt and tacit rules for how portfolios are to be developed and what significance they will have for classroom life.

The analysis of this transcript also reveals a difficult aspect of being a teacher/participant-observer (Spradley, 1980): I learned for the first time that my emic perspective as the teacher in the research setting had limitations. I had an insider’s advantage of very intimate
knowledge about the sequence and structure of events in the classroom. I thought I knew the personalities of my students very well. I had expected to be surprised in the de-briefing interview by perceptions of portfolios that individuals may have held and were perhaps sharing aloud with the group for the first time. I did not anticipate that there would be sets of information, like the rules for participation, that everyone in the class seemed to be aware of except for me. The differences in roles and responsibilities, however, may insure that some understandings about portfolios will be constructed outside of the teacher's awareness. The researcher, then, is left with the task of searching for traces of similar patterns of agreements and understandings elsewhere in the data.
CHAPTER V

CONFLICT: COMMUNICATING THROUGH SPEECH GENRES

CHAPTER III, Episode 6, details portions of a transcript in which a previous class redesigned key aspects of the portfolio process. They spent an hour and 40 minutes in serious, tightly focused discussion of how to change portfolio processes. Conventional turn-taking behaviors, with raised hands were evident as student facilitators became increasingly competent at guiding the discussion. Most students in the class contributed to the redesign process. This experience led me to welcome student criticism of the portfolio process and to view it as a natural step in the development of more student-determined portfolios.

The case study class (1993-94 academic year), however was somewhat different. In the parlance of teacher culture, they were "one of those classes." Long before they became my students officially, I had heard a great deal about the entire cohort and stories about individuals within it. Once they became my students, they provided me with many instances of behavior that I failed to predict. I got used to being surprised. Nowhere was their capacity to surprise more evident than in our attempts to redesign portfolios around their needs and interests.
After our January assessment discussion in which Carey, Joe, and Vincent described some of their difficulties in following the prescribed portfolio procedures, I initiated a discussion of portfolio redesign, similar to the one we had had the preceding year. Six student facilitators were asked to lead the class through brainstorming and consensus-building discussions to decide three key features in portfolio implementation: 1) what items or types of work should be included in the portfolio; 2) what criteria should be used to select the items; and 3) what reflective questions should be answered on annotation cards regarding the selected items. Having been through this process once before, I estimated that each discussion segment would take about 30 to 40 minutes. I hoped to finish two of the discussion segments the first day. I was not personally invested in the existing set of guidelines for the three areas of portfolio implementation and hoped to transfer more control for such decisions to the students. Based on past experiences, I anticipated that this discussion would result in a great deal of cohesion among students and an increased sense of student ownership in the portfolio process.

The constructions and negotiations this second class engaged in, however, seemed singularly atypical. Rowe (1994) has noted "the extreme complexity of real-life events" as they present themselves in field studies. (p.244) Such complexity characterized this class's efforts to redesign the portfolio process. Throughout the year this class was involved in many instances of conflict. The tone of their
portfolio redesign process reflected this. Student facilitators experienced difficulty keeping the class quiet enough to allow individuals to make their points. In several instances, students shouted at one another and used aggressive physical movements to add emphasis as they made their points verbally.

The sense that portfolio development is primarily a language activity operating through a large and complex set of social and linguistic rules was much more evident in the work of this class. Thus, the tranquil image often evoked in theoretical descriptions of a "community of learners constructing their own knowledge" was replaced with one of individuals and groups engaged in an unpredictable, sometimes jarring language event. These conversations were more in line with the "loud talking at the kitchen table" that Dyson (1992, p.16) observed among the student writers she studied. Within this redesign event, multiple and perhaps even contradictory constructions were generated. The portfolio redesign process for this group was more of an opportunity to try out positions, to argue for one's own point of view, and to use language in an attempt to change people's minds. The teacher's purpose for portfolio, particularly its role as an "assessment tool," was often overshadowed by the language strategies students were trying out and the occasional fierce personal turn the debate took.

The teacher's role also figured differently in these negotiations. Other classes had allowed me a role in which I could summarize, encourage consensus, and move the group
forward. That role seemed less evident in this discussion.

I puzzled for a long time over what factors could cause two similar "empowering" discussions to go in such apparently different directions. Ultimately, Bakhtin's (1986) theory of speech genres offered comprehensive framework that seemed to account for both types of portfolio redesign episodes, the sedate, cohesive, reflective experience, as well as the agitated, energized, factionalized one. In fact, the theory proved particularly useful in explaining the apparent differences in the two discussions.

Speech genre theory (Bakhtin, 1986) with its focus on speakers, addressees, and responses proved to be a helpful in understanding the differences in the way the two classes approached the redesign issue. The transcript that follows reveals students making active, often insightful use of portfolio structures for their own purposes.

The transcript itself is a lengthy one, yet it represents only about two-thirds of a discussion which ran for portions of two days. The first redesign discussion began in March (1994) with my reviewing the teacher-determined procedures and questions we had been using all year for our portfolio sharing sessions (See CHAPTER III, Episode 1: Introductory Lesson, for lists of selections and questions):

00 Teacher: This is the "what." [points to the list of selections from the first portfolio experience of the year] What should we put in our portfolios? What directions should we give ourselves? And then the second thing is what I call "criteria," but it's the "why." How do we make decisions about what should go in the portfolio? How do you make
decisions? How do you think about it? And the third thing we'll work on are the questions [for portfolio annotation cards]. You might like these questions or you might really want to change them. But there ought to be a core set of questions that everyone is writing to for their portfolio selections. You can take some of these [points to existing questions]; you can modify them; you can make some of them optional. But we need at least two that everybody's going to do. We'll follow the same process [we used] last week when we did our scale discussion [the class had developed a rubric together] and that is to use cards to pick facilitators who will do the writing and running the discussion . . . . Also when we're doing this discussion, think of all the work we've done since we did this the last time. You've got your animal intelligences articles, which I think most people would be interested in including in their portfolios, lots of reading logs, explorer projects which are hanging out in the hall, your extension, but try to think about what we have available.

[Facilitators are picked and come up to lead a discussion of "Selections"]

01 Shalendra: [Calls on first student]

02 Student: Pictures

03 Shalendra: Agnieszka?

04 Agnieszka: Posters?

05 Students: What?

06 Students: Posters out there. You know the posters hanging out there [in the hall].

07 Carey: Umm our math tests? [Pause]

08 Teacher: You guys [to facilitators] are looking at me. That's fine. When you're facilitating, you're supposed to write down whatever people say.

09 Scott: You said like your papers that are As . . . your best papers.

10 Taylor: Your best artwork papers.

[Discussion continues for 12 1/2 minutes with students giving suggestions one at a time and facilitators recording them. Here is their list of "Selections":]
Picture (i.e., photograph of a project)
Posters
Extensions
Tests
Papers (As or Bs)
Animal Articles
Good Plannings
Rough Draft or Outline
Letters
Drawings
L.A. Choice [Planning] Card
Ice Age Exhibits
Reading Logs/Questions Sheet
Music Sheet
Art Sculptures
Explorer Exhibit
Jackdaw
Research Cards

I have noticed at this point that this has ended up being a list of much of the work and many of the projects the class has done in the last few months. I am uncertain as to how they are going to work with the list, so I begin asking questions about what they expect students to do with this list.]

10 Teacher: I think we're going to be able to read this. We'll just leave it hanging up in the room. My next question is [pause] How do we . . . do we want to say we're going to try to do all of these? What are we going to do with this selection list, because the way we did this the last time, I said, "I'd like to have one of these, one of these, one of these, and I think we ended up with four things. So how should we--

11 Vincent: Categorize them.

12 Teacher: Okay. Vincent is suggesting that we categorize them. How would we--I gave you the categories the last time. We did "polished work."

13 Vincent: Because like [unintelligible] we did something other than language arts. That would be like a picture or the mummies or something like art.

14 Teacher: That, if we look at the intelligences [refers to handmade chart showing Gardner's (1993) seven intelligences] I think that would be spatial, isn't it? Carey?
[pause]

Vincent was saying we ought to try and group the selections by category and maybe one category is visual spatial, but I don't know if everyone is comfortable with that.

15 Carey: If you get something like a time line, you can like draw pictures and put it in there.

16 Teacher: I guess I'm saying, "How are you going to know when you are done with portfolio this time?" Should you put whatever you'd like to put in there, or should we say everyone needs to put three things or four things, maybe one in this category. That's what I'm asking. How do you want to handle that? How will people know what the portfolio assignment is this time?

17 Scott: Like what Mrs. Fenner is saying. Out of these things we should put like five of them that you should put in your portfolio.

18 Teacher: How does everyone feel about that? Scott is proposing that we should put in five from the list this time.

19 Student: This is fifteen things right now so
[background noise; a student has lost his balance on his chair]

20 Student: We should do five or more. Five or more?

[Daniel R., a facilitator, is counting up the list. He adds another student's selection.]

[Lots of quiet student-to-student discussion is going on as several students are deciding things that should be added to the list of selections]

21 Teacher: So I think the proposal should be ... Shalendra [facilitator] your task--you'll love this--now is to get what we call consensus on this--is if we're going to do five things from the list. We have to figure out is this is what everyone wants to do or did just one person suggest it. Can you figure out a way to do that?

22 Student: Raise hands.

23 Teacher: That's one way to do it.

24 Mark L.: We might have the five things, but not just in the same stuff like a picture of your extension and then you can have your research cards, and other things. And we could
have five as the minimum—five different things from the list as the minimum.

25 Teacher: So that's a little different spin on it. I think you elaborated on Scott's idea. Scott had started out with the idea of five and Mike is saying we ought to try to balance it so it's not five of one thing.

26 Mark L.: Yeah.

27 Carey: We could have five cards or things, but we could put more in.

28 Student: Yeah.

29 Teacher: I think that's what that word minimum is supposed to mean. That's the basic requirement, but you can go way beyond it if you like. Okay, Shalendra, have you figured out a way to tell if this is just Scott, or is it the whole class?

30 Shalendra: Raise your hand if you agree with Scott.

[Small response of hands raised]

31 Teacher: Shalendra, you might want to restate what the idea is. That's a common thing to do in a meeting like this. To say, "Here's what the proposal is . . .".

32 Shalendra: Umm that there should be a minimum of at least one thing per subject? Is that what you were saying?

33 Student: Five.

34 Mark L.: Just five things from the list.

35 Shalendra: Okay. Five things on the list from each subject.

36 Student: No, five things total.

37 Carey: It can't be like five of the same thing.

38 Taylor: Five different.

39 Shalendra: Five different things.

40 Daniel R.: Vincent?

41 Vincent: I'm thinking five to eight. I'm raising my hand like Shalendra said. [establishing he didn't want to be
called on]

[Shalendra counts hands]

42 Teacher: Okay in this situation the ten or so people [out of 25] who didn't vote for this have now lost their votes, so you might want to say, "If you didn't vote for this, what are your objections, or do you have additional suggestions to help us?" They might have an idea that could be incorporated easily, and it would be a good idea, but they've just been sitting there and they haven't said anything about it.

43 Student: [inaudible] suggestions [inaudible]

44 Carey: Well if you don't want it tell us why.

45 Teacher: This is your chance to get your idea incorporated in the plan.

46 Student [Vincent?]: [inaudible] Cause you're gonna get stuck with it.

47 Teacher: That's right.

48 Teacher: Okay, is there anyone who's feeling negative about this [and is] thinking, "There's just no way!"?

[Pause]

49 Teacher: Okay, Dan, what's your problem with this?

50 Daniel M.: Well. Well, last time I had trouble getting the stuff done. [inaudible] cards like you were supposed to last time?

51 Teacher: Okay, so Dan your problem is with the amount?

52 Daniel M.: Yeah.

53 Teacher: Okay.

54 Student: Somebody could help him with it.

55 Teacher: Five is too much. What's a better number?

56 Daniel M.: It might be easier to do [pauses looking around at other students] like four or three.

57 Teacher: I'm sorry, I'm taking over the job of the facilitator.
58 Shalendra: So you think it would be better if we had less number? About four or three?

59 Student: But if you do that—I think the portfolio shows what you are like—if you only put one or two things, people won't know what the subjects you like are.

60 Student: [inaudible] your best stuff [other whispering going on]

61 Student: You can put more than that in, right?

62 Teacher: I think the proposal has to make that clear. [low voices talking in the background at this point]

[Inaudible portion with teacher and one or two students making short statements that may have been asides]

63 Shalendra: Mark?

64 Mark L.: Well it might be easier this time since we have more choices to do things—to pick from—than we had last time. Or we could like lower it to four.

65 Daniel M.: My problem is like we [inaudible] down to five of the same things and --

66 Mark L.: It's like you couldn't put your space outline and your research cards in cause that's kind of the same thing and it's like you could put one of those things in that's a different thing. Like you could put your picture of your dragon that you did in art instead of—


68 Joe: Well I kind of agree with Dan, but Scott said that [inaudible] kind of hard to get that much stuff [inaudible] five, six, things in [inaudible] only like three or four [inaudible] put that much in—

69 Taylor: [talking over Joe] [inaudible] those five things that are on there—everyone has done that so I know— you've already done the work, so all you have to do is write a card saying how you did that. So five is little [inaudible] out of seventeen—there's seventeen things there to pick from. Everybody has at least five of those. Who doesn't have at least five of those?

70 Student: That's [inaudible]
71 Vincent: Because well if you're going to put five things [inaudible] like your intelligences [reference to Gardner chart] you have to have at least one thing like from different subjects. And it's like if you say there's a minimum of three things or so, well you'll only put in three things. Some people will put in only three things because it's easier to put in three things rather than five things or six things. You gotta put one thing from each subject and there's more than three subjects. [pause] So, you did it last time--you got it done--so why couldn't you do it this time?

72 Daniel M.: [more audible, less tentative] But not everybody got everything done. I didn't get everything done.

73 Vincent: Well why didn't you, Dan?

74 Daniel: I was working as hard as I could on it. I just didn't get it done.

75 Vincent: We all have all these things. We all did them.

[Camera pan shows teacher with her hand up waiting to be recognized to speak in the discussion]
[Students making inaudible comments]

76 Daniel R. [facilitator]: Mrs. Fenner?

77 Teacher: Well I'm trying to think of what the consequences are if we make five the goal--because I'm hearing most people say that's going to be pretty easy for them, but I'm hearing a couple people say it's not going to be easy for them. And since they're supposed to be your personal portfolios, I'm wondering if we set the goal at five things and that's what most people are going to try to do, but if you can't get the five things, you just don't have them. Is that----Do you think the consequences will be terrible if--------I guess what I wouldn't like to see is during portfolio sharing if someone gets up there and says, "I didn't do it!" [laughs] That would be a problem for me, because here's a person who's not participating. But there's the issue of--well what if---Mark's (L.) a good example---At the end of the year his major writing will probably be his Alex story, which will be chapters long. And in some ways that ought to count for--I don't know--five different pieces of writing so that maybe we do need to make some modifications for individual differences in how much people can get done or what their choices are in [inaudible]. If you work on one really big thing the whole year maybe it's going to be harder to have these five little pieces. I do agree with what people are saying that these are going to be
five things that are fairly easy to get. Especially if you can take pictures [photographs]. This isn't supposed to be new work that you're doing.

78 Student: [comment inaudible]

79 Teacher: Pardon?

80 Student: [repeat comment; still inaudible]

81 Teacher: You can, that's right, and we've got about two weeks to get things ready.

82 Mark L.: We haven't really put 'em [the choices listed] in subjects but if we did it might--since some people are saying that five would be too much that you might just pick your best work from one subject if you put those into subjects and you wouldn't have to do each subject if you put them into subjects then you wouldn't have to pick out . . .

83 Teacher: Because as they stand now [items on students' brain stormed selection list] they are more specific subjects or projects?

84 Mark L.: Yeah.

85 Teacher: And you're saying that we ought to put----now what would be an example of "subject?"

86 Mark L.: Well like uh [laughs]--

87 Teacher: I'm trying to think now when he says "subject" I ought to think------social studies or . . . . . ?

88 Mark L.: Kind of like that but there also would be like that, math and science and social studies, but there'd also be different ones like a musical thing or like a sculpture that you created and there might be one like jackdaws and extensions.

[pause]

89 Daniel R.: Joe?

90 Joe: Well I think that there should be [inaudible-- several sentences in a very soft voice; it's likely this relates to amount of work required and various options]

91 Scott: Or there could be like a sign up sheet for 3 things or you could put in 4 things or 5 things.
92  Dan R.:  Carey?

93  Carey:  You could have people like [if] they think it's hard could have like a sign up sheet. They think it's hard and they can't do it, then they could sign up for like 3. And if they think they can do a lot, then they can sign up for 5.

94  Vincent:  So like I think I can only get 4 done, so I sign up--Why do you say, "Sign up?"

95  Rennita:  Yeah, sign up. [other students in a chorus of, "Sign up!"]

96  Vincent:  Why?

97  Teacher:  It's like a contract or a commitment. Say you're sitting at your desk and you say, "Okay, my contract is I think I can do 4." Is that your intent, Carey?

98  Carey:  [nods head]

99  Vincent:  Where'd we get this "sign up" from?

100  Student:  Up on the board.

101  Vincent:  I know, but what do you mean by "sign up?"

102  Rennita:  I know.

103  Scott:  [stands and point in the direction of the board]

104  Joe:  You basically tell your teacher how much you think you can get done.

105  Vincent:  Okay, well why don't you just say have 1 thing from everything and get as much done as you can?

106  Joe:  That's basically what it is. If somebody thinks they can only get 3 done and they write it down on a sheet of paper, "Mrs. Fenner I can get 3 done by the time." That's how much I'll work for.

107  Students:  It's a lot easier--yeah--yeah [other inaudible remarks said simultaneously]

108  Scott:  [standing at the board] Just put it up here and get people to sign up here. [More discussion with overlapping comments]

109  Scott:  Just write your name like this. [demonstrates in
air]

110 Vincent: [inaudible--many voices at once]

111 Joe: Well, Vincent, you may think it's how much you work--

112 Rennita: Yeah.

113 Vincent: Well, these are all things you've done, and if you sit there and talk the whole time, you're not going to get five things done.

114 Rennita: [overlapping Vincent] Yeah.

115 Vincent: You're wasting time. That's their problem if they talked the whole time. Not mine.

116 Daniel M.: Vincent, [pauses trying to get his attention to make a point] Vincent----

117 Joe: Vincent, not everyone can get five in [emphatic tone].

118 Vincent: [inaudible--overlapped with comments from Rennita] talk the whole time.

119 Joe: Some people don't work as fast, a lot of people don't work as fast----

120 Vincent:----because they sit around and talk!

[lots of overlapping loud comments]

121 Rennita: I know.

122 Joe: [inaudible] but they're really, really determined and they don't talk all the time. Some people are slow readers. It's not their fault that they can't read fast.

[Facilitators have raised their hands giving the signal that's supposed to quiet the class down.]

123 Vincent: [continues through hand signal and over whispers from other students to "be quiet"; points to list on board] Everyone can get five of those things done.

124 Daniel R.: [facilitator; looks to teacher; group has quieted down now] Okay. Well the thing is on the sign up--everyone could sign up for 3? But when they think they can do 5---
125 Student: Four.

126 Teacher: Facilitators, I think you need to bring us to what's called "closure." Do you want to summarize what you think the sense of the group is, because I think we're in disagreement on the little points, but not the big points.

127 Daniel R.: Well most people agree on like the one thing from every subject [points to intelligences chart], not everything from pictures or verbal or--

128 Teacher: Most people are agreeing that there ought to be a balance? [pause] Okay. [pause] We disagreed on--

129 Shalendra: --The sign-up sheet and stuff like that.

130 Teacher: We disagreed on whether to sign up in advance. Umm. We also disagreed on the number. Is that right? [Heads nod] Do you guys [facilitators] have a sense of a number that's going to work for the whole class?

131 Student: I think 5.

132 Student: Three, three!

133 Shalendra: Maybe 3? Three.

134 Vincent: Not 3, 'cause 3's too little. That takes less work.

[Overlapping comments begin again. Rennita, Joe, Vincent can be heard]

135 Vincent: You got a whole week to do this. You can only get 3 things done?

136 Joe: I'm not saying---

137 Rennita: [to Joe] If you got 5 of these to do, if you do 1 every day, 1 every day gives you 5.

[Overlapping comments in very loud voices]

138 Taylor: Joe, all you have do is write on a card. It's not doing a whole essay.

139 Vincent: A sentence. Well then why did you have to go [inaudible].

140 Mark L.: It's like they [students who would be working
on the cards] can't decide on what they are doing. It's--

141 Joe: --Well if they can do more, they can do it.

142 Vincent: Such a low number as 3. I can do 3 in 1 day! And Joe can do 3 in 1 day.

143 Joe: [yelling] Just because we can do it doesn't mean everyone else can!

144 Vincent: [low voice] Joe, we can do it.

145 Joe; I'm not saying I don't want to do it

[Joe and Vincent are overlapping their comments; Rennita is chanting something unintelligible to Joe; facilitators are looking around and laughing nervously.]

[Overlapping of loud comments by many students continues; facilitators use hand signal to quiet group down again.]

146 Vincent: Sometimes the problem isn't picking your best subject, it's talking too much. Or doing something. Or you spend too much time--

147 Daniel M.: [not as loudly as Vincent has been speaking] Some of us just don't work that fast.

148 Vincent: Some of us do, Dan! [nods head]

[overlapping comments continue; facilitators use hand signal to quiet class]

149 Daniel R.: Okay. Mark?

150 Mark F.: [first time he has commented] Well I think the sign-up thing. Some people are saying they can only do 3 in a week and I think some people might start signing up for 3 even though they know they can do 5 and it's a lot easier and they don't have to work as hard.

151 Carey: If they think they have to do 3 cards [inaudible] and I don't think they're going to get a whole day to work on this, Vincent.

152 Vincent: [inaudible]

153 Carey: But it's not going to be good cards. What if it takes 20 minutes? That's going to be a lot better than a 5-minute card.
154 Rennita: Some people can get a real good card done and it takes them only 5, 10 minutes.

155 Vincent: It takes me 20 minutes and somehow I have 7 things in my portfolio. Somehow! I don't know how I do it.

156 Daniel R.: Scott?

157 Scott: You know how I said we should have sign-up sheets for 3, 4, and 5? They should choose what they want to do. Because if people want to do 5, not 4 or 3 they should have sign-up sheets for that.

158 Student: If they want to do 5, they should just do 5.

159 Teacher: To take care of this problem of some people working faster than others, will it work if we have flexible sign-up about when people can present and share? We'll try to handle it the same way we did extension sharing. We won't force people into certain days, but we'll let them sign up when they are ready. Which means the people who work really quickly will have their things ready to present the first day, but those who take longer doing the cards can sign up later? Does that help?

160 Student: Yes!

[Whispering continues in the background]

161 Teacher: Can we make a note of that on the chart? "Flexible scheduling?" Because that may help some people. Any more comments? and then we need to make a decision about this number issue. Facilitators, you haven't gotten to say very much.

162 Daniel R.: I think something like Mark's "Alex" writing, that should be worth more than 1 thing.

163 Scott: She said it should be worth like 5.

164 Teacher: That's interesting. I think we can all tell that. We seem to know that story counts more than just a 1-page thing.

165 Carey: It's like 30 pages now.

166 Student: You could have a point for every 2 pages or something.

167 Daniel R.: Okay. Taylor?
168 Taylor: Okay, well I think about this sign-up sheet, I just think people are saying, I mean, I don't think it's a matter of they can't do 5 in a week. I just think, well some people just can't work as much, but I think that if they get started they should have no trouble getting 5 cards done. It's like getting 25 [research] cards done for our sci-fi stories or our extensions, stuff like that. It's not like we haven't done it. It's just 5 cards. We have L.A. [language arts] Choice [time period] scheduled.

[Inaudible overlap of voices]

169 Shalendra: Mrs. Fenner?

170 Teacher: Does it help if we monitor how much time it's taking to get things done and make sure we have enough L.A. Choice time. That's an area where we can really help people. If it takes an hour to get cards done, then we can make sure that's built into L.A. Choice time. There are a lot of things we can do with modifying the schedule. Okay, where are we with numbers?

171 Daniel R.: Vincent?

172 Vincent: Okay. If you had a choice if you could choose 3 things, 4 things, or 5 things, and if you had a whole L.A. Choice time of 2 hours, how many people would choose to do 3 things? Raise your hands. [no response] So what are we arguing about? [stands up]

173 Students: What? Huh? You just said you would want to do 3 things!

174 Vincent: [sighs] If you had a 2-hour L.A. Choice time and you could do anything you wanted in that L.A. Choice time, but you had to have the cards done in that L.A. Choice time and you had a choice of 3, 4, or 5 cards--

175 Mark L.: Vincent, it wouldn't really matter because you could try to get like 3 cards, but you could get more than that in that time period. You could probably get like 5 done.

176 Carey: What if they were the best ones you'd ever done and you really took your time on them?

177 Vincent: I'm trying to prove something.

178 Rennita: What are you trying to prove?

179 Vincent: Well I can't prove it right now because everyone's arguing with me. They didn't get my point.
Tony: [inaudible]

Student: What is your point?

Rennita: Let him say it.

Vincent: Well my point is when I said, "Everyone raise your hand for 3," no one raised it. So why do we have to do 3 things? Just one person. We agree to do 4 things. Does anyone want to do 5 things?

[Overlapping comments discussing 4 versus 5 selections]

Mark L.: I wouldn't want to say I'd stop at 5, because I could do more.

Vincent: Could we at least make it a minimum of 4, because we don't need it at 3, because even Daniel would admit he could do more than 3. He could do 4.

Mark F.: He said he wanted 4.

[Comments overlap; Vincent, Joe, and Rennita are talking loudly to each other.]

[Facilitators attempt to get class quiet; teacher has her hand up waiting to be called on; class focuses on 3 students who continue to argue; arguing continues without resolution for approximately 4 minutes]

Teacher: [stands] Excuse me [quietly] Excuse me. We're still having an important discussion and this is still part of our language arts class. First of all, I think we need to thank our facilitators, because they did a really good job in a difficult spot. I think they got us to the point where we are all saying 4 and most of us are going to try to do 5 selections—

Student: [whispers] Yes!

Teacher:---And it's my responsibility to customize the schedule so that everybody can get their work done. The one thing I do want to do is talk about our discussion.

A de-briefing discussion continued for approximately 10 minutes; Joe and Vincent continued to exchange heated comments and were asked to join me in the hall as I attempted
to defuse their anger. The class quickly completed a list of possible questions for the annotation cards while I remained in the hall with Joe and Vincent. Many students were no longer paying attention at this point.

The third part of the discussion, criteria for portfolio selections, took place the next day without the same pattern of conflict. Alliances continued to form and disband during the year. Later in the year, Joe and Vincent chose to work together in designing a Martian space station. On a group project that occurred later in the year, Joe refused to participate saying, "I can't work with Daniel M."

Somewhat surprisingly, given the heated nature of the disagreements that took place during the discussion on "selections," after finishing their discussion on "criteria," students took up their portfolios and began selecting work and writing up cards for the next sharing session. Another group-constructed norm, "having fun with your friends while getting something done," (CHAPTER IV) seemed to come into play at this point.

It is difficult to discern all the meanings students constructed during these redesign discussions. However, their outward behavior seemed to reflect an attitude that regardless of how arduous the redesign process had been, they now had the information they needed to proceed with the next phase of portfolios. This segment of the videotape shows much movement of students around the room with a generally high level of noise. Portfolios, cards, new work, and prior selections were out on most students' desks, and very little
discussion about the task itself was occurring. One isolated inquiry could be heard, "Mark, what card are you working on?"

**Analysis: Speech Genres**

This episode reinforces Bloome's (1994) contention that a good portion of the "material substance" of classroom reading and writing events (portfolio can claim some kinship with process-based reading and writing) is made up of language (p. 238). If the chief question in this chapter is "How do portfolios work?" then the tangential one for this episode becomes, "Is this an example of portfolios working?"

The first point that needs to be made is that living through this conversation as the teacher in the classroom was quite different from transcribing it and analyzing it as a researcher. On paper, the level of animosity, particularly between Vincent and Joe is somewhat deadened. When I removed the boys to the hall, Vincent continued to hammer away at his point that people who didn't have their work done had no one to blame but themselves. The comments deteriorated to a hurtful exchange of name calling in which Joe began to cry in frustration about Vincent's "unfairness." Joe had a history of taking physical action during conflicts; I was worried he would carry the dispute out on to the playground at noontime. There were moments during the discussion, particularly in the stretches near the end and many students were simply yelling at each other, when I thought, "Should I just put an end to this? These kids are obviously out of control and can't handle this." The comments they were yelling were about
portfolio, but the scene appeared chaotic.

This way of doing portfolio contrasted sharply with the previous class's approach. Portfolio lessons had always been "showpiece lessons." Indeed, we had had many visitors during such lessons, and they usually went away remarking upon how adult-like and reflective the conversations were. On this morning, however, I counted my blessings that a colleague or the principal hadn't stopped by.

Reviewing the transcript for this study and reconstructing the experience in my mind resurrected the feeling of utter unpredictability in this situation. In my teacher role, I felt I was not doing a very good job of controlling things. The conversational turns were occurring so quickly that I was afraid someone's feelings would be hurt and irrevocable damage would be done to the "community of learners" I was trying to foster. In narrative terms, I couldn't see that there would be a constructive resolution to the situation, or that things would come out all right in the end. I didn't know that Vincent and Joe would become fast friends by the end of the year. It had never occurred to me that there could be so much risk involved in portfolio activities.

The sense of unpredictability from moment to moment in this transcript is a good place to begin applying Bakhtin's (1986) theory of speech genres. I believe Bakhtin's work is critical in answering the question, "Is this an example of portfolios working?" Using Bakhtin (1986; Wertsch, 1991a),
I intend to argue that this transcript is a good example of the way portfolios "work."

The unpredictability factor is an important initial clue that, in Bakhtin's terms, this conversation is an open or "dialogic" situation. Students had grown to expect this open stance in portfolio conversations. Although in their first exposure to portfolios in the introductory lesson, students like Vincent and Elizabeth apparently interpreted portfolios procedures as an authoritative text (Bakhtin's term for a non-negotiable utterance), they and their classmates had learned in subsequent experiences—portfolio sharing sessions and conversations like the January discussion of assessment—that meanings and procedures for portfolio activities could be negotiated. They brought this perspective to the redesign session, which was after all an official opportunity to negotiate the meanings of portfolios.

In an open or dialogic situation, a Bakhtinian analysis focuses on speech genres, speakers, utterances, and responses. All these elements figure prominently in this transcript. First, the issue of speech genre. Bakhtin (1986) maintains that we are surrounded in everyday life with speech genres that arise in many "spheres of activity": "... each sphere of activity contains an entire repertoire of speech genres that differentiate and grow as that particular sphere develops and becomes more complex" (p. 60). Speech genres can also be thought of as "ready-made way[s] of packaging speech that at the same time allow for "creative emergent, and even unique" individual performance (Wertsch,
1991a, p. 61). Bakhtin (1986) uses military language as an example of a speech genre. Classroom language it would seem might also qualify as a speech genre, and, in fact, Daiute (1993) has identified student writing as a distinct speech genre that she calls "youth genre."

This transcript and earlier ones in this study contain evidence that "portfolio talk" may constitute a distinct genre similar to the "youth genre" that Daiute (1993) has observed within student writing. Portfolio has a vocabulary with highly contextualized meanings: "selections," "sharing," "intelligences," "cards." For example, if I were to say to the class (as I have): "For this session, how about we just share our cards from our most recent selections?" students would understand that we are preparing to have a session in which we share the contents of our portfolios, but we are working only with works selected for this quarter and that the remarks they have written on their annotation cards are to be read or conveyed to the class rather than sharing the entire piece of work that has been selected. Further evidence of these genre features can be found in "selections" transcript. When Mark L. in Lines 66 and 88 refers to the "different" things that go into portfolios, students know this is an oblique reference to Gardner (1993) and the non linguistic intelligences on the chart that has been hanging up in the room all year. Carey's concern about "cards" (Lines 151, 153) and Rennita's (Line 154) and Vincent's responses (Line 155) show that they know portfolio annotation cards are being referred to. There is
even a shared sense for how much time a "good card" might take to write.

A distinct speech genre, then establishes certain boundaries for what is likely to be discussed. A well-understood portfolio genre could, perhaps, provide students with a kind of social and intellectual security in which comfortable language tools are available for use in a thorough examination of a problem.

To interpret events within a speech genre, then, Bakhtin (1986) focuses on the utterances of various speakers. Utterances, Bakhtin's primary unit of analysis, are the complete text a speaker gives before stopping to allow for a response. An utterance could be a long as a book, which he would describe as a "secondary" (complex) speech genre (p. 61). Within conversation, a site of "primary" speech genres, one word can also constitute an utterance (pp. 61, 74). Utterances and responses occur in on-going chains and are directed at addressees (p. 84). Bakhtin characterizes their relationship this way: "Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker" (p. 68).

The "selections" transcript is filled with examples of speakers and addressees moving through rapid chains of utterances, close listening in which listener become speakers, and precise responses to utterances. It takes some time at the beginning of the transcript for this mechanism to appear. Early in the discussion, my comments appear as almost a Vygotskian scaffold (Bruner, 1986) in getting the
process started. In Line 14, I respond to Vincent and attempt to draw Carey into my response. In Line 17, Scott has responded to my question about how many selections people will be expected to do, and I attempt again to get people to respond to Scott. I continue in this pattern of being the primary addressee (respondent) for the group when I respond to Mark L. and Carey in Lines 24 and 27, respectively.

It is not until Line 33 that the students appear to begin listening to one another and responding. This set of utterances and responses (Lines 33–41) are more focused on clarifying what "5" means here. But in Line 48, I make one more attempt to involve students who haven't spoken up yet, or in Bakhtinian terms do not appear to have been listening and formulating a response even as the utterance is occurring. Dan M., who may have been formulating a response all along, chooses (in Line 50) to respond the proposed number of selections by saying that he had trouble finishing the last portfolio assignment. Shortly after Dan makes his response, I realize the extent to which I am controlling the discussion (Line 57). This is serendipitous for the utterance/response process, because, as it turns out, Dan M. has introduced an issue of great substance as far as potential respondents are concerned. Students begin talking to one another, and by Line 62 my role in generating authoritative utterances seems greatly diminished.

In another pivotal utterance Joe responds (Line 68) with support for Dan M.'s utterance in Line 50. Taylor is so active in constructing her response to Joe's utterance that
she begins to talk over him in Line 69. Vincent decides to respond in support of Taylor's position (Line 71) and Dan M. 's response to Vincent is a much more assertive statement about his difficulties in completing the last assignment. The chain of utterances and responses continues, but Vincent in Line 73 shifts his response to Dan personally and transforms the selection issue into a value-laden one of an individual's work habits.

The response/utterance chain has begun to gain momentum, because in Line 77 I try to break it by presenting an authoritative utterance on the lack of importance (in my view) of the number of selections an individual chooses. The number of selections issue is a chain that is derailed only temporarily, however. I maintain an authoritative stance again up through Line 89, at which time Joe uses the "legal means," raising his hand, to be recognized by the facilitator, to respond to the unfinished business of number of selections.

Scott responds (Line 91) directly to Joe and indirectly to me: he makes a proposal ostensibly to Joe that there be a sign-up process for students to choose how many items they would like to include this time in their portfolio. He has apparently tried to incorporate my views on number of selections from Line 77 into his proposal, however. Carey (Line 93) responds to Scott, but also to Joe and Dan M. ("They think it's hard and they can't do it"), by restating Scott's idea positively. Vincent (Line 94) has apparently listened carefully to both Carey and Scott. His response
gives his interpretation of their proposal, and then he questions Carey and Scott about introducing a new element, "sign-up," into the proposal.

This chain, focused on resolving how many selections will be appropriate, continues through nearly 100 utterances, including several of my attempts to impose consensus and closure on the discussion. This entire chain of utterances, which was devoted exclusively to discussing the number of selections we should put in our portfolios, involved 140 utterances. This does not include Vincent and Joe's untranscribed utterances that continued in the hall and were also related to this chain.

To give some sense what this utterance pattern might demonstrate about students' abilities to examine a problem extensively, a comparison is warranted. The first segment of the introductory portfolio lesson (CHAPTER III, Episode 1), in which I tried to develop examples of portfolios by interacting with students, ran approximately 75 lines (estimate based on remaining topics introduced but not transcribed). In that first segment, of the 55 utterances that were actually transcribed, 25 belong to me. In the "selections" chain that lasted approximately 140 lines, 21 of the utterances belong to me. In the introductory segment, the longest number of student-to-student utterances (stretches of conversation in which I have not commented or intervened) is 3. In the selections chain, the longest stretch lasts 30 utterances. There are several examples of short student-to-student utterances, but in this same
transcript there is a chain of 28 as well as one of 16 utterances.

The close listening, the focused responses that students give one another, the longer utterance chains in the "selections" transcript, reveal at least one aspect of how portfolios may be working. The talk that surrounds portfolios appears to evolve, in Bakhtin's terms, into an increasingly dialogic system. This analysis may also shed some light on the question of how well portfolios are working. The openness of the dialogic system appears to allow for patterns to emerge that, at least in a preliminary analysis, differ visibly from other classroom discourse patterns that have been documented previously (Wells, 1986; Barnes, 1992; Mehan, 1982; Cazden, 1988) There is more close tracking and extending of students' thoughts in an authentic conversation (Wells, 1986); more student-to-student interaction on a focused topic (Barnes, 1992), and less segments of conversation that follow the teacher-dominated introduce-respond-evaluate (IRE) instructional sequence (Cazden, 1988; Mehan, 1982).

An issue that an analysis of utterance chains still fails to address is the level of conflict that emerges in portions of this discussion. Again, Bakhtin's (1986) speech genre theory offers some useful interpretations. Bakhtin calls the individuals who participate in various speech genres "speakers." When speakers make utterances, they are actually speaking for others as well as themselves, borrowing distinct voices from individuals or the rhetorical styles of
other genres. This "ventriloquation," as Bakhtin terms it suggests that, "the word in language is half someone else's" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 70). In examining the utterance patterns of students in this transcript, there is a strong sense that they are representing not only themselves, but other voices as well. In some cases, students even seem to address others outside the room or to appropriate rhetorical stances from outside the classroom.

The multi-vocal nature of the conversation in this transcript seems to emerge initially when Dan M. voices a tentative objection to the proposal that everyone complete 5 portfolio selections. His voice on the tape is quite soft. I respond to Dan M., trying to get him to articulate exactly what the problem is. Extra linguistic features become important here. In Line 56, Dan M. is formulating a response to my question, "What's a better number?" and as he does this he is looking around the room at other students. He is seeking support; he is looking for a better number; he is also signaling that he doesn't wish to speak alone on this issue. A student (who may have been Mark L.) in Line 59 responds for himself and the interests of the class--the "people" [classmates] who "won't know what the subjects you like are."

Suddenly in Line 68, Joe also questions the number of selections and aligns himself with Dan M. Taylor (Line 69) responds immediately to Joe and draws his attention to the chart of selections on which the class had listed the projects and assignments they had available for portfolios.
Her somewhat impatient tone suggests she may be speaking for the "workers" in the class. Vincent uses another chart hanging in the room (the one with multiple intelligences listed on it) to support the proposal that 5 items ought to be selected. Daniel M. returns to the conversation with a much stronger voice in Line 72. Vincent in Line 73 personalizes the selection issue by asking Dan M. why he doesn't have his work done.

Ultimately in this conversation, three groups of students appear to be represented: 1) The 5-Is-Too-Many Group (Dan M., Joe, Carey); 2) The If-You-Don't-Pick-5-You Haven't-Been-Doing-Your-Work Group (Taylor, Vincent, Mark F., Rennita; 3) The Let's-See-If-We-Can-Structure-This-to Help-You-Get-Your-Work-Done Group (Mark L., Scott, Rennita, Dan R.). A number of students didn't speak, which may mean they were allowing others to speak for them.

Who was speaking for whom here? Group #2 "Pick 5" is likely to have represented the majority of the students. In fact, it was difficult to discern any support for Group #1's "Five-Is-Too-Much" position beyond Dan M. and Joe. In Bakhtin's thinking, however, it would be likely that the audible speakers actually represented an amalgam of voices. Group #2 may have felt they were also speaking for me. Many of the values that they expressed in their position--“good students would have these assignments done”--"portfolio is a good thing to do"--"you should use your time well in class"--"you should never give less than your best effort" (Line 150)---would be views they might attribute to me. There
are also echoes of their parents' voices in what they say. In his comment in Line 150, Mark F. appears to have the adult view that children's behavior needs to be regulated.

A possible interpretation of Vincent's utterances is that his rhetoric reflects a legal genre. Beginning in Line 172, and irrespective of the consensus process I thought I was encouraging, Vincent begins the equivalent of a legal summation, complete with vote-counting to confirm the final verdict. He actually stood up (as a trial attorney might) and took control of the discussion away from the facilitators. In Line 177, he says he is trying to "prove" something. The class listens to his case. He garners a show of hands indicating that most people now support his point of view.

Except for Joe, of course. Determining the component voices in Joe's stance as a speaker is complicated. Based on what I know about Joe, part of his stance arose from self interest—he occasionally felt pressured to read faster. But more importantly, it is quite likely that he supported Daniel M. simply because no one else did. He enjoyed supporting the "underdog" in most situations. At one point in the transcript, Joe suggests that he is not arguing on his own behalf. He says in Line 145, "I'm not saying I don't want to do it." In Lines 119 and 122, he's probably talking about both himself and Daniel M. when he mentions "some people" who don't work or read as fast, but "they're really determined" and "they don't talk all the time." "It's not their fault that they can't read fast." He says to Vincent,
"Just because we can do it doesn't mean everyone can." His remarks also indicate his on-going preoccupation with fairness and the interpretation of rules. He loved complicated legal arguments because they allowed him to challenge the rules. If he had problems with the bus driver in the morning, he would come in and ask me about some technicality of bus rules: "Can you have candy on the bus if you put it in your mouth while you were still inside the school?" I think he both loved and hated authority. Based on several conversations I had had with his parents, this may have been a voice he appropriated from his father.

After working with the idea of speakers using others' voices and sometimes even addressing those outside the classroom, I was struck with how well this description fit Joe. I recalled a segment in the January assessment discussion which made little sense to me at the time. I had invited the class to critique the pilot version of the district's proposed literacy collection test procedure in order to give feedback to teachers who were working on revising this procedure. Now I see Joe's remarks as a clear example of one of his addresses to the outside world. It should have been evident to Joe from the way I introduced the test and was attempting to collect students' comments that I was one of the test's developers. Joe had several problems with the test. In this segment, I was pressing him for what the committee ought to change in the pilot test. In the course of this discussion, Joe said plaintively, "I don't understand why they just don't ask kids how they feel?" At
the time I thought of this as a non sequitur; he was being asked what he thought. Using a Bakhtinian framework, however, Joe appears to be addressing an audience of outside authorities ("they") whom he frequently challenged about the general unfairness of things.

The tendency that Bakhtin has observed for speakers to represent and address others in the context of speech genres offers a plausible explanation for the level of conflict that is apparent in this transcript. The interactions within the portfolio speech genre are much more open and dialogic than in some other school-situated genres, so there is an aspect of unpredictability built into such discussions to begin with. Add to this the possibility that speakers usually take on the voices and perspectives of others and in some cases need to speak beyond the classroom. The result, depending on the topic and the personalities involved, can be a calm, sedate, seemingly adult-style discussion in which there is a great deal of coherence among the voices used because they appear to identify so closely with the teacher's stance. Or, students can be galvanized by another kind of portfolio discussion in which wide differences in personalities, interests, and speakers' needs insure that a cacophony of voices will emerge in the discussion. In either instance, a Bakhtinian perspective is useful in interpreting events and analyzing possible benefits to learners.

Analysis: Socio-Cultural Aspects

An important subtext in this transcript is the group
membership various proposals implied. The most contentious issue became how many samples of work to include. The number of selections a student supported appeared to identify him or her with a particular group having a distinctive ethos about schoolwork and classroom behavior.

The debate also had an interesting "democratic" aspect to it. Although theoretically my role as teacher left me in control of the class, my ideas were often ignored. The debate over the appropriate number of items to select continued to be constructed even after I had given what I thought would be the "final word" on the subject in Line 77. Students like Vincent and Joe continued to use the language opportunities of this discussion to air their views and to accomplish their own purposes, which appeared to be representing a certain set of values and persuading other class members that their respective stances were reasonable. This is especially striking at the end of the transcript, when Vincent stands up, using the physical stance that was reserved for facilitators in this discussion, asks for a show of hands supporting his position, and states that he is "trying to prove something" (Lines 172-185). The interactions and constructions in this segment appeared at times to be more about issues of personal values, power, group membership, and influence than they were about working on portfolios.

Why did students spend so much time arguing about the number of selections, however? This development would seem to involve issues of both standards and group membership. The
student in Line 59 may have expressed the deep interest many students had in the discussion of number when he said, "I think the portfolio shows what you are like—if you only put one or two things, people won't know what the subjects you like are." This student suggests that the portfolio is a vehicle for communicating to others something about your identity as a learner. This is true in a similar way for other students like Joe, Taylor, Mark F. Vincent, Scott, and Daniel M. They seem to be arguing the number of items the class selects as adequate could really be used to determine your status as a learner in the class. From this number, students could make inferences about how you use your time in class, how hard you work, and which group you might be identified with. The desirability of being identified with the students who are getting lots of things done is so strong that at one point Joe (Lines 143 and 145) in a heated exchange with Vincent says, "Just because we can do it doesn't mean everyone else can," and then distances himself from the students who can't get the selections done by saying, "I'm not saying I don't want to do it." Students like Carey in Line 153 try to raise the issue of effort and quality as they might contribute to a learner's identity as well. He observes, "But it's not going to be good cards. Why if it takes 20 minutes [to write a portfolio annotation card]? That's a lot better than a 5-minute card."

If this session is about a class determining how, in a public and potentially embarrassing way, individuals will receive or be denied the designation of "good student"
through the portfolio process, there are two other features to the discussion worthy of notice. Many students focused on how to create strategies or pathways by which any student could achieve the standard the class had set. Taylor and Vincent point out that all the selections are available to virtually everyone in class. Scott, who proposed the original 5-item standard, suggests later that it can be modified for individual needs by having a sign-up sheet. Rennita maps out how time could be managed to get an annotation card done each day in order to complete the requirement of 5.

An interesting feature absent from this discussion are notions of conventional letter grades, which would have been available as sources of data in this classroom, and traditional definitions such as being "smart in school," which students might associate with the school's program for gifted students. These criteria for membership in the "good student" group never came up. The students spend an enormous amount of time on the topic "How good does the portfolio have to be?" without noticing or caring that there are no external standards here. The most important criteria to these students appear to be presenting a broad picture of your interests and accomplishments and evidence (the number of selections) that you've been busy in class and are using your time well.

The transcript also offers some evidence as to how important students think portfolio is within the classroom culture. One index is the amount of time, over an hour, they
maintained their interest in a discussion of what should be selected to go in their portfolios.

**Analysis: Constructs about Portfolios**

This transcript also affords detailed views of how children are conceptualizing portfolios at this point in the implementation process and provides additional information about the question: **How do portfolios work?** In a Vygotskian sense, many of the ideas I introduced initially have been picked up (i.e., internalized), contextualized and transformed, and are now evident in student's verbal constructions of what the portfolio is or should be.

Many speakers comment on the importance of including works from different "categories" or "subjects" which represent what I had called "intelligences" in the portfolio introduction lesson. In Line 88, for example, Mark L. says, "... there would also be like that, math and science and social studies, but there'd also be different ones [emphasis added] like a musical thing or like s sculpture you had created and there might be one like jackdaws and extensions."

How was the debate over the number of selections constructed and what does this tell us about students' de facto standards for quality? First, there is the list of items which in most cases refer to projects students had worked on during the grading period and would have available. I actually introduced the idea of numbers of works in Line 10 of the transcript. Although my intent was to get students to consolidate the list into more general categories, this was
not clear to students, who may easily have interpreted my questions about "How much?" and "How will we know we're done?" as signals that the most important consideration was the number of selections. At the time the discussion occurred originally, I thought the students were solely responsible for introducing and supporting the discussion of number of selections, but the transcript reveals I followed their lead and reinforced the idea that we should select a specific number of works.

In Line 11, Vincent suggests that the list could be categorized, which was what I was hoping for. In Line 16, I am seeking resolution on how to know "how much" is acceptable. Scott introduces the number 5 in Line 17. In Line 21, I try to determine the amount of support for establishing 5 as the number of selections. (I am thinking here that this will be a short discussion.) In Line 24, Mark L. introduces the idea that the selections ought to be different kinds of things and the discussion up through Line 39 continues on this topic with no disagreements, just attempts to clarify the issue. In Line 42, I am concerned with whether this represents consensus (understanding that many students in this class don't speak often unless called upon) and make another attempt to make certain that everyone has perceived they can impact the decision. This may have had the effect of suggesting that there ought to be disagreement and that such discussion would please me.

Daniel M. in Line 50 is the first student to voice a concern over the number of selections. After this at least
two stances are constructed and defended: the first stance is that to accommodate students who work slower and often produce less tangible products, the minimum ought to be set at 3 selections. The second stance is that 5 (or sometimes 4) is a more appropriate number because everyone should have these pieces already completed. The values and standards accompanying each of these stances are quickly articulated, and at least 2 camps of students become vocal in the discussion. One group maintains that slower workers deserve consideration and those who oppose this consideration are unfair and unsympathetic. An alternative construction is that 5 selections is the more reasonable number because people who do their work and use their time well in class (and by implication, do what the teacher asks) will have these items already available. Then it would become a matter of students continuing to use their time well (defined by this group as getting portfolio tasks done when they are assigned) in class during the next week.

Although there is a compromise proposed that would allow for multiple numbers of selections, the discussion continues as if a single number should still be set. I may, in fact, have reinforced this idea by asking in Line 170, "Okay, where are we with numbers?" Vincent, in Lines 172, 174, 177, 179, 183, 185 attempts to get consensus on the ideas he has been promoting. He appears to get agreement on the number 4. The class now appears to have agreed on selecting at least 4 items from their list and to use a
flexible sign-up sheet to allow various students to work at a comfortable rate.

The discussion of what should constitute appropriate selections for this group of learners was quite different, perhaps because so much of this discussion emanated from and continued to focus on individuals, their personal values, and their need to try out particular strategies with language. Participation patterns were different as well, with a small number (mostly males) of students actively engaged in the discussion. My sense of who was controlling the discussion and its appropriateness to the lesson topic were different as well. I decided to let the student-led process go on as long as possible, hoping, first, that a reasonable discussion procedure could be arrived at and, second, that the student facilitators would find a way to draw the majority of the students into the decision about what constituted the "work" for portfolio sharing this time.

My determination to stay with a collaborative procedure and my insistence that consensus be achieved rather than a simple majority vote were part of my own history in the school culture and reflect, in Bakhtin’s (1986) view, the voices I use as a speaker. Recently I had had an experience in my school district in which the term consensus was used to describe a simple majority rule vote. I had been in the minority on this vote and a colleague, someone I admire a great deal, had pointed out that our ideas, some of them very good ones, had just been completely voted out of the plan. Having my attention drawn to this mislabeling of consensus
was now I voice that I chose to interject in the portfolio implementation process. Interestingly, when I tried to use my authority as a teacher to establish that the number of selected items per se should not be that important (Line 77), this attempt to defuse the conflict was ignored. Something else kept the students aligned as adversaries in this discussion. In contrasting my first experience with portfolio redesign, with this more recent example, I see the first group exerting itself against the structure established by the teacher (they mention the need for "more freedom" three times during the discussion), and the second group, in which the teacher's procedures seem to be much less of an issue, preoccupied with group membership and influencing one another through argument.
CHAPTER VI

CASES: THE CONSTRUCTION OF ARGUMENTS

New Views on Thinking Skills

A primary claim I make in this study is that one of the least examined areas of portfolio use, language, may be one of the most significant in terms of benefits to students’ growth as thinkers. In addressing the second question in this study, "How do portfolios work?" it seems important to consider evidence of how language opportunities within the portfolio process may impact students' thinking. The "selections" transcript is the focus of this analysis, as well.

Evidence of children’s abilities to argue logically is marked with contradictions. Argumentive or persuasive discourse is a component often missing from elementary school language arts programs, although Newkirk (1989) has demonstrated that even young children use these forms when they write for their own purposes. Chambliss (in press) notes in her study of readers' abilities to discern and follow arguments in written text, even adults struggle with this type of discourse. In her review of national testing data she concludes, "the majority of adults in America have not learned to comprehend written arguments longer than a few paragraphs" (p. 3). In evaluating children's abilities to produce written arguments, the National Assessment of
produce written arguments, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 1992 "Writing Report Card" (Olson, 1994) found that only 3 percent of students at any grade level tested (4, 8, and 12) were able to develop a piece of persuasive writing that scored a 5 or 6 on a 6-point rating scale.

Although formal approaches to written or verbal arguments are considered by some to be beyond the reasoning capacities of elementary school children (Newkirk, 1989), some educational psychologists (Kuhn, 1992; Kuhn, Amsel, & O'Loughlin, 1988) view argument as the ultimate demonstration of thinking:

... this kind of thinking lies at the heart of what we mean—or should mean—by real-world intelligence . . . no other kind of thinking matters more—or contributes more—to the quality and fulfillment of people's lives, both individually and collectively (Kuhn, 1992, p. 156).

It is in argument that we are likely to find the most significant way in which higher order thinking and reasoning figure in the lives of most people. Thinking as argument is implicated in all of the beliefs people hold, the judgments they make, and the conclusions they come to; it arises every time a significant decision must be made. Hence, argumentive thinking lies at the heart of what we should be concerned about in examining how, and how well, people think (Kuhn, 1992, pp. 156-7).

Such a characterization suggests that educators need to take a close look at the opportunities children might have in school to develop such skills. Kuhn (1992) also discusses the relationship between formal "rhetorical" argument—which defends the truth or falsehood of something and a "dialogic"
argument—which is an exchange of ideas between two people of opposing views. She contends that the the skills of dialogic argument, that is, the ability to unearth the assumptions and evidence of an opposing (implicit) point of view and refute those assumptions undergirds an individual's ability to develop rhetorical arguments: "... any reasoned or rhetorical argument in support of an assertion implicitly contains a full dialogic argument" (p. 157). Informal debate, then, might constitute training for the development of more formal arguments.

What skills of dialogic argument are revealed in the "selections" transcript? The presence of interpersonal conflict in this transcript belies a stream of reasoned argument. Turning as Chambliss (in press) does to theories of argument, I shall use Toulmin's (1958) work on structure of arguments to map out the reasoning students use to build cases within this conversation.

Eschewing classical models of logic, Toulmin (1958) approaches his work by "seeing by direct inspection what are the categories in terms of which we actually express our assessments [in an argument] and what precisely they mean to us" (p. 6-7).

Logic is concerned with the soundness of the claims we make—with the solidity of the grounds we produce to support them, the firmness of the backing we provide for them—or, to change the metaphor, with the sort of case we present in defence [sic] of our claims" (p. 7).

Thus, Toulmin concludes that the appropriate framework for examining arguments is one of jurisprudence, which
contains these three primary elements:

Claims (C)--"conclusions whose merits we are seeking to establish;" (p.97) also referred to as "assertions."

Data (D)--"facts we appeal to as a foundation for the claim;" (p. 97) also referred to as "evidence."

Warrants (W)--"general hypothetical statements which can act as bridges and authorise [sic] the sort of step to which our particular argument commits us" (p. 98).

These three basic components can be used to represent the structure of an argument in which no challenges occur (what Kuhn might label a "rhetorical" argument). Such an argument is represented by this simple scheme (Toulmin, 1958):

(D) Data  (C) Claim

SO

(W) Warrant

SINCE

Toulmin also uses an enlarged framework that fits the real-life situation of a conversation in which challenges are issued to the primary claim. The following analysis uses Toulmin (1958) to walk through the structure of the "selections" argument as it unfolded:
The initial claim (C) is made:

Five is a reasonable number of selections to include in the portfolio. (Scott)

Mark L. amends the initial claim:

Five should be the minimum number and they should be from different areas.
(Mark L.)

Toulmin says the next step necessary for the argument to continue is to answer the colloquial question, "What have you got to go on [in making this claim]?" (p. 99).

The data (D) is given. The chart of projects/assignments is used as evidence that 5 is a reasonable number:

"We have fifteen things right now so . . . ."
(Unidentified student)

Next a challenge is raised:

" . . . Last time I had trouble getting the stuff done."
(Daniel M.)

Toulmin (1958) notes that in order to return to the initial claim, this "prior issue" has to be dealt with (p.97). In the life of the argument, this challenge becomes known as a rebuttal (R).

The challenge, which actually raises the issue of warrants (W) for the original claim, is embodied in the question, " But how do you get there [to your claim]?
"
Toulmin notes that at this stage of the argument a **warrant** (W) or "justification" for accepting the claim needs to be presented:

> Our task is no longer to strengthen the ground on which our argument is constructed, but is rather, to show that, taking these data as a starting point, the step to the original claim [In this case: 5 is a reasonable number.] is an appropriate and legitimate one (p. 98).

Two **warrants** (W) are developed by students initially:

#1 "... the portfolio shows what you are like--if you only put 1 or 2 things, people won't know what the subjects you like are."

(unidentified student)

The **warrant** here seems to be that less than 5 selections will not constitute a portfolio as some students understand it; less than 5 selections (specifically 1 or 2) would not be a legitimate portfolio.

Mark L. also offers a **warrant** (W):

#2 "It might be easier this time since we have more choices to do things--to pick from--than we had last time."

This **warrant** (W) suggests that 5 selections for all students are justified because this task would be within everyone's reach and therefore easy to do.

Joe supports Daniel M.'s challenge (R-rebuttal):

"Well I kind of agree with Dan ... [it's] kind of hard to get that much stuff . . . ."

Taylor reiterates Mark L.'s **warrant** (W):

"... those 5 things that are on there--everyone has done that--so I know you've already done the work, so all you have to do is write a card saying that you did that . . . ."
Vincent begins to develop a new warrant (W) that has to do with perceived effort in class:

#3 "... if you say there's a minimum of 3 things or so, well you'll only put in 3 things ... you did it last time ... so why couldn't you do it this time?"

Daniel challenges/rebuts (R) this warrant (W):

"But not everybody got everything done. I didn't get everything done ... [later in the transcript] I was working as hard as I could on it. I just didn't get it done."

Over the space of several utterances Vincent develops warrant (W#) #3 into a justification that people who work hard and use their time well in class would be well-prepared and able to include 5 selections in their portfolios:

"Well why didn't you, Dan? ... We all have these things. We all did them ... [later in the transcript] That's their problem if they talked the whole time. Not mine ..."

This warrant (W) also constitutes a rebuttal (R) of Dan M.'s challenge/rebuttal (R) that maintained some people were working hard the entire time, but were unable to complete the requirements.

The argument is about to become even more complex, but it will be helpful to stop and examine how the claims (C), data (D), warrants (W), and challenges/rebuttals (R) relate to one another. This is how the principal argument could be analyzed using a Toulmin-style (1958) diagram (p. 102-103): [See Figure 1]
(D) **Data**

(D)#1 We have a list of 15+ projects for the class  
(Taylor, Mark L., Vincent)

(C) **Claim**

So

(C)#1.1 Five is a reasonable number of selections for every student  
(Scott)

(C)#1.2 Five should be the minimum and they should come from different areas  
(Mark L.)

(R) **Challenges/Rebuttals**

UNLESS

(R)#1 Some students work too slowly to have gotten all the assignments done  
(Daniel M., Joe)

UNLESS

(R to R)

They didn't get assignments done because they talked too much  
(Vincent)

(W) **Warrants**

SINCE

#1.1 Less than 5 selections would not meet a student-determined criteria for showing enough about yourself  
(unidentified student)

#1.2 So many projects have been completed this assignment should be easy  
(Mark L.)

#1.3 People like me who have used their time well in class have all these assignments completed and will also be able to get their cards done in the same way  
(Vincent)

**Figure 1--Principal Argument**
So far, I have left my own long set of remarks (Line 77) out of the argument scheme, largely because it received scant acknowledgement in the discussion. My comments appear to contain both a claim (C) and a warrant (W). Here is the gist of what I proposed: [See Figure 2]

(D) **Data**
(D)#2 Some students are having difficulty with 5 selections
(Joe and Dan M.)

(C) **Claim**
SO
(C)#2 Three or fewer selections are acceptable
(Teacher)

(W) **Warrants**

SINCE

(W)#2.1 Everyone will have some selections and the point is that everyone participates

(W)#2.2 There don't appear to be any negative consequences if someone does only 3 selections

(W)#2.3 Some people's work is considerably longer than others and should "count" as more than 1 selection
(Teacher)

Figure 2--Teacher's Argument
This line of reasoning is largely ignored for the time being. There are more discussions about picking from various categories. Joe restates his rebuttal (R) regarding too many selections. Then Scott formulates a claim (C) that accepts my warrants (W) and makes my claim (C) that the actual number is unimportant much more concrete:

"Or there could be like a sign up sheet for 3 things or you could put in 4 things or 5 things." (Scott)

Carey restates the claim (C) and adds this warrant (W):

"... people, like [if] they think it's hard could have like a sign-up sheet ... ." (Carey)

A number of students support this "sign-up" claim, but Vincent issues a challenge which, again, asks a question that calls for a warrant (W), "How do you get there [to your claim that we should have a sign-up sheet]?" (Toulmin, p. 98)

"Where'd we get this 'sign-up' from?" (Vincent)

Vincent treats the third claim (C), Scott's sign-up proposal, as an "objection" that needs to be "cleared out of the way" before we can return to the original argument. (Toulmin, p.97) He wants an explicit justification (i.e., the warrant) that proves we need to take this step because, as far as he is concerned, claim (C) #1 is what all students are capable of doing.

Joe attempts to provide a warrant (W) by describing the hypothetical situation in which some students will not be able to complete the 5-selection assignment. Toulmin (1958)
notes that warrants often take the form of an hypothesis—
what might happen. Here is Joe's warrant (W) in this
hypothetical form:

"... If somebody thinks they can only get 3 done and they
write it down on a sheet of paper, 'Mrs. Fenner, I can get 3
done by the time,' that's how much I'll work for."
(Joe)

Vincent attacks the authority of Joe's warrant that
students might not be able to get their work done. He
suggests this is a weak warrant that lacks backing (B)
(Toulmin, 1958):

Joe: Some people don't work as fast, a lot of people don't
work as fast--
Vincent:--because they sit around and talk!

Rennita joins the discussion now with a warrant (W) of
support for the original 5-selection claim (C): the time to
get the assignment done is available. She explains how it is
hypothetically possible to get the annotation cards written
for the 5 selections by working on 1 card each day:

"If you got 5 of these to do, if you do 1 every day, 1 every
day gives you 5."
(Rennita)

Later in the conversation, Carey issues a challenge (R)
to the Rennita's contention (warrant), later seconded by
Vincent, that there is adequate time to get 5 annotation
cards written:

"If they think they have to do 3 cards [inaudible] and I
don't think they're going to get a whole day to work on this,
Vincent . . .
But it's not going to be good cards. What if it takes 20
minutes? That's going to be a lot better than a 5-minute
card."
(Carey)
The discussion continues for quite some time. Many students continue to address the original claim (C) that 5 selections is a reasonable number. My sense is that closure using 5 as the suggested number of selections but allowing for some flexibility for individuals has been reached, but Vincent begins to construct a final indisputable warrant. Toulmin (1958) refers to this issue as the backing (B) of a warrant (W) (p. 103). One of the most important questions that can be leveled at a warrant (W) is, "[W]hy in general [should] this warrant be accepted as having authority?" (Toulmin, p. 103). Vincent’s final act in the discussion is his attempt to build the backing (B) for an ironclad warrant establishing that virtually everyone in the class supports 5 portfolio selections as a reasonable number. He attempts to do this in several steps. He stands and asks for a show of hands indicating how many people plan to make 3 selections. No hands are raised. Using this data (D), he builds his final warrant:

"... my point is when I said, "Everyone raise your hand for 3," no one raised it. So why do we have to do 3 things? Just [for] 1 person. We agree to do 4 things. Does anyone want to do 5 things?" (Vincent)

Vincent appears to have established an unequivocal warrant (W) in his goal of getting the class to agree that 5 is a reasonable number of selections. This is quite a strategic move, since he has eliminated what was perceived as the wide gap between 3 and 5 selections. Now he begins to
make his case for 5 selections. The class never does come to
closure on the number 5; things fall apart at this point.
Figure 3 shows the final version of the argument as it took
place in 3 stages.

The "selections" transcript provides a striking example
of students developing a complex argument around a central
issue. Because of its close relationship to Toulmin's (1958)
notion of arguments based on a model of jurisprudence, some
claim can also be made that this is an authentic argument.
The topic appears to have been important to many students,
and the outcome had a tangible effect on their lives. The
argument provides a window on students' thinking processes
and their socio-linguistic abilities to follow a line of
logic through to a group-constructed resolution. From a
Bakhtinian perspective, there can be little doubt that
students were listening closely to one another since
virtually all the utterances were linked in some way to the
central issue of a reasonable number of selections. Beyond
providing an example within a portfolio context of students
engaged in complex thinking, how does such an example relate
to other features and processes within the development of
classroom portfolios? In other words, was this argument a
freakish sort of occurrence that just happens to show a great
deal about how children reason and argue, or is this
structure of argumentation present within portfolios in other
significant ways?

Using Bakhtin's (1986) speech genre theory again, it can
be argued that this discussion was able to move quickly and
(D) **Data**

(D)#1 We have a list of 15+ projects for the class (Taylor, Mark L., Vincent)

(C) **Claim**

(C)#1.1 Five is a reasonable number of selections for every student (Scott)

(C)#1.2 Five should be the minimum and they should come from different areas (Mark L.)

(R) **Challenges/Rebuttals**

UNLESS

(R)#1 Some students work too slowly to have gotten all the assignments done (Dan M., Joe)

UNLESS

(R/R) They didn't get assignments done because they talked too much (Vincent)

(W) **Warrants**

SINCE

#1.1 Less than 5 selections would not meet a student-determined criteria for showing enough about yourself (unidentified student)

#1.2 So many projects have been completed, this assignment should be easy (Mark L.)

#1.3 People like me who have used their time well in class have all these assignments completed and will also be able to get their cards done in the same way. (Vincent)

------Indicates that discussion has moved to a different claim.

Figure 3--Final Version of the Selections Argument in Three Stages
(D) **Data**

(D)#2 Some students are having difficulty with 5 selections.

(Joe and Dan M.)

(C) **Claim**

SO

(C)#2 Three or fewer selections are acceptable.

(Teacher)

(W) **Warrants**

SINCE

(W)#2.1 Everyone will have some selections and the point is that everyone participates.

(W)#2.2 There don't appear to be any negative consequences if someone does only 3 selections.

(W)#2.3 Some people's work is considerably longer than others and should "count" as more than 1 selection.

(Teacher)

(D) **Data**

(D)#3.1 Two students say they may have trouble getting the work done.

(Joe and Dan M.)

(D)#3.2 The teacher said 3 or less things would be okay.

(Teacher)

(C) **Claim**

SO

(C)#3 We should have a sign-up sheet to allow students to pick the number they can get done.

(Scott)

(R) **UNLESS**

There isn't any evidence we need to do this.

(Vincent)

(W) **Warrant**

SINCE

Some people work hard but can't get all their assignments done.

(Joe)

**UNLESS**

The reason they don't have their assignments done is that they spent too much time talking.

(Vincent)

Figure 3--Continued
(D) **Data**

(D)#1 We have a list of 15+ projects for the class
(Taylor, Mark L., Vincent)

(C) **Claim**

(C)#1.1 Five is a reasonable number of selections for every student
(Scott)

(C)#1.2 Five should be the minimum and they should come from different areas
(Mark L.)

(W) **Warrants**

SINCE

(W)#1.4 You could do 1 card per day for five days.
(Rennita)

UNLESS

(R) We don't have enough time in class to write 5 "good cards"
(Carey)

(W)#1.5 Most students do not plan to do 3 selections, so why are we making our decision based on 1 person?
(Vincent)

(B) **Backing**

ON ACCOUNT OF

When we do a show of hands everyone in the class indicates they will do at least 4 selections
(Vincent)

---

Figure 3--Continued
interactively with little assistance needed from the teacher because it occurred within the familiar genre of "portfolio talk." All students in this context would have had a sizable base of shared understandings and experiences about portfolios from which to build their claims, data, warrants, and rebuttals. Unlike many rhetorical writing assignments, participation in the development of this dialogic argument required no research, just an active and creative use of information available to everyone in the room. When, for example, someone raises the shared understanding that portfolio "shows what you are like," the argument focuses on how that agreed upon norm for portfolios can best be shown. Another example of the shared understandings that students had available to them in the argument is the issue of "cards." A portion of the argument focused on 5-minute cards versus 20-minute cards. These were real-world examples that everyone in the class could understand.

This argument also highlights is how students determine their own standards within a portfolio process. At its heart, the argument is about what level of work/participation is adequate in the view of the participants: "What's good enough to constitute this thing we are calling "portfolio?" Portfolios involve selection and discrimination. The unstated question for individuals is, "How can I look at all the work and projects we have done in class and determine what to select?" Several guidelines come through in the warrants and claims:
It shouldn't be everything you worked on, in fact, students estimated that about a third of the that they had done should be selected for portfolio.

The work should be a broad sample of interests; the phrases "different" "different areas" "different subjects" were repeated at several points during the discussion.

The annotations should be "good cards" that you've taken your time on and written out thoughtful observations.

**Other Evidence of Warrants in Portfolio Processes**

An important question the "selections" transcript raises is whether the warranting process is unique to this conversation or could be seen functioning in other aspects of this portfolio implementation. In an exploratory discussion that preceded this line of analysis, Tierney (1994) observed that many self-evaluation decisions seem to involve small "cases" that students argue internally or perhaps with a classmate. This could mean, for example, that when students choose what goes into their portfolios, they might conduct self-contained versions of Toulmin-type arguments with claims, warrants, and data to support each selection. This hypothesis suggests the intriguing possibility that Toulmin's (1958) "layout of arguments" might fit, perhaps less obviously at first, other portfolio activities, particularly those that involve individual students in self-assessments. Such a structure might be evident, for example, during portfolio sharing sessions or on the annotation cards that students develop for each selection. We might see students looking at the the work they have produced as (D) data, making a (C) claim that particular pieces/projects are worthy of being included in their portfolios, and supporting this
decision based on (W) warrants, that is "bridging statements" about the quality of the work.

During the pilot study (1992-93), one of the recorded discussions captured the portion of the portfolio redesign session that dealt with "criteria." In my mind, this was supposed to be the articulation of the standards students were using to make judgments about how successful their work was. I expected the criteria to look rather like statements that might appear on a scoring rubric: the story has an intriguing lead, well-developed characters and a setting that is easy to visualize; the design of the project was innovative; the project was neatly and carefully implemented.

What the students offered in this discussion were statements that seemed more directed at answering the question, "How did this particular item get here?" In other words, what students nominated as criteria actually resemble the individual warrants that form the implicit bridge between a piece of work (data) and its claim of significance within the portfolio. Moreover, it is evident that some warrants can only be made in relation to another piece of work in the portfolio; this happened, for example, when a story written in the spring was compared to a story that had been written in the fall. In this transcript of the criteria discussion, instances of statements that might constitute warrants have been underlined:

601 Scott: [a facilitator] Anyway, kind of like the question we have to do today is what kind of things we would
want to put in our portfolio. Do they have to sound good, our best work or what? Or is it just something we dashed off at our desk? Rebecca?

602 Rebecca: Well I think that it has to be **pretty much** near perfect.

603 Scott: So near perfect [inaudible] Any other opinions? Benjamin?

604 Benjamin: Something you worked really hard on and stories you tried to make readable for people who don't know about the subject. Sarah?

605 Teacher: Scott, you might want to wait and give Benjamin M. [a facilitator] a chance to catch up with Benjamin B. Having worked as a recorder, [I know that] usually people get the words out faster than you can write them and sometimes you have to go back to Benjamin B. to get exactly what he said.

606 Benjamin B.: "To make the readers understand . . . ."

607 Scott: Sarah?

608 Sarah: Something that you worked really hard on.

609 Scott: [inaudible] Emily?

610 Emily: Well it doesn't have to be exactly perfect. Say you're just working on it at your desk. You think it's your best work, but it has a lot of spelling mistakes. It should show that if you want to put another thing in there to show that you have worked on your mistakes.

611 Scott: Kind of like lessons you've already learned.

[Two facilitators confer about what to write]

612 Teacher: Do you want to ask Emily to restate?

613 Scott: Yeah.

614 Emily: Well you're just working on it at your desk and well you try to do it over again when you fix your spelling mistakes. You should put both of them in there.

615 Teacher: Do you intend that it would be spelling only? Could it be beyond spelling?
Emily: No. It could be beyond spelling. If you have punctuation and maybe the story isn't correct—it doesn't make sense—and you put something in there that's better than that, that shows how you've learned from your mistakes.

[pause for writing]

Teacher: I think we need to work with this some more—ch, I see what you are doing. Emily, I think, makes a really good point and it's different from the point that it umm always has to be your best work. Because what she's saying [is] she would select is something where you could really show growth? [turns to Emily] Is that right?

Benjamin M.: Should I put that down?

Teacher: I think learn from your mistakes--

Benjamin M.: That's [inaudible]

Teacher: But to me that's a little bit different from "I picked it because it was almost perfect."

Benjamin B.: Um something you have a lot of details on? So...something with a lot details in it is probably your best work

Scott: [reading from chart] Something you've worked on to make readers understand.

Teacher: I think maybe the way to approach this is—what I'm starting to hear is that people have different ideas about why you would select things. Maybe what we want to do is capture what everybody says. The comment that Mike made about details, maybe everyone doesn't relate to that. Maybe they don't even think about that when they make their portfolio selections. But if he said that, that must be in the back of his mind when he's pulling things out, "I did a really nice job of developing this with detail."

Benjamin B.: Or my reading logs you sort of want to describe in details. So if you just write down [inaudible] it's not really details. It's not your best work.

Scott: Uh, I could kind of see that if you give like examples or something of that [inaudible] [pause for writing] Chrissy?

Chrissy: Well maybe a story that you've written that was one of your best—one that you've written a the beginning of the year and you just like how you wrote it
628 Scott: [inaudible conferring with Benjamin]

629 Teacher: So Chrissy, are you saying your standards might change over the year? You might have put something in in October that was really your favorite and it stays in there because it was your favorite in October?

630 Chrissy: Yeah.

631 Teacher: [reading what facilitators have written] I don't know if best work really captures what you're saying.

632 Chrissy: Well --

633 Scott: Change this?

634 Teacher: Or add to it. I was almost hearing you say sometimes you pick things just because they're your favorites. If you go back and compare them to other things you've done then maybe it really isn't your best work? Is that what you're saying or not? But it's a story that's just really a favorite of yours for some reason.

635 Benjamin M.: What should I put down?

636 Teacher: This is a hard thing to learn. You guys are learning how to facilitate, so your job is not to do the thinking. Your job is to capture what the speakers are saying. And sometimes when you are a facilitator--one of the reasons I was having you guys do it today is that I have a real tendency to say, "I think what we ought to say here is .." But I wanted to see what you guys would do with being facilitators for each other. So your job when you're the facilitator is to listen very intently to the speaker and figure out what the essence is of what they are saying. You can help them be more concise, you can go that direction, but pretty much once they've said something you're obligated to put it up there. So let's come back to Chrissy and see if we can get a statement that really represents what she's saying.

637 Chrissy: Well maybe you could say [pause] it doesn't have to be your best work. It just happens to be your favorite because you like how you wrote it.

638 Teacher: You sound like you have something in mind. Is there a particular piece you have in mind?

639 Chrissy: Well like my story, the gymnastics story that I started at the beginning of the year. Well that was my favorite, but now I like my Revolutionary story better than
that, because I took more time on it and it's better written because I have more details. I really thought about what I was writing.

640 Teacher: That makes a lot of sense to me. Your gymnastics story is kind of a sentimental favorite.

641 Scott: Rashi?

642 Rashi: Well um maybe it could be a piece that a lot of people gave comments on that they like even though it doesn't have to be one of the very best. It could be something that somebody else might think is real good.

643 Scott: Is it kind of like something that someone else likes that you don't really care for?

644 Rashi: Well it doesn't have to be that you don't care for it. [inaudible] just something that a lot of people like.

645 Scott: Outside pressure. Like someone else sitting there, "Oh yeah, that's good you should do this, this and this?"

646 Rashi: No. It's just like you finish a story and you show it somebody and they say it's real good, but you don't think it's one of you best pieces of work. It's just like something that you get a lot of comments from other people on.

647 Scott: Rebecca?

648 Rebecca: I also think if you put in one about an experience or something like a reading log or pictures of a trip that you went on, I think that the reason you put something like that in is because you enjoyed it. So I think that some of the decision of putting it in there reflects on if you went there, and you had a lot of fun. I think that really reflects on your putting it in the portfolio.

649 Scott: So--don't let me put words in your mouth--but is this when you had fun doing something, then you put down on paper that you like that better.

650 Rebecca: Um. Sometimes it just reflects on your [inaudible] Sometimes if you want to go somewhere or something and you have a lot of fun then that would definitely go in the portfolio because of what happened.

651 Scott: So that's kind of like reflection
Rebecca: Uh-huh. It depends. Some of the decision of what goes in your portfolio is that you actually did it.

Teacher: And you want to save the experience.

Shawna: Something that you're proud of--like your first piano piece or something.

Scott: Like your first something?

Shawna: Like your first really good story or something.

Scott: Like the first time you sat down and actually wrote good writing.

Shawna: Yeah. Just like something that you're proud of.

Teacher: Did our two facilitators get to give their ideas, because sometimes when your the facilitator you give that up.

Scott: I kind of thought well not like your first time and it's not like best work but it's something like a step up.

Benjamin B.: Isn't that kind of like learning from your mistakes?

Teacher: You want to add that to Emily's?

Scott: Well it's not like learning from your mistakes. It's like a step up.

[Several students talking]

Teacher: Okay well maybe it's not like learning from your mistakes, because Emily's kind of saying you would want the evidence so you could show the before and after.

Shawna: Kind of like going from first grade to second grade.

Scott: It's sort of like one kind of writing--

Benjamin: It's like what you want to do for selection. Beginning and end.

Teacher: Is it fair to say--I like your "Olde Sawmill." I see your Revolutionary War story--I don't know if it's a
step up, but it's sure a step in a different direction.

Scott: It's kind of like a taste of a new thing.

A way to test the hypothesis that the selection of items for portfolios involves the formation of warrants is to see if the statements and phrases that indicate how these students were deciding what went into their portfolios fits the data, claim, warrant frame: [See Figure 4]

(D) Data

(D)#1 Samples of projects, writing, and other activities

(C) Claim

(C)#1 This item should be selected for my portfolio

(D)#2 Definitions of portfolios established through introductory lessons, examples from the real world, and negotiations in sharing sessions

(W) Warrants

SINCE

#1 It's pretty much near perfect
#2 I worked really hard on it
#3 I tried to make it readable for someone who didn't know anything about the subject
#4 In comparing it to an earlier piece, it shows where I have worked on my mistakes
#5 It's something I put a lot of details into
#6 Even though it's not my best I like it because it represents me at a certain point in time
#7 It has more details, I took more time, I really thought about what I was writing
#8 Someone else gave it a lot of good comments
#9 It represents an experience I enjoyed
#10 I'm proud of it because it's something I did for the first time
#11 This represents a step up and a taste of a new thing for me

Figure 4--1992-93 Class's Criteria as Warrants
The following list contains the criteria that were developed in a similar redesign discussion that took place with the 1993-94 class: [See Figure 5]

(D) **Data**  
(D)#1 Samples of projects, writing, and other activities

(C) **Claim**  
(C)#1 This item should be selected for my portfolio

(D)#2 Definitions of portfolios established through introductory lessons, examples from the real world, and negotiations in sharing sessions

(W) **Warrants**  
SINCE
#1 It is my (very) best work  
(B) Backing  
It was not something that you just picked out because the card was easy to write

#2 It is something you spent a lot of time on  
#3 It is in final copy form  
#4 It is something that you're proud of  
#5 It is something you enjoyed working on  
#6 It is in good shape (not crumpled up)  
#7 It has well thought-out (cards) detailed  
#8 It is what you think is good work  
#9 It is a personal goal  
#10 It is something that represents yourself

Figure 5--1993-94 Class Criteria as **Warrants**
Virtually everything that was nominated in this discussion as a criterion fits into Toulmin's (1958) argument framework as a warrant. These statements all have the tone of reasons or justifications. There is one important difference between the two sets of warrants, however. Each of the warrants developed by students in the 1992-93 class is personalized. Based on my knowledge of the students represented in these transcripts, I can recall the particular work the student had in mind when he/she articulated a warrant. There was also a parsimony in the way these warrants were generated. Although there might have been several warrants or criteria they could have given for a piece, students tended to pick the most salient feature about the work to serve as the warrant. Intuitively, they seemed to be building the strongest case possible for their works. The second list provides strong justifications as well, however, the warrants seem to be more generic standards.

The following transcript offers an illustration of the warrant-construction process at the level of an individual student. This is Mark F., in November, 1993, as he shares his portfolio selections with the class for the first time. Again, warrant-type statements have been underlined:

Mark F.: This is my portfolio and this is my best math paper that I had 100% on. And I worked very hard to get all the right answers on this.
And this is one of my best reading logs that I had to think a lot on and the book was The River that I had to do it
on.

This is the story I just finished--yesterday and it's a story "I worked very hard on to finish and PUBLISH." This is the draft and this is the final copy of it. It's [called] "The Clearing."

This is my best science log that I spent a lot of time recopying and having all the parts to it.

And this picture is of my jackdaw [project], but it didn't come out too well.

These statements from an individual student can also be analyzed for their ability to fit into Toulmin's (1958) data, claim, warrant frame: [See Figure 6]

(D) Data
(D)#1 Samples of projects, writing, other activities

(C) Claim
(C)#1 This particular item should be selected for my portfolio

(D)#2 Definitions of portfolios established through introductory lessons, examples from the real world, and negotiations in sharing sessions

(W) Warrants
(Since)
#1 I worked really hard to get all the answers right (indicates correctness and effort)

#2 I had to think a lot on this

#3 I worked hard to publish this

(B) Backing
Here are the rough draft and final copy

#4 I worked hard to recopy it and get all required parts done

#5 (A warrant for the jackdaw project was not given.)

Figure 6--Mark F.'s Annotation Card Statements as Warrants
In returning to the selections that were suggested for the initial sharing session in Mark F.'s class, it is possible to see some relationships between the categories for selections and how Mark F. has developed his warrants:

1. A POLISHED WORK or PROJECT, something that makes you look grown up.
2. Your best READING LOG.
3. Something that shows an INTELLIGENCE other than verbal or mathematical.
4. An example of GOOD THINKING or PLANNING.

The "polished", "grown-up" work is undoubtedly the published story. He documented this feature in his portfolio selection by including rough draft and final copy and mentioning these specifically in his warrant. The warrant he offers for "best reading log" helps him cover the category of "good thinking" as well.
PART THREE

Case Studies

Introduction

The final portion of this study focuses primarily on the question, "How do portfolios work?" by looking at case studies of two individual students for evidence of change and growth that might be attributed to participation in the portfolio process.
CHAPTER VII
CONSOLIDATION: INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES
WITHIN PORTFOLIO PROCESSES

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on tracing the thinking of individuals as they experience the portfolio process. Previous analyses in this study have focused on establishing a situated perspective (Resnick, 1991) for portfolios. This perspective suggests that, "Only by understanding the circumstances and the participants' construal of the situation can a valid interpretation of the cognitive activity be made" (Resnick, 1991, p.4). Thus far, the data have indicated that a group construction of portfolio is negotiated over time. Data also suggest that the development of individual portfolios is likely to revolve around the selection of "best works" supported by personally determined, often unique warrants (Toulmin, 1958) or standards and the capacity of portfolio to tell one's story (See Allen's portfolio, CHAPTER III, Episode 1). There is also evidence that the language and culture-building activities surrounding portfolios provide opportunities that may encourage the development of reasoning processes (Kuhn, 1992) and the emergence of a voice capable of speaking for self and others (Bakhtin, 1986).
In moving to the case studies, there is a sense that opportunities to negotiate ideas, to engage in authentic, dialogic conversations, and to select, reflect upon, and organize a body of one's own work should produce discernible changes within individual learners. One preliminary caution that might be drawn from previous analyses in this study is that the unpredictable features of individual speakers in dialogic situations may carry over into the development of individual portfolios. Complex, contextualized interactions affected the opportunities available to individual speakers in portfolio discussions. It seems probable that these same shifting contexts might also interact with the characteristics of each individual to produce portfolios that are as different as they are alike.

The temptation to make the study of growth in individuals an "objective" (positivistic) evaluation of the products contained in portfolios is strong. Comparing students with one another, rank ordering their work, and applying "standards" to the items within the portfolio might be a way to demonstrate that portfolios foster "superior" work. But, as it turns out, in the investigation of individual cases, the meanings of portfolios are not always straightforward. It takes an immersion in the characteristics of the individual before one can even begin to map out what might count as "growth." Just as individuals remain situated in the group, portfolios themselves remain connected to their creators either explicitly or implicitly.

Bruner's work (1991) serves to reinforce the importance
of this connection. If portfolio is a "constructed" experience, then the frame of reference for case studies must be the constructed self: "In the distributive sense, then, the Self can be seen as a product of the situation in which it operates, the 'swarms of its participations,' as Perkins puts it" (Bruner, 1991, p. 109). A study of individuals and their portfolios is assumed to be multi-dimensional and requires the same careful chipping away of layers that examinations of the larger portfolio culture demand. In this process, it is impossible to ignore the uniquely constructed Self at the center of each portfolio.

The two students who have been selected for case study profiles are quite different in their characteristics as learners. Shalendra would be considered a high academic achiever by most people's standards. Her grades in school were consistently high. She had been identified as an academically gifted student; this determination was made through norm-referenced tests of school ability. She experienced high parental expectations to do well in school. It was common, for example, for her to appear distressed if she missed a question on a test.

Shalendra's written work revealed fluency in her ability to generate ideas and to think well on paper. Her work also demonstrated a sophisticated control of the conventions of written English. She read widely and deeply and was capable of following intricate plots like those in Jacques's (1990) Mattimeo. Her reading logs revealed a high degree of engagement and mature interpretations of her readings.
Vincent, a student of equal complexity, had some puzzling characteristics as a learner. In conventional academic rankings comprised of tests scores and grades in academic subjects, he would appear average or somewhat above, but not gifted. His reading test scores placed him in the bottom half of this particular class. Vincent's parents expected him do well in school and would, in fact, have liked him to try harder on many of his assignments. They found it somewhat difficult to motivate him to improve his school work, however. His comment on this issue to his mother (who is a teacher) was, "Why should I try harder? A B is a good grade isn't it?" While Vincent did not often show signs of outward distress if he made mistakes, he could react emotionally if learning was not coming as easily as he expected it to. As a fourth-grade student he could often be observed out in the hall for a "time out" period. Once in mathematics he engaged in series of behaviors that disrupted the lesson. When I questioned him, he replied that he already knew all about the topic we were studying, and he was "bored." In fact, he wasn't understanding the concepts at all, as a later assessment revealed. It appeared that he felt this particular topic should come easily to him. He was reluctant to admit this publicly, so he invented a strategy to get the help from me that he needed.

Vincent's written texts were a mixture of characteristics. His oral language was sophisticated, yet he lacked much of the control of written conventions that would be expected of a fifth grader. Spelling was a major problem
in his daily work; his spellings were largely phonetic encodings that could be understood most easily when the text was read aloud. At the same time, he was capable of developing the ideas in his writing fairly well. He was able to revise the substance of his texts, but the final process of editing and preparing work for publication seemed to daunt him. Handwriting difficulties combined with large percentages of unconventional spellings within each text made final copy work arduous for him. Reading was something of a struggle for Vincent, too. He read very slowly. One of the goals he articulated for himself was to be able to "read faster." His chief and frequently stated ambition was to design aircraft and ships for the military.

**Case Study #1: Finding the Meaning in the Doing**

This first transcript shows Shalendra in November, 1993, sharing her portfolio selections for the first time. She is reading her annotation cards for various selections, which gives an initial sense of both how she is thinking and the kinds of work she considers important:

701 Shalendra: This is a science log. "I picked this science log because I worked really hard on it. Actually it was pretty fun. We did a lot of research, Taylor and I. We went back and forth and back forth collecting information. I was relieved when it was finally done."

Okay, this is my saber-toothed tiger plan. "I picked this work, because we planned very carefully what size it would be and what color. What size fangs we should make and et cetera."

This is a letter [reading log written as a letter to the teacher]. "The reason I put this letter is because I put some of my personality in it. I felt really moved and emotional when I read my book. It was like I was the girl in the story. I felt the same hatred for the Nazis as she did,
and I was helpless that I could not be saved."

702 Carey: What book was that? What book was that?

703 Shalendra: The Devil's Arithmetic [Yolen, 1988]. My Battleship Board [a math strategy game]. "I did this Battleship Board because I thought when I was doing it that it was fun doing it. I also put it in because I like math. It was easy to work on because you don't get a grade on it."

[student laughter]

"I chose this time line because it was really fun doing it and the original picture was so neat I thought it would be good to do. I was happy that we finally got it done."

704 Carey: What did you do that on? What did you do that on?

705 Shalendra: What? This was our time line.

706 Carey: What was the time line on?

707 Taylor: You did the Incas didn't you?

708 Shalendra: Yeah [inaudible] "I chose this picture [saber-toothed tiger] because we worked really hard on it. I missed some of the sessions because I was at LEAP. I chose this because it was fun to do." Oh, and I have a card for my Ice Age story, but it's not done yet.

709 Student: Read it! Read it!

710 Shalendra: [Shakes head indicating "No."] Rennita?

711 Rennita: Okay, I liked the way, on your Devil's Arithmetic thing, I liked the way you talking about your emotions and how you felt in the story. You felt like you was the girl and you couldn't get out and stuff. I thought that was good.

712 Shalendra: Carey?

713 Carey: I thought it was neat how you put your animal--the picture of your animal--in there because it didn't look like it looks out there [in the hall]. It looks better out there. I really thought it was good.

[Another student and the teacher respond.]
The next set of transcripts looks at Shalendra in June, 1994, after an entire school year of involvement in portfolio processes:

Shalendra has arranged selections for the entire year in chronological order with this one exception from January:

714 Shalendra: This is our language arts test/CBE thing that we actually were guinea pigs on sort of, and I didn't really have a card for it, but I can sort of explain why I put it in. I put it in because because it was fun the first time—-the first time. The second time wasn't as fun, but I think it was fun because you could really choose anything you wanted that fit the category. So I liked it.

[She moves on to November's selections. Because she is reading from her annotation cards the transcript is nearly identical to the November session. This transcript picks her up as she is sharing her March selections.]

715 Shalendra: This is the second semester--March. "This is a science log. I was really relieved when this was done because I don't like science that much and I thought I would get a bad grade because I didn't understand it. It was pretty hard working on it because I got sort of confused on some of the questions."

This is a brochure for our Fifth Grade Open House. And "I put this brochure in because I was on the committee that wrote it [inaudible] and I think that it's my good work. I think that it was quite hard working on it because, we first had to write it then revise and edit it. We had to work together as a team. All the hard work paid off in the end."

This is my Invisible Man reading log. "I enjoyed working on this log because I was at the climax of my book, The Invisible Man. I felt really relieved when I was finally finished because I had so much to write and so little time."

This is my Puritan homework. And . . . . I said, "I felt sort of like I knew what the Puritans felt like and how they felt about things. I picked this because I thought the Puritans were very interesting because of their utter infatuation with religiousness."

And these are my Showcase things. This is my Devil's Arithmetic log. "The reason I picked this letter is because I put some of my personality into it. I really felt emotional when I read this book. It was like I was with the girl in the story. Like I felt the same hatred for the Nazis that she did."

This is my LEAP [gifted program] mock trial script. "I put this in because I enjoyed what we were working on in
LEAP. I learned a lot of different things about law.

This [picture] is my Time Machine extension. I picked this extension and plan because I enjoyed working on the book, The Time Machine. I think this is the best extension I've done this year. I learned how H.G. Wells interprets the future on his views of the evolution of man.

This card represents my Tasmanian devil report, but it's like now in the CBE [competency based education] folder thing. And, "I really enjoyed doing this. That's why I picked it. The Tasmanian devil is such an uncommon animal and so interesting to study; I felt really happy when I was finished."

My social studies . . . my social studies thing I did with Janelle and Taylor. It says, "I chose this time line because I thought it was really fun working on it. The original picture was really the Incas"--I did the Incas—the original picture was really interesting. I learned a lot about the Incas. It felt really inspiring."

This is my biography--I didn't write a card for it, I don't think—but I put it in because it tells about me [inaudible].

This is my Jump-Rope-for-Heart thing [certificate]. I put it in because I feel like helping the people who have like cardiovascular disease.

And this is my editing quiz and "I picked this because it really shows my improvement in learning and editing and I feel like a real editor editing someone else's paper."

Our Science and Technology Open House and "I put this in because Science and Technology is one of the major things we do in fifth grade and it was sort of hard getting prepared for it, but the night was really fun.

My Revolutionary War time line . . . and "I put this in because it was fun to work on. It was easy finding facts for the events you did. It was easy working on it. The events were important."

And this is our Showcase booklet. "I picked this because it was such a major event involving us this year. It was a lot of hard work. I enjoyed working on it a lot especially the talent show."

Students who were involved in the de-briefing interviews now responded to the selections that Shalendra had shared.

This was also the format we followed in our classroom portfolio sharing sessions.

716 Taylor: I really liked what you put in there and all that you put in there and all the major things that [inaudible]
717 Vincent: I think you write longer cards than a lot of people do.

718 Shalendra: [laughs and shrugs shoulders]

719 Teacher: Why do you suppose that is?

720 Shalendra: Me? Because, well the things I put in here I really did enjoy. I want to like convey to people why I actually put the things in there.

721 Vincent: [inaudible] cards [inaudible]

722 Elizabeth: At the beginning of the year you didn't use big words but your cards almost sounded [inaudible] but at the end of the year you used bigger words . . . . I like your cards a lot because you don't just put, "I picked this because it was fun to work on," and maybe one other thing. You've got a lot of sentences on your card.

723 Jackie: [inaudible]

724 Teacher: I want to pick up on Elizabeth's question about the shift in vocabulary. Were you aware of that? Or--

725 Shalendra: At the beginning of the year I wasn't really keen on doing the cards. I didn't really like doing cards. And the things that I picked were towards the easier side. They were pretty easy to do. So I just decided I can write easy words for easy things. Towards the end of the year, I picked harder things that I worked on, like The Time Machine one and I felt like I should use big words to describe what it feels like so . . .

726 Teacher: Were you aware that you were doing that or not?

727 Shalendra: Um . . .

728 Teacher: Or are we just now--asking it, does that make you more aware of it?

729 Shalendra: I really didn't notice it. I put bigger words because I thought-----um------I never used to get the chance to use them ---so these kinds of things [waves her copy of Showcase booklet]-----uh------uh--I can't get it [bends head down then looks up] sort of made me do the bigger words.

730 Teacher: Is it an opportunity issue?
Shalendra: Yeah. Opportunity—that’s what the word was I was looking for [points for emphasis].

Teacher: Um------You're expressing you had a change in attitude toward portfolio, or not? Is that accurate?

Shalendra: No! I always liked portfolio. The questions were different, so I sort of responded differently. Like it says, "What did you feel like?" I didn't really---- See for easier things, you don't really feel like anything big. So I just put, "I feel good," or something like little words or stuff. I always liked portfolio. It was—the easier things, never like brought like--------the questions that I answered wasn't really a challenge to me so...

Teacher: Can you talk a little bit about how you define "easier?" You say you can identify the things that you selected were easier. And then you have some things in there that are, for lack of a better word, "harder." What's the difference in your thinking? What's the difference?

Shalendra: For instance, reading logs. At the beginning of the year, I did this Devil's Arithmetic and that wasn't a really hard book. So I just wrote a simple card for it. towards the end I read Time Machine and Invisible Man and I didn't know how hard they were until I read them, and then I sort of knew what I should put on my cards. That I should express my feelings like hard and easy. Do--At the beginning the year, I didn't want challenges. I didn't like challenges. I just thought just put in what I liked and that's basically what I should put in. But sort of like at the end--at like in the middle of the year, I decided to put in more challenging things even if I--------more challenging things, because they appeal more to me.

Teacher: Do you know why you started to change? Why those began to appeal to you more? Do you have a sense for that?

Shalendra: I don't know------I think--------

Teacher: Let me ask you one more question: Does this happen every year? Or is this the first year this has happened?

Shalendra: This is probably the first year because last year I was like, "No big deal, I want easy work, I want easy work." But this year at the beginning of the year I didn't feel any pressure. It's just like, "I'm done with this!"
I'm done with my homework and I go home and I [inaudible] my time. And my mom sort of yells at me, "You do easy things. Why don't you do something that's hard, that's challenging?" And I go, "Because I don't want to do any work!" So but later on I felt like these easier things were sort of boring and I wanted something that was harder and I could do more thinking working on it.

740 Teacher: So how did you pick something that was harder? I mean how did you know, "Well this ought to be a challenge!"?

741 Shalendra: Well The Time Machine I thought would be a challenge because I saw the movie and their language was well sort of different from ours. So I thought maybe this would be an interesting book to read. I read Pride and Prejudice and that was sort of hard for me to understand because the language is different and I thought it would be different for me to figure out what they were saying. The Invisible Man was sort of hard because he uses scientific terms, H.G. Wells uses scientific terms for different things he was saying. So I sort of analyzed what he was saying.

742 Teacher: For you, what was the reward for picking things that were more challenging?

743 Shalendra: Well ... I think when I look back I can see--Well I'm glad that I changed because then I could broaden my horizons sort of---I can see---harder things sort of help because then when you go on to higher grades you're more prepared for more harder things-----Like if you go---I'm now in fifth grade and if I read harder books now, I'll be used to what they give in sixth grade. Like if they give you a hard book I'll be used to it because I've already read harder books.

744 Teacher: Where does portfolio fit with what you've been talking about?

745 Shalendra: Portfolio is like sort of when I come back like a recollection of what I used to be like and [I can see] if I still would be like this. And I think it's really a reward, because if you really have a change you can see what your interests were when you were smaller and how is it has affected you when you are older. And I think portfolio is a thing that you should do because it sort of makes the child feel proud of what they've done and what they have achieved . . .

Well I think [stops to reflect for moment] Okay, okay! You can see--portfolio is good because you can see you shouldn't have been this way and you'll never make that mistake again.
When you look back on it you'll say, "Oh, this is how I did in fifth grade. I'll make sure I never do that again." So it sort of helps you not make choices like trying to go the easy way and stuff.

746 Teacher: Shalendra, I did want to ask you, your order for your portfolio is different from the order in which you selected them. Was there anything conscious about the order? Was there a design to the way you presented today?

747 Shalendra: Yeah. I started with the beginning and then I did semester by semester and then I did Showcase [gallery exhibit all students participate in at end of year].

748 Teacher: What threw me was that you started with language arts CBE [materials for district competency based education folder].

749 Shalendra: Well, it's sort of like when you see language arts, it's sort of like, you think that sort of this person likes language arts and I do, so I wanted people to see that I like language arts. Language arts is my--I like the subject language arts.

750 Teacher: You said earlier that it was fun to do the test the first time (January pilot test)? Why was it more fun taking it the first time?

751 Shalendra: Oh! The second time---the first time it wasn't really a test, so I didn't get the test anxiety that I usually get when I take a test. Even if it's the easiest test, I still get nervous. The first time I didn't really have the idea that it was a test and the second time I knew this was the test and if I bombed it it would matter. I kind of liked the first one better because we were---it didn't really matter what grade we got on it.

**Interpretation**

In his autobiographical studies, Bruner (1991) talks about "reinforcing themes" that run through the family narratives that his subjects created. In one such theme, for example, everyone in the family fit their narratives around the idea that home was pitted against a "real world" which was tough and required "street smarts."
In a similar way, each case study student seemed build a particular theme or themes through his or her portfolio. Another way to look at this issue is to ask: For what purpose(s) is this student using the portfolio? In Shalendra's case, a main purpose/theme seems to be the creation of a psychological space in which she can begin to make her decisions for herself as a learner.

Although the de-briefing interview might suggest that she accomplished this purpose independent of other learners, the equilibrium she seems to have achieved rests very much on her interactions with others and what she learns as a participant in this class. The following transcript is excerpted from a discussion that took place at the end of the school year when the entire class was preparing to do final portfolio selections. Students seemed to be in a reflective mood and spent some time mapping out how their selection processes had changed as they moved through the year. This segment suggests Shalendra's active consideration of others' ideas and experiences and the influence that her thinking may have had on other students.

Shalendra: I have something to say about--remember how you said it has to be--not you specifically--but I sort of have gotten the idea that the items that should be in portfolio have to be in final copy. I think that it doesn't matter how--it should be presented like-----I mean---[pause]

Teacher: I would choose that word.

Shalendra: ---Generally, overall, good, but it doesn't have to be "final" because it doesn't have to look good for you to like it. What if it's like your best reading log and it's in shambles because it's old? But you feel it's your best and you want to put it in. But you want to keep it like it is, because you remember how you used to write and how old it
was. And it's like putting in your outline for your animal intelligence story. You don't want to put it in because—I mean you want to put it in because you like it and stuff and you want to see what corrections you made. And you want to see how you sort of, sort of [pause]-----Like some people put in their outlines because they wanted to see their sloppy copy before their real copy so they could see like [pause]. They liked their outline better than their report because they--this was like their draft and they really had their main, their first ideas without any editing and what they really thought was in their first copy.

Teacher: I want to support what you are saying because my rough drafts are always harder than my final drafts. If you want to look at hard work, look at my outline.

Joe: I like my rough draft better than my final copy [inaudible] I don’t really like writing final copies because it’s boring. All I did was just copy from something where I have all my ideas written down [inaudible]

Shalendra's participation in portfolios, however, was also governed by her personal characteristics. She was always in a delicate balance between her roles as speaker (Bakhtin, 1986), which became more pronounced during the year, and addressee (Bakhtin, 1986), a role which for her was marked by unusual sensitivity. Like many bright female students (Freeman, 1991), Shalendra had difficulties if she made what she perceived to be "errors." There were several incidents with academic work in which she cried because she had "made stupid mistakes" that she was afraid she would have to explain to someone. In the de-briefing interview transcript, she describes herself as having "test anxiety." There were also two instances in which teasing from other students reduced her to tears. These episodes contrasted with the sunny, charitable personality she displayed most of the time. Freeman (1991) also associates unusual empathy
with very bright individuals. Shalendra's response to her reading of *The Devil's Arithmetic* and her ability to identify with the Puritans' world view suggest a high level of empathy.

Evidence that much of Shalendra's portfolio effort involved mapping out what should "count as important" exists in both the selections she makes and the *warrants* she gives for her selections on her annotation cards. She made 5 selections in November: a science log done with her lab partner, a plan for a full-sized representation of a saber-toothed tiger—a group project, a reading response log for *The Devil's Arithmetic*, a game board made to use with a math game the whole class played, and a time line project in the Incas—a group project. Here are the summaries of her *warrants*:

Science Log: (partner)
- Hard work
- Fun [relieved]
- Lot of research (back and forth) done

Saber-toothed Cat (group)
- Planned the sizes and color
- [backing] size of fangs

Reading Log (individual)
- Put personality into it

Battleship Board (individual w/ class)
- Fun
- Easy
- Likes math
- No grade given

Inca Time Line (group)
- Fun
- "Neat" original picture

Shalendra herself admitted in the de-briefing interview
that she wasn't really certain about the purpose of portfolios after the introductory lesson. Even her initial choices (claims) and warrants, however, might be seen as experiments in defining what her portfolio could become. In November, for 3 out of 5 selections, "fun" is used as a warrant; fun is not an unusual criterion for many students, as earlier discussions of the cultural norms in this study indicate. But the choice is somewhat surprising for a student like Shalendra, who is seen by classmates as a "brain." She sounds exactly like everyone else in class; and in retrospect, she may have created this impression by design. Only 1 of the selections represents her own independent work. The Science Log and Battleship Board are perhaps the most interesting selections here. She notes on her card that she was "relieved" to have the science lab and log completed. In interpreting the Battleship Board selection, it is important to note the other options Shalendra had available to select from in mathematics. The grades recorded in my grade book for first quarter indicate 10 of her assignments received grades of 100% on them. Not only does she select something in mathematics that is ungraded, but she uses this ungraded feature as a warrant to justify its inclusion in the portfolio. This leaves the impression that she is trying to create some space for herself in which she can take some risks.

She has 10 additional selections that were made at various times during the remainder of the year. These selections and their warrants are listed chronologically:
March

Open House Brochure (group)
   My good work
   Difficult
   (Backing) We had to write, revise, and edit
   (Conclusion) We had to work as a team

Science Assignment on Stars (individual)
   Experienced relief
   (Backing) Don't like science
   Confused while doing this assignment
   Worried about getting bad grade

Invisible Man Reading Log (individual)
   Enjoyed because had so much to write regarding climax
   Felt relieved because of time pressures

This set of selections is supported by a mixture of warrants that vary in their complexity. First, it is important to notice that "fun" as a general criterion is used less often. All these warrants seem more limited and focused on the specific features of the selections. The reading log, for example, captures the difficulty of writing about a complicated and exciting climax to a story. Probably the most complicated warrant exists in the annotation developed for the Open House Brochure. This constitutes a complete, self-contained argument:

(D) Data

Here's a brochure my committee wrote

(C) Claims

It should be a selection

(W) Warrants

#1 It represents my hard work
#2 It was difficult
   (Backing)
   We had to write edit and revise
   We had to work as a team
Conclusion: When you look at the finished product, you can see that all the hard work paid off.

The warrant for the Science Assignment on Stars is similar to earlier ones in that it expresses "relief" over its completion and concern that a desirable letter grade might not be achieved. The Invisible Man warrant marks Shalendra's commitment to reading more "challenging" books, which she articulates later in the de-briefing interview. This warrant may reflect this aspect of growth as much as it documents "enjoyment."

In analyzing the data, I expected to see the nature of the warrants Shalendra developed for portfolio selections change over time. In the March sample, this is generally true, although the changes are not as dramatic as I might have predicted. However, the strongest and most authoritative warrants in Toulmin's (1958) sense were ones she developed for audiences outside the classroom. These warrants, developed in letters to the readers of her two competency test efforts (January and May) and the description of her personal Showcase display at the end of the year have a very unequivocal tone (voice) to them. [See Appendix A--Examples S.1 and S.2 and Figure 7--Other Warrants]

This discovery, however, reiterates the importance of looking at the evolving purposes of her portfolio, and the audiences she perceives for this work. I think particularly given the "low risk" nature of the selections and warrants in the first sharing session, that it can be inferred that one of her important audiences is her classmates. However, as
she progresses through the year, other important audiences appear to emerge and influence her efforts.

May
Puritan Homework (individual)
   Able to put self in place of Puritan
   (thoughts, feelings)
   Attracted to Puritans’ “utter infatuation” with religion

LEAP [gifted program] Mock Trial Script (group)
   Learned about law
   Enjoyed

Tasmanian Devil Report (partner)
   Enjoyed studying uncommon and interesting animal

Showcase Biography (individual)
   Tells about me

   The audience of chief importance for this set of selections, I believe, has become Shalendra herself. This can be verified by identifying those groups or individuals she is not addressing. It is not likely that the most immediate audience for her portfolio is her parents; her choices do not fit with the pattern of responses she exhibited to family goals of achieving high test scores. She isn’t addressing outside audiences at this point because, as later analysis will suggest, she uses a different voice. And, most significantly, she has started making language choices that may actually distance her from her classmates. The critical selection to examine here is the Puritan Homework assignment. First, she says she can understand the Puritan point of view. Second, she describes them as having an ‘utter infatuation with their religiousness.” Writing on this topic and in this manner to share your ideas with your fifth-grade classmates
is taking a big risk.

That her March selections and warrants set her apart from other students can be documented in two ways. First, at the time of the sharing, one of the responses she received was, "I really liked your cards, but I didn't understand a word you said." Second, in the de-briefing interview Elizabeth raised the same point in a different way by noting how at a certain point Shalendra had begun to use "bigger words." It is important to understand that Shalendra is a student who responded intensely to judgments from peers. On one of the mornings that she was in tears, her father had reprimanded some boys at her bus stop for throwing rocks at cars. She was deeply upset because classmates who had witnesses this incident said her father was "mean." As her comments in the de-briefing interview indicate, she continued through until the end of the year with her strategy of taking on more complicated readings and projects and trying to develop appropriate responses to them. I believe the primary audience for her portfolio continues to be Shalendra herself.

June
Jump-Rope for Heart Certificate (group activity)
   Shows my commitment to helping people with cardiovascular disease

Revolutionary War Illustrated Time Line (individual)
   Easy to find events
   Fun
   Events themselves were important

Showcase Booklet* (individual exhibit)
   Major event for entire fifth grade
   Hard work
   Enjoyed
Fifth Grade Talent Showcase Exhibit

Fifth-Grade Talent Showcase is an annual exhibit of student work and talents. Each child constructs a personal display of significant work and interests. Artifacts for the display may come from school assignments or interests developed outside of school. For example, students often bring in trophies they have won in dance or sports. Shalendra wrote the following description of her display. This description, her biography, and a program for a live talent show appear in the Showcase Booklet:

My Exhibits:

1. My reading log for The Devil's Arithmetic. I really enjoyed this book. It was really emotional.

2. My Tasmanian Devil report. This was my first real research report using cards and references. It is very important to me. I worked really hard on it.

3. My social studies project. I put this in because this was my very first social studies project. Mine was on the Incas. It was very fun working with my friends.

4. This is my Time Machine jackdaw. I put this in because I think it is the best jackdaw I have done this year. The Time Machine was a superb book. It was fun to work on.

5. My coin and mummy. I put these things in because it was fun working on them and because Mrs. C.[art teacher] put them in the art show.

6. My ABC Murders story. I chose this because I really liked this story and wrote it with my friend.

7. My Jump-Rope for Heart Certificate. I selected this because I care about people and curing heart disease.

8. My LEAP script. I chose some of my LEAP work because I want something outside of class to be here and I really like the project.

(Underlined phrases indicate warrants)

Figure 7--Other Warrants
There are several ways in which this portfolio documents growth in metacognitive processing. Shalendra appears to develop more skill selecting examples to show specific aspects of her work and in making appropriate and limited warrants for these examples. Although the strongest examples are developed for audiences outside the portfolio, her portfolio work might be viewed as offering practice in how to make these stronger warrants and show the roots of these stronger more public warrants.

In returning to the dominant theme of how Shalendra has constructed a psychological space for herself, her portfolio seems to reveal a learner taking control of her intellectual life. Shalendra is able to take ideas and support from peers, teacher, and family, and at the same time to make her own choices about what she should study and how it might be evaluated. As a younger student, she viewed school and by extension learning as a series of procedures to be followed. Shalendra observed in the de-briefing interview that one of her primary motivations in school had always been to do things well enough to avoid "getting in trouble." This sense that learning experiences were beyond her control and could go wrong in disastrous ways is less evident in her portfolio work and her comments over time. Bruner (1986) notes the importance of such shifts in a student's stance toward learning:

Language not only transmits, it creates or constitutes knowledge or "reality." Part of that reality is the stance that the language implies toward knowledge and reflection, and the generalized
set of stances one negotiates creating in time a sense of one's self. Reflection and "distancing" are crucial aspects of achieving a sense of the range of possible stances—a metacognitive step of huge impact. The language of education is the language of culture creating, not of knowledge consuming or knowledge acquisition alone. (p. 132)

Exploring the question, "How do portfolios work?" from an individual perspective revealed several surprises: First, items selected by this student for her portfolio were not always "best works," but rather were chosen because they best accomplished the student's purpose at a particular point in time. The purposes themselves seemed to change over time and were influenced somewhat what the evolving portfolio culture within the classroom. Such selections were not, then, works that demonstrated "competence" for external accountability demands. This finding parallels Dyson's (1994) work that challenges the assumption in process writing curriculum that the primary purpose students have for writing is to convey a message that "makes sense" for an external audience. This classroom portfolio was developed to fit the needs of the student within a particular context and time.

Second, although one might expect to look at students' annotation cards and get clear and stable indicators of metacognitive growth, in fact, the annotations the student wrote were situated and responded to such influences perceived audience; in this case the more distant the perceived audience, the more precise, detailed, and authoritative the metacognitive judgments about the work were. Thus, in this case study warrants developed for
different audiences appear to have different degrees of power.

Third, this student's portfolio documented a process of establishing personal goals for learning. The portfolio may have supported this process by providing public and private opportunities to declare what kinds of learning are significant.

Case Study #2: A Determined Autobiographer

This is the transcript of Vincent's November, 1993, portfolio sharing:

[This segment was difficult to transcribe; Vincent is barely audible in many segments; the quality of his voice is quite different later in the year, most notably in the "selections" transcript.]

7701 Vincent: These are some pictures and art work that I've done [inaudible]. I like to do a lot of drawing . . . project I did--my mummy and another project I did. I like to draw and [inaudible].

This is my story that we did--my Ice Age story--and I put it in here because it's one of the longest and the best that I think I've ever done.

This is my poem that I did and I like writing and this is my first poem that I've ever done, and so I put it in here.

These are my two best reading logs that I did and they're on Hatchet (Paulsen, 1987). I think one of em's on the book and one is on Hatchet the movie.

This is a letter to Queen Elizabeth. I wrote to her and I just finished yesterday and I'm going to send it to her today.

This is my planning for our social studies projects that we did out in the hall and I put it in here because I had to first of all for planning and also because I like to draw.

This is some notes and stuff that Mrs. Fenner gave to me--things that [inaudible]--things like that and I put it in here because I want to remember [inaudible] when I leave this school to go to the next one.

That's my portfolio.

Tony?
Tony: I like how you made the drawings.

Vincent: Thank you. George?

George: I like how you put a lot of stuff in.

[Teacher responds.]

This next transcript is part of the de-briefing interview conducted at the conclusion of the portfolio process:

Teacher: Do you have your selections arranged in the order you want to present them?

Vincent: I don't think there's any difference if I present one thing first or last.

Teacher: That's fine. That tells us something about how you think about your portfolio.

Vincent: It's in my portfolio, so you're going to hear it sooner or later. [inaudible] the way Shalendra did hers by like what, sessions?

Shalendra: Yeah, and then I did Showcase.

Teacher: There would be a lot of different ways to organize your portfolio. That's what I was curious about.

Vincent: I think probably a lot of my things are in folders... Uh, lost the card... let's see, this is a picture of me and George and a report on Roanoke. Um, I don't know if you can see it. This is a picture of a boat I drew... This is a make-up social studies homework assignment that I did that I got 100%. I put it in there to fill up space [smiles]. This is my egg drop and Indy banana car with George's messy desk. I put these in my portfolio because these are notes from Mrs. Fenner to me. [inaudible] Tony kept taking them off the side of my desk so I put them in my portfolio.

These are my Showcase cards [special annotation cards done for the exhibit] and I put them in here because I worked hard on them and because it's from my Showcase [exhibit]. These are some art work and projects I've done. The first one is my first jackdaw [book extension project] I did on
**Hatchet.** It was good until Daniel stepped on it. This was my and Brian's time line. We made prehistoric animals and the animals that they are now.

7714 Taylor: I thought their heads broke off.

7715 Vincent: Yeah. We smashed them on the floor. Of course they broke. Then Janelle had my giraffe. She shattered the head off and the ears.

7716 Shalendra: She broke the head off---------------- during portfolio selections.

7717 Taylor: We had to glue them back on.

[Everyone in the group apparently knows about this incident and is chuckling over it.]

7718 Teacher: That doesn't even seem in character for Janelle.

7719 Vincent: I didn't care [throws arms up in air and laughs]. It's not my best work. This is my mummy in art. I destroyed it, and the reason I destroyed it was because I have this picture of it so I didn't need the real thing. Also it was fun watching the bus run over it.

[More laughter and comments about the bus running over the mummy.]

7720 Vincent: I've done worse things! This is my um bio that I wrote for whatever--Showcase. This is my um first test that we did--

7721 Teacher: For CBE? The practice test?

7722 Vincent: Yeah. Um--------I put these pictures in because I like to draw---

7723 Taylor: We know that.

7724 Vincent: Since I had nothing to do with them, I gave them to Miss Fenner. But then I took them back and put them in my portfolio.

7725 Teacher: [inaudible]

7726 Vincent: Hmm . . . What is this spelling? What's this supposed to be?
Teacher: It looks like spelling editing.

Vincent: This is a letter that I wrote to the Queen of England that was fun to write. It was also hard writing it, because I had to use good English.

I put this in my portfolio because we needed something for design—uh planning—this is my plan for making an 8-foot, giant beaver.

Taylor: Too bad we don't have a really big picture of that [large display of prehistoric animals mounted in the hall]. We did a really good job with all those flowers.

Vincent: And this is the brochure that we made. This is cool. I guess I helped with the brainstorming on this. I didn't write anything.

Taylor: That was our job.

Vincent: These are two of my reading logs from Hatchet which I think is the funnest and the best book I've read in a while.

And this is my Ice Age story. I think this is the best story I wrote this year, but it's still in edited form. It has a bunch of lines through it.

This is a paper towel study with paper towels and we chose the best brand.

And this is my orangutan report. I put this in because Mrs. Fenner told me I should [smiles].

This is my sci-fi story. I put this in because this is my first story I wrote with another writer. I wrote it with Joe. That's only half of it.

This is our fifth-grade Talent Showcase booklet and I put this in for memory.

This is math homework. I put this in because it shows when I first put it in I wasn't very good at it.

Let's see this is the first really good boat I did [inaudible] with George. Should I get into a discussion of how I did a rough draft?

Teacher: Uh huh. Sure.

Vincent: I think the first thing is my rough draft and it's quite sloppy. It looks better because [inaudible]. The second one is my final copy. I think it's better because it's drawn better and I put more details in it. And—oh yeah—on the first one I drew, the nose was too shallow so if I ever got on a plane it would flip over backwards and oh yeah waste somebody. In the second one, I made the nose thicker and it has more power because the first only has—the second one has better steering because it has a front
valve thruster which turns the nose with a propeller that turns either left or right and there's a rudder in the back. They do that on big boats because it's really hard for them to turn with only a rudder in the back [inaudible] And it has three props instead of two. That's all.

Um---did everybody see this [sheaf of papers in a pocket folder]? Okay, I'll put it back in here.

7735 Taylor: Yes [inaudible]

7736 Vincent: Because I've shared my portfolio like what? Ten times for visitors?
These are designs for me and Joe's story. We were looking for a shuttle that could go to Mars and back and still be reusable and then it's either put in a museum or it sits at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.
I put this in because it shows math from the beginning and the end of the year and it shows how I thought mathwise all year.

[Talk digresses in a direction not directly related to Vincent's portfolio]

7736 Vincent: I was noticing something while I was listening today. I noticed when Carey did it, too, but was it you Taylor who wrote that poem about that place? About someplace that you really like to go?

7737 Shalendra and Taylor: Michigan City.

7738 Vincent: Because I noticed a lot of people in our class, I know Leah did, I did, Carey did and Taylor did all wrote poems about places that we really liked.

7739 Shalendra: Because some of them are from "sights, sounds, smells . . . ."

7740 Vincent: Is that when we did them?

7741 Shalendra and Taylor: Yes.

7742 Vincent: Carey's is the only one that isn't from that, but Carey's is a lot like--I think Carey's is a lot like mine [inaudible] course somebody'd probably call that cheating--

7743 Teacher: Well you know that discussion goes on all the time about whether it's cheating if you take somebody else's ideas and springboard off them.

7744 Vincent: Carey still thinks I cheated on writing my [Ice Age] story because I used that one that--
Shalendra: Gary Paulsen. I think if it's not plagiarism and it is not totally copying the other person's idea, you can take the basic idea and change it a little.

Vincent: I did. I did, I thought was cool the way they did it. I didn't use the split dimensions like they did [in Dogsong (Paulsen, 1985)] what he did in his book where real life was seeing himself 10 million years ago.

Taylor: It's like what we did with our ABC Murders. [We used Agatha Christie.]

Teacher: You would be amazed at how many authors do that.

Vincent: Taking a plot and making it into your own story.

Vincent: You take the outline of a story, and you erase everything that's in it and you fill in your own stuff. It's kind of like a fill-out-the-blanks because you take out blanks and you fill in the blanks with your own stuff.

This is my accident investigation folder.

This is my first portfolio. This is something I did for my Ice Age thing. It's a cave painting.

This is another one of my drafts and things. This is my first one and this is my second one. You can see my first has a lot more doodling on it.

Teacher: Where did you get the idea of drafting with drawing, Vincent? Have you done that always?

Vincent: I think I got it--how I really got interested in drawing? I really don't know how. I think it really became a habit. I think what really sparked me though was my dad's cousin who is an architect and he gave me--I think I was five years old--I was in kindergarten--he gave me a bunch of drawing supplies and things and showed me how. And I think that Christmas after he gave me that stuff [inaudible] I went upstairs to my grandpa's desk and I started drawing. I just kept on going from there. And I think what started me drawing war-like things is because my mother's stepfather is in the Army, my mother's father was in the Air Force, my father's father was in the Air Force, my dad's uncle designs ships for the Navy. So like everything is related I guess I'm kind of following in their footsteps. I think I like drawing them right now because I'm not old enough to do anything in the actual Army. This is the closest I can get. I think I actually started drawing things like this in school.
Teacher: When you started portfolio, did you have a sense that it was going to go this direction? That it was going to have a lot of your drawings in it?

Vincent: No. [shakes head] At first I never even .

Teacher: How'd that happen?

Vincent: I think it happened when you really opened it up and made it so we could put really whatever we wanted in it besides the selections is when I really started putting my drawings in it. The things I really like. I think the first one is not really what I would have put in, but I think it was good because it got me started. The second and the third and the fourth time I put in really what I wanted to because we made up our own selections.

[Digression not directly related to Vincent's portfolio occurs.]

Vincent: This is a rabbit I did in art. This is "Uncle's House" story. This is math that me and Carey made. And these are [inaudible]. This is a brochure [inaudible].

Teacher: Thank you.

Teacher: I'll ask you the same question I asked Shalendra: What's fun?

Vincent: I think it's fun going around, looking picking out different things I've done through the year. Looking at them .

Teacher: What's fun about that?

Vincent: I think it's cool because you can look and see---last night I was looking at the stuff I brought home from school. It was weird and I was looking these things I was writing at the beginning of the year that were hidden back in the back of my desk. And I was thinking they were so weird and they were stupid. But [when] I did them I didn't think that. I obviously liked it while I was doing it. And so I think it's fun looking to see what I was doing, even though it was only a short time ago. Sometimes you forget the little things and then you come upon them and you think they're really neat.
Teacher: What's the difference between the stuff you brought from school on the last day of school and your portfolio?

Vincent: My portfolio I think is a little easier to understand [than the previous home-based collection] what I was doing at the time because it has a card on it telling you know what you know explaining things. But like my mom has boxed stuff up in my room and she has stuff from like third grade and it's harder to understand those because they don't have a little card on them saying, "I put this in my portfolio because I worked hard on it and because it was my best work. And I really enjoyed working on this."

Teacher: The stuff that went home [at the end of this school year] in a bag rather than in your portfolio---Is there a difference between that and what you have in your portfolio?

Vincent: Well it is not as good as quality, I think.

Teacher: Okay, so it sounds like you have something in mind when you put it in there. What kind of qualities does it have to have to get in there?

Vincent: Something that I like to do. It's not just something that we had to do in class, and I had to do it and when it turned out, I didn't do a good job on it. Something that I really enjoyed doing or something--like I'm really proud of my drawings and designs. Something that I think looks good and it's my best work.

Teacher: . . . The stuff that didn't go in the portfolio, how would you describe that again?

Vincent: Scraps. Scraps and pieces from the year.

Teacher: And are you saving some of that or not?

Vincent: Yeah.

Teacher: Okay. And now why are we saving--you don't plan to put it in your portfolio [Vincent nods in agreement] you're going to save them in a different way? How come two different kinds of saving?

Vincent: Cause I guess because I started saving the scraps and stuff like that before I started doing the portfolio. I never even heard of portfolio before fifth grade. And I guess this is sort of my mom's version of
portfolio. I've been doing that for a long time. And I think it's very similar except portfolio is your best work and that's [other type of folder] some of your best work and some of your worst work and just some of just your regular work--stuff you did.

Interpretation

Vincent's approach to presenting his portfolio is quite different from Shalendra's. Chronology, in the sense of lining selections up in the order in which they were produced, is less important to him. He announces, in Lines 7706 and 7708, "It's in my portfolio, so you're going to hear it sooner or later." Vincent uses an interesting word to introduce this portfolio: He says that sooner or later you will hear everything in it. He chooses a verb that a storyteller might use. Unconsciously, he seems to emphasize the interpretive part of the portfolio process, the language that highlights and weaves together the significance of the various artifacts. Think for a moment what the effect would have been had he said, "Sooner or later you will see everything in it." This would have signaled to the audience (the six of us present for the de-briefing interview) that the important thing to attend to in the presentation of his portfolio was how the artifacts looked. In this instance, the meaning of the portfolio would have been more open to the interpretation of the audience. Although Vincent chooses to organize his portfolio differently, it can be argued that he, too, uses the portfolio in a purposeful way.

Like Shalendra, Vincent also gives some indications that
his portfolio is being developed for an immediate, familiar audience, which is a mixture of both self and peers.

Vincent is a participant in portfolio processes who influences other student’s work and in turn is influenced himself. In the class’s discussion of final portfolio selections, Joe gives some indication of how this network of supports distinct but interrelated identities for him and Vincent:

Joe: I think that really at the beginning you don’t know what you’re supposed to be doing so you follow—so you do what the directions say you are supposed to be doing. Then when you get into it you have a little bit more freedom. Then you get to put more of your stuff in. Like first semester, I don’t have very much stuff in that I really liked. Then second semester what I put in is stuff that explains what I do in my free time not what I do in class. But next year, like if you’re going to do this next year, what you should probably do is basically the same thing. I really think [inaudible] all you do is say, “You have to put in this many . . .” and then you can put in anything you want—

Teacher: You mean after January and redesign or—

Joe: --Yeah because [inaudible] put in a certain amount. And some of us, like me and Vincent and a lot of others of us in the room, like to things that aren’t necessarily math and stuff like that—

Teacher: Like school stuff.

Joe: Like Vincent and I like to draw a lot and some people like to write letters to famous people and stuff like that. [If you tell them what they have to put in] it’s going to be a problem.

Another obvious difference between Vincent’s and Shalendra’s portfolios is a physical one: Vincent has 35 selections plus 5 learning log notebooks in his portfolio.
compared with Shalendra's 15 selections. Shalendra seems to rely on representative selections and what they might show. Vincent's approach to building his portfolio could appear haphazard, but he actually seems to follow two themes in his selections. One important theme appears to be preserving experience. This aspect of portfolios received some emphasis in the introductory lesson (CHAPTER III), but somewhat less than the idea of selecting and describing one's best works. Vincent reveals in Line 7761, however, that he has always been a collector of sorts and that one of the experiences he relishes is to "come upon" the little things that may have been forgotten. Vincent seems intent on saving many samples, perhaps hoping that in revisiting these items memories and patterns will be activated for him. This seems to be Vincent's way of marking this particular time in his life and establishing it as a future point of reference. He says this fairly explicitly when he is presenting the idea of portfolios to first-grade students:

Vincent: If you look [for] yourself [inaudible], our portfolios aren't just necessarily for your work that you got a good grade on or you did a good job on. You can do a portfolio [selection] that you did a bad job on and that shows what wasn't right in it or what you should do better the next time. And so it's kind of like a little locker that you put all your things in that are really special to you. Except that you don't put big things in. It's mostly like papers or like journals. Like if you had something big--like we do jackdaws and some of them are back there [point to back of room]--we take a picture or something like that. Since you guys got all your stuff, I guess we won't need to do that [their teacher had saved papers and projects from the beginning of the year for her students]. You can put in your best pictures, and then when you get older and you guys are like 30 or so, you'll go back looking at these and you'll see what you were doing when you were little. And that's kind of
like a record of your life of what you were doing at your age. You guys can think about that.
[emphasis added]

For Vincent, the portfolio is an organized and focused way to do something he has probably been doing on his own for some time.

In addition to using his portfolio as a means of preserving experiences, Vincent also has a second principle operating as he develops his portfolio: to make particular personal goals and interests more prominent. This strategy for supporting a distinct identity is the second theme in his portfolio. Unlike Shalendra, who seems rather to discover what her portfolio will allow her to do, and then to begin experimenting (e.g., with larger words and more challenging work), Vincent values certain types of selections from the outset of the portfolio process.

Some clues to Vincent’s portfolio-building strategies exist in how he uses warrants within his portfolio and in other contexts. It is important to recall that in the "selections" transcript (CHAPTER V), Vincent was among the most capable students in the warrant generating and evaluating process. He hammered relentlessly at other students’ warrants that he felt were unjustified. His warrant-making efforts in the context of his own portfolio, however, are somewhat different. His "progress" in this area is quite stable. He doesn't exhibit Shalendra's pattern of a sudden shift in the complexity of the warrants he offers. After analyzing all 35 of Vincent's selections for their
warrants, it can also be observed that Vincent’s warranting style differs noticeably from Shalendra’s. Shalendra’s warrants tended to be articulated more formally and permanently; once she had written out a warrant, she tended to stay with it in subsequent presentations or discussions. Vincent, on the other hand, didn’t develop his initial written warrants in a detailed fashion. Then he would embellish his original warrants slightly in later conversations. One significant example is his Ice Age story written in October, 1993. He selects this story for his portfolio and supports it with the warrant (Line 7701) that it is "one of the longest and best [stories] that I've ever done." In the de-briefing interview in June, 1994, he shifts slightly, calling it the "best story I wrote this year." (Line 7732) Because it represents a summative evaluation, this is a much more significant warrant, although the actual language of the warrants are very close. This is fairly typical of how Vincent approaches warrants. Here are the remaining 4 (out of a total of 5) selections and warrants from his first portfolio sharing (November, 1993):

Pictures and Other Art Work
-I like to do a lot of drawing
-I like to draw [repeats warrant]

"Uncle’s Farm"--Poem
I like writing
First poem ever written

Two Reading Logs
-Hatchet is best book

Letter to Queen Elizabeth
[no verbal warrant]
Annotation card says: "this is a letter to queen of England it was fun to write it."

Plan for Prehistoric Animal Project
-Like to draw
-Had to have a planning sample

Like Shalendra who used "fun" repeatedly as a warrant in her initial selections, Vincent repeats a warrant, "I like drawing," a total of 3 times. Unlike Shalendra who used the "fun" warrant less and less, Vincent continues to use this warrant or variations on it throughout the year. The warrants Vincent gave on his annotation cards tended to remain simple and straightforward: "I put this in because I like to dising in a lot," went with a group of space vehicle drawings he selected in the spring. [See Appendix B Example V.1] "I put this in because I like art and I ingoy it because I get compliments," accompanied some drawings of military tanks. Vincent, like Shalendra, has a sense not only of group membership, but also the audiences he is addressing (Bakhtin, 1986) inside and outside the classroom. The warrants he develops in the competency test letter (Appendix B--Example V.2) are more authoritative and detailed than those he usually wrote for annotation cards for his portfolio. This shift in the authority and detail of a warrant can also be seen in comparing Vincent's initial warrant for selecting "My Uncle's House" with the annotation card that accompanied this same poem when it went on display in the spring Showcase exhibit [See also Appendix B--Example V.3]:

Portfolio Sharing--November, 1993: "... I like writing and this is my first poem that I've ever done and so I put it in here."
Talent Showcase--"This is a poem I wrote about my uncle's house. I picked it because it is the first poem I ever wrote. I learned poems are like music with the rhyme."

I began to suspect, however, that repeating the justification "I like to draw," might represent an altogether different type of warrant-building strategy. Vincent seemed to be amassing a volume of evidence to support a claim that was much larger than establishing the worth of a single selection. The warranting he did in his portfolio seemed aimed at establishing an identity among his classmates (and perhaps for himself as well) as an artist and designer. It's as if he keeps coming back to the class with a particular image of himself, amassing more evidence each time to support his stance as a contemporary and future designer. He even reinforces this image in his affiliations. In the discussion of the norm of selective listening (CHAPTER IV) his affiliation with Joe is part of his rationale for listening to some students but not others; he identifies himself with the other "designers" in the class:

Vincent: They listen to their best friends or like I listen to Joe 'cause I want to see if he's designed anything new or anything like that. I don't listen to--I'm not picking on Shalendra--but I don't listen to Shalendra's.

Vincent's use of portfolio to establish an identity as an artist/designer is also evident in the way his selections are distributed in various subject areas. Table 1 compares Shalendra's number of selections with Vincent's from a content perspective:
Table 2--Portfolio Selections by Subject Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Shalendra's # / % (N= 15)</th>
<th>Vincent's # / % (N= 35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>3 20%</td>
<td>7 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
<td>2 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
<td>5 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3 20%</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts/Constructed Projects</td>
<td>3 20%</td>
<td>14 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous (e.g., Showcase Booklet)</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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[Percentages have been rounded]

Vincent's efforts to establish this aspect of who he is through his portfolio is in some ways like the "positioning" interactions observed in younger children (Fernie, Davies, Kantor & McMurray, 1993). From the outset of portfolio sharing activities, Vincent offers his artistic identity as a "possible [way] of being" (Fernie, Davies, Kantor & McMurray, 1993, p. 98). The question becomes whether his peers acknowledge this position, allowing Vincent to "take [himself] up" in the way he would like to be viewed (Fernie, Davies, Kantor & McMurray, 1993, p. 98) within the portfolio culture of the room. There is evidence that this occurred. In remarks transcribed earlier, Joe aligns himself with Vincent as a member of the group of students who make drawing a focus of their portfolio selections. In Lines 7722-23 Vincent begins to say, "I put these pictures in because I like to draw," and Taylor interrupts him saying, "We know
that." In Line 7734, Vincent develops this position further by launching into an "expert" discourse regarding two different designs he had tried out for a ship. Later in the interview (Line 7752), he gives a narrative that emphasizes his goal to become a designer, which he believes to be inevitable.

Vincent, like Shalendra, presents a conundrum in what he labels his "best work." Appendix B--Example V.4 contains the piece of writing that Vincent decided was the best story that he had written all year. Vincent's work on this manuscript in terms of both revision and editing is quite evident. His revisions were actually among the most substantive that any of my students were making in their stories at that point. He dealt with both the sense and the style of the piece. I also know that he was able to incorporate suggestions that I had made in writing conferences into his writing, such as looking at Gary Paulsen's *Dogsong* (1985) for ideas about ways a character in the Ice Age might view things. For reasons that I don't fully understand, however, Vincent was never willing to get this story into a "published" form, although he talked about this story quite a bit (See Line 7732). I wasn't at all certain that I agreed with his evaluation that the Ice Age story was the best piece he had written all year. In fact, I strongly discouraged him from including this piece in the district literacy test collection, suggesting (insisting) instead that he put in his orangutan article [See Appendix B--Sample V.5 ]. This article has many strengths and
certainly looks more conventional, although it is not entirely error-free.

As I reread the Ice Age story (and to give it a fair reading I decided to transcribe the story into conventional spelling and punctuation—See Appendix B—Sample V.6), however, I was struck that the actual warrant for the strength of this piece exists outside the portfolio itself in Lines 7744, 7746, 7749, 7750, of the de-briefing interview in which Vincent summarizes what this piece has allowed him to learn about the authoring process: that it was possible to borrow ideas and transform them into new works. I also find in this story, a warrant that Vincent develops in the letter that he wrote to accompany his district literacy test collection: "They [the samples] show I can write in my own voice and make it seem like I'm saying it myself." This metacognitive judgment is also substantiated in his Ice Age story.

Bruner’s (1991) work suggests other layers of meaning represented in Vincent’s portfolio. Bruner (1986) contends that thinking falls into two categories: paradigmatic, which is formal, controlled, and achieves understandings through scientific reasoning, and narrative, which is interpretive, generative, and achieves coherence by making connections and leaps. Bruner (1986) characterizes the two forms in these ways:

The imaginative application of the paradigmatic mode leads to good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, and empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis.
The imaginative application of the narrative mode leads instead to good stories, gripping drama, believable historical accounts. It deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course (pp. 13).

In later work, Bruner (1991) investigates a special form of narrative thinking, the autobiography. Vincent's use of portfolio may provide an example of how children use autobiography to organize their experiences. Bruner uses a number of narrative theorists to undergird his own work. Citing Gergen (1982), he notes that humans have a reflexive capacity; that is, we can look at the past and alter the future or we can alter our view of the past given present circumstances. A second "universal" he borrows from Gergen (1982) is "our 'dazzling' intellectual capacity to envision alternatives --to conceive of other ways of being, of acting, of striving" (Bruner, 1991, p. 110). He also sees a more general significance in the conclusions some psychoanalysts have drawn about the power of the self-narratives patients construct and sometimes repair in the course of therapy. Bruner adds to narrative theory the sense that stories are told within a context so that both audience and self are influenced by them, a point that meshes well with Bakhtinian notions of speaker and addressee and could be of great importance in interpreting how narratives function within portfolio development.

In the autobiographical narratives that Bruner (1991) and a colleague collected from families, he sees different uses of narrative techniques including sequencing and
agentivity—the sense the teller creates of who’s in charge. He maintains that the interviews in their study showed “people in the act of constructing a longitudinal version of Self” (p. 120). Here’s how he characterizes the narratives he and his colleague heard:

As stories of development, these, “spontaneous autobiographies” were constituted of smaller stories (of events, happenings, projects), each of which achieved its significance by virtue of being part of a larger-scale “life” (Bruner, 1991, pp. 120-121).

He also notes that subjects often used the present tense to tell about things that had occurred in the past, because it was at the moment of telling that the significance of the event was constructed.

Although Vincent was not asked to give an autobiography or to tell the story of his life, he seems to be engaged in what Bruner (1991) might call a “spontaneous autobiography” (p. 120). In his portfolio presentation, Vincent shows the same active construction and interpretation of self-narrative that adults in Bruner’s study exhibited:

*He uses portfolio artifacts to preserve experiences that fit into a larger “life story.”
*He gathers large amounts of evidence to support a central claim about himself (Bruner would identify Vincent as the “protagonist” in this narrative) that he is an artist and designer and will continue on that path into the future
*He makes connections to his family history (a “larger scale life”),
*He demonstrates reflexivity in looking back into and
interpreting events in his early childhood and maintaining a narrative [Line 7752] that connects these early steps to a possible future: “So like everything is related. I guess I’m following in their [relatives who are designers] footsteps.”

*He uses a present-tense interpretation when noting the significance of what he has drawn and designed in the past year: “I think I like drawing them right now because I’m not old enough yet to do anything in the actual Army. This is the closest I can get.”

*He uses sentence constructions and verbs to indicate a sense of control that he has when he describes the alterations he had made in the drafts of the design of a ship he was working on [Line 7734].

Vincent’s portfolio yielded some unanticipated results, too. First, although Vincent was highly sensitive to warrants and case-building strategies, he did not direct this ability toward the development of unusually sound warrants for individual pieces of work in the portfolio. Rather, he was involved in collecting evidence for the larger claim that he was well on his way to becoming a designer.

Second, some of his major insights about what he had learned from particular pieces of work, his Ice Age story, for example, which suggested to him how to use another author’s blueprint to get started with his own writing or learning that “poems are like music with the rhyme,” came through experience related to but not directly part of the portfolio development process. Much of what this work meant
to Vincent was not preserved in any kind of written reflection or at best, captured in a kind of shorthand. Third, "best work" in this case seems to be rooted in what the experience meant to the individual, rather than what the final product looked like.

Commonalities

In retrospect, an autobiographical quality also comes through in Shalendra’s portfolio. It may be a stylistic feature of her self-narrative, more tentativeness, that makes this quality less obvious initially. Shalendra’s narrative seems to be a quiet, more private examination of her portfolio to discover its patterns. She constructs a narrative with Elizabeth’s assistance during the de-briefing interview when she says out loud for the first time (as far as it can be determined) that she has begun to enjoy and seek out challenging work. Vincent’s portfolio narrative seems to reflect his efforts to reinforce a pattern he has already discovered but has now moved into the venue of school. For both learners, the opportunity to shape their narratives within the group and present them to an audience seems to have been important.

Both Shalendra and Vincent took risks in their portfolios. Their risks were different, however, and, again relate to Bruner’s (1986) characterization of the constructed self. Shalendra’s risk might be interpreted as taking a chance on revealing who she really was and the areas in which she believed she could excel. Staking out work that was "challenging" and "complicated" could easily have caused her
emotional trauma if peers began to tease her about her interests.

Vincent's risk went in another direction. He apparently felt a strong need to map out an identity that was based on something other than conventional school success. He certainly had enough work samples to make a "nice" school portfolio. In fact, he implies he did that for the first portfolio sharing. But then in the course of our portfolio development process, Vincent began to perceive that his portfolio could be about something quite different and he followed his natural inclinations to collect a lot of "stuff" that would show who he is and who he hopes to be, an identity quite distanced from tests, grades, and typical measures of school success.

There is a bit of an over-simplification in the interpretation of both these students' portfolios. I searched for what I thought was a single highly important theme/purpose that appeared to have a strong link to the student's perception of self. I also selected a purpose that was likely to highlight growth and change. In reality, the purposes for which classroom portfolios are used are more complex. They resemble what Dyson (1994) reports about young writers in a process classroom who used writing for purposes beyond making sense of their world, a single purpose that Dyson suggests is derived from adult ideas about "writing process" methodology. Her young writers were using writing for at least 4 purposes:
1. To establish social cohesion
2. To engage in social manipulation or regulation
3. To engage in artful performances
4. To communicate information

It seems plausible that portfolio participation follows a similar pattern of multiple uses. There is some evidence in both Shalendra’s and Vincent’s presentations of portfolios that they use their selections to reinforce social relationships. Vincent selected his story written with Joe because it was the first story written with someone else. Shalendra talked in the de-briefing interview about the discussions she and her best friend Taylor had regarding how to share the projects they had worked on together when it was time to make portfolio selections. Such social negotiations were common in portfolio processes, where students announced they had worked on selection together.

Choosing to focus on only two case studies also has the effect of masking some of the multi-dimensional social and cultural forces described earlier in this study that continued to be at work as individuals developed their portfolios. The focus of this chapter has been on how the changes or developments in two individuals’ thinking were reflected in their portfolios. But the changes or effects that can be seen—Shalendra’s record of her challenges to herself and Vincent’s sense of how his work changed in a year’s time, for example—were mediated within the day-to-day interactions of the group. Watching Shalendra formulate her
idea that unpolished work should also be part of a portfolio conveys the impression that she has put this new thought together on her own for the first time. Her new insight rests on what she has seen, discussed, and experienced within the group, however. And even more important, she can be seen "trying out" this thought on the group, including her teacher. The immediate effect of her thinking can be seen within the group as Joe, who has been watching and listening intently the whole time she is working through her idea, makes a parallel statement that both supports and extends her comment. This incident captures something quite significant about classroom portfolio processes and their capacity to support an individual's sense of being intelligent and competent within the group.
PART FOUR

Conclusions

Introduction

Part Four organizes the findings of this study of a particular classroom portfolio implementation into a tentative framework which may identify some of the dynamics operating in other classroom-based portfolio implementations. The theories of Vygotsky (1986), Bakhtin (1986), Toulmin (1958), and Bruner (1986, 1991) are integrated into one framework and applied to portfolio processes. Within this framework typical opportunities for learning, part of portfolio’s instructional dimension are also identified and described. Part Four concludes with a summary of findings and a discussion of the implications of this study for practice, policy, and research.
CHAPTER VII

A FRAMEWORK FOR
UNDERSTANDING CLASSROOM PORTFOLIOS

This study has been, in large measure, a response to the call (Teale, 1994; Graves, 1992) for more research into how portfolios actually work in classrooms with real children and teachers. The aim of this study has been to show how portfolios came to be understood and used by a class of students and their teacher. The method of conducting this study was to examine classroom conversations and the portfolio work of two individual students through several theoretical lenses: constructive, socio-cultural, argumentive, and narrative. One result of this study has been to show how enormously complex the workings of portfolios can be. The study also brings to light some of the instructional possibilities within portfolio, that is, learning opportunities which may be present that move beyond a narrow definition of portfolio as "assessment instrument."

In looking at portfolio's instructional possibilities, results of the data analyses in this study seem to converge on two important learning opportunities for students: the making and using of warrants and the sustained, natural language conversations that occur among participants as the portfolios are developed through the year. I focus on these two "sites of learning," because as a classroom teacher
implementing portfolios, these were the most difficult to see without deliberate study. Discussions of the significance of these two learning opportunities follow.

Warranting and the Cognitive Click

My own views of "higher level thinking" and children's capacities to function on this plane have undergone deep changes as a result of the analysis of warrants (Toulmin, 1958) undertaken as part of this study. Within the portfolio process as I recorded it, warranting seemed to be one of the central mechanisms. This was an insight that developed over time, however. The discovery of the case-building and warranting process within the context of the "selections" debate seemed at first to be a special case of language use, primarily I think, because of the personalities of the "speakers" (Bakhtin, 1986) and the unusual commitment they showed to their warrants. However, in stepping back to look at other aspects of the portfolio process, warranting, that is, the construction of a justification or the determination of significance, was present in other instances, such as the criteria-setting discussion that took place in May, 1993, (CHAPTER VI) and was the key feature of virtually all the annotation cards that students wrote for works that went into their portfolios. The generic question that all students were answering was, "Why is this work significant?"

A logical follow-up question for the researcher then becomes: In what ways could this kind of thinking be important cognitively for children? This study offers some sources of information for thinking about this question. My
own insights about the importance of warranting came to me in an unusual way.

I need to begin by recounting a conversation I had with my advisor regarding my findings on warrants (Toulmin, 1958). After I summarized my findings for him, I concluded by saying, "The warranting model fits this ["selections"] conversation like a glove." We were both excited by how much the warranting model was able to account for in the conversation. Then he stopped me dead in my tracks with his next question: "Okay, so what?" He was getting me to see that although the warranting model fit the conversation, I needed to consider whether this finding had more general significance. I replied (stalling for time), "Wait a minute, I don't quite have this yet."

I stumbled through an answer, not feeling I had formulated an explanation that was quite adequate. Driving home from this meeting, however, it occur to me that he was asking me to form a warrant for the claim that I had made that the presence of warranting was an important finding about children’s thinking within portfolio processes.

I think the temporary uncertainty of my reply reveals something about the nature of the warranting process itself and the level of thinking that it demands. Although I had spent many hours analyzing the warrants that students were using in their discussions and on annotation cards, I knew I at that moment I was unable to answer his question about the broader meaning of warrants in thinking. Inside I could "feel" ideas coming together, but I was having to work really
hard to explain the significance of my findings.

What I began to hypothesize, however, was that children may go through a very similar process when they make their portfolio selections and develop their annotation cards. As teachers, we say to them, "Okay, you picked this thing. So what?" The question demands that their thinking about their own work move to a different level. Presumably this is a more sophisticated level, because in my own case, I could feel myself doing cognitive work as I tried to formulate an answer. I knew I couldn't yet answer the question "So what?" regarding warrants, yet at the same time I could "feel" that I had all the pieces to put an answer together. When an insight finally came to me, I experienced it as a sort of cognitive "click." As things "clicked into place," I believe that I began mentally to test my conclusion against other interpretations, confirming that the "fit" of evidence with warrants was right.

Newkirk (1992), detailing his efforts to make sense of data he had collected on young children's classroom talk about books, describes a similar experience:

With transcripts in hand, we [he and his teacher-researcher colleague] next moved into the "so what?" stage. We had interesting data, lively transcripts, but no interpretive frame, no governing metaphor for looking at them. Our early presentations were like vacation slide shows: "Here's a . . ." "now here we have . . ." I remember after one presentation a teacher asked, "So what have you learned from this?" This was not a trick question, but I had trouble answering it. I felt, sheepishly, like one of my composition students caught without a point. "So what?" (p. 5) [emphasis added]
I began to view the warranting processes that accompany the development of portfolios as an opportunity for children to engage, authentically and naturally, in higher order thinking about something with which they have great familiarity: their own work. They, too, are likely to have all the pieces available cognitively to put together an original insight about their own work. There are no right or wrong answers in this process, but as Toulmin (1958) suggests, and Shalendra and Vincent confirm in their work, some warrants are more powerful than others.

The question of “higher order thinking” has an important developmental aspect as well. Daiute (1989) after reviewing the National Assessment of Educational Progress 1986 study of writing in which it was determined that “children at all grade levels are deficient in higher-order thinking.” makes this observation:

Children are known to be good players, and recently they have been identified as bad thinkers. Literature on the role of play in human development characterizes the child’s playful activity as absorbed, elaborated, and meaningful, while literature on critical thinking, especially in relation to reading, writing, and problem-solving, characterizes the child as unreflective and relatively taciturn. This contrast between the child as player and the child as thinker points to a gap that could, in part, be filled by exploring relationships between play and thought (p.1)

In many ways, the classroom portfolios in this study functioned as a kind of fulcrum balancing the demands of thought and play. Analyzing the “selections” transcript was a key for me to begin seeing deep, concentrated efforts at
problem-solving within an unscripted, and, yes, playful situation. On one level, the discussion of selections was a serious adult argument over principles and alliances, yet on another level it was quite child-like: the major points of contention were a little inaccessible to me and the tone of some participants' comments seemed almost petulant. This argument, invented by child participants, was in many respects a game. This doesn't trivialize the children's participation, in fact, it makes it more impressive. They were able to take sophisticated requirements from my adult model of self-evaluation and bend them to their own socio-cultural purposes, creating a tour-de-force in logic and argumentation at the same time. At first I was greatly disturbed by the competitive, taking-sides nature of this discussion. After much reflection, I see this conversation now as an important intersection (one I would like to encourage in other contexts) in which developmentally determined interests encountered a challenging thought problem.

**Authentic Conversations about Learning**

A second set of learning opportunities for students in this study existed in the extended, substantive conversations about various aspects of portfolios in which they were sometimes engaged. These conversations had several notable features. They were part of a portfolio speech genre that was well-understood by participants. The conversations also had the aspects of what Daiute (1993) has labeled “youth genre” in her research on writing. The students' values were
woven into their selections, which were often characterized as “fun,” a youth genre code for meaningful engagement in the company of friends.

Portfolio activities were often characterized by what Barnes (1992) might call “exploratory talk.” A central theme or problem was to be examined, setting of criteria for portfolio selections for example, but predetermined answers or solutions to the problems did not exist. In the conversation examples in this study, interactional patterns differed from those cited in many studies of classroom discourse (Flanders, 1963; Cadzen, 1988; Wells, 1986; Barnes, 1992; Mehan, 1982). Students had more conversational turns than the teacher. These turns tended to last longer. Students had more opportunities to carry on direct conversations with one another without the teacher mediating or evaluating. They were able to maintain a focus on one topic and discuss it extensively. Similar opportunities have been identified in other language-rich settings such as the informal classrooms Fox & Allen (1983) studied. Looking briefly at Halliday’s (1976) classifications of language functions (which Fox & Allen also use in their analysis), portfolio language events are represented in all categories:

**INSTRUMENTAL:** language used to satisfy the child’s needs;
-Mark F. discusses the need to show strengths in several different intelligences.

**REGULATORY:** language for controlling others;
-Large portions of the “selections” transcript.
INTERACTIONAL: language used to interact with others around him or her;
-First grade buddy portfolio projects;
-Students describing their interactions while filling out portfolio cards.
PERSONAL: language used to express the child's feelings and unique qualities;
-Portfolio sharing sessions and annotation cards.
HEURISTIC: language used to explore the environment
-Discussion about what the portfolio is
-Discussions about how physically to include large or group-developed projects in the portfolio
IMAGINATIVE: language used by the child to create his or her own world;
-The narratives about possible future selves that some students create
-Mark F. saying he could imagine what it would be like to be a writer or a scientist
-Shalendra's identification with the Puritans and their worldview.
INFORMATIVE: language used by humans to convey information to those around them;
-Students explaining portfolios to visitors and to other students
-Students answering questions about the content of their individual portfolios.
(adapted from Fox & Allen, 1983, p. 60)

A final site of language learning opportunities presented within a portfolio model relates to Bakhtin's (1986) notion of "speakers" developing in dialogic situations and to other research studies (Bargar, 1991; John-Steiner, 1985) on "voice" and the development of expertise. Some
researchers have observed that adult competence in a particular field carries with it a sense of belonging in a particular context and being able to speak authoritatively within that context. Bargar describes the effect in this way:

The most striking feature of creative development is the gradual emergence of what many writers call "voice," a phenomenon which I have found in the case studies [of highly talented adults] to be essential to the fuller flowering of creative expression in the arts and major breakthroughs in the sciences. Closely aligned to the notion of style in the visual and performing arts, voice refers generally to the quality, clarity of focus, originality, and articulateness of "what one has to say." These characteristics appear to emerge within an integrative nucleus of thought and affect related to one's experiences with the medium, and to the developmental and professional issues being expressed through the medium. More easily observed in a language art where cognitive meaning is an essential part of the expression, for instance in the novels of John Steinbeck, voice is also a useful metaphor in describing work in other media. One sees in the work of the social scientists, biologists and physicists in the sample, an analogous sense of coherence, style and perspective in their major contributions." (p. 3)

In revisiting both Vincent's and Shailendra's transcript there is some sense of a "voice," a more confident definition or expression of self, emerging. This is not surprising given the nature of the selection, evidence gathering, and warranting processes that seem to be implicit in portfolio development. The opportunity to try out "voices" or to begin honing a distinctive voice may be one of
the more powerful, but subtle features of a dialogic portfolio implementation.

A Framework for Explaining Portfolio Events

In the concluding portion of any study, but particularly a qualitative one such as this that is based upon data from a single classroom and a limited population, an issue that must be addressed is what general significance can be made of the findings. It is important to draw data, interpretive theories, and instructional possibilities together into a unified framework. What might make such a framework useful for practitioners, practitioners, and policy makers is a capacity to predict or explain variations based on the features of a particular portfolio implementation and the characteristics of the student participants.

Although this development of a tentative framework for examining portfolio implementations is presented sequentially, it is important to note that the data indicate many "steps" in our implementation were occurring simultaneously or at different times for different learners.

The first aspect of a portfolio framework is the constructive nature of the process. Data in this study show that the artifacts we termed "portfolios" were supported by a set of understandings constructed by the participants in the classroom. Students in this study did not have a shared understanding of what a portfolio was at the outset of the process. Moreover, the learning that took place regarding portfolio was not merely transmitted. In other words, as a teacher, I couldn't "tell them what it was" and assume we
were ready to "do" portfolios. Once the topic of portfolios was presented initially, it took on a life of its own, with all participants acting as co-constructors in some way either through verbal negotiations or in the decisions they made about about selections for their own portfolios.

Transcripts show minute-by-minute changes in thinking in the introductory lesson, which seemed to fit a scaffolded learning framework (Bruner, 1985). But subsequent samples of the explanations individual students gave of portfolios over the course of the year indicated that their concept of portfolios continued to evolve outside of the teacher-assisted scaffolding in the first lesson, which echoes Newkirk's (1993) finding about book discussions.

What may be significant, as well, are comments in the de-briefing interview which suggest that although the class appeared in the transcript to take on the new constructs regarding portfolio fairly easily, there was a degree of unvoiced confusion that had to be resolved over time through active participation—the "doing" of portfolios. This clarification of the procedures and purposes of portfolios must have been accomplished by talking with and working with others, because no comments or questions asking for further explanations were directed to the teacher. Thus, even for learners like Vincent, who can be viewed at the end of the process as holding clear ideas about portfolios, the constructive aspect is drawn out over time.

Newkirk (1992) offers a refined description of how simple scaffolding is superseded by or at least blended with
learners' own strategies. His remarks, made in the context of a study of children's talk about books, question the feasibility of a pure scaffolding model in accounting for learning a new type of discourse such as book discussion. His description of a learning hybrid of modeling and social construction parallels what I believe I saw as students began to take up portfolio processes:

In the first place, the theory behind modeling often implies that what counts is that which the teacher models and students pick up. Children are seen as bereft of significant strategies (ones that count) when they begin a task. Growth is defined as the progressive internalization of adult models . . . What we have is a one-way socialization of children into the adult mode of discussion . . .

(p. 6)

. . . Suppose we take the example of coaching a first- and second-grade soccer team, a task I took on during my recent sabbatical. To a degree, my job was to initiate the players into some characteristics of the adult game. I taught them rules they didn't know and strategies they tended not to use (e.g., passing--they all wanted to dribble and score). But to be effective, I had to be initiated into the game as they invented it. The first thing I did (partly out of desperation) was to watch them play a scrimmage game. Instead of assuming all the responsibility, I assumed almost none. And the game they invented made sense . . . I began to see my role as grafting parts of the adult game onto the game that they had invented . . . I needed to understand and respect the game as they played it (pp. 6-7).

The constructive aspect of the portfolio development framework seems to be a like the invented soccer game. The portfolio "game" is constructed through a series of negotiations, internal shifts in thinking, and growing understandings shared within the group of what the portfolio process might mean. As the transcripts show, the playing
field for this game is language—the conversations—mediating the class (and individual) constructions of what the portfolio experience will be. On some occasions, I was able to use my authority as teacher to graft adult expectations about portfolio on to the evolving construct the class was creating. On other occasions, setting norms for listening during portfolio sharing and resolving the debate on the appropriate number of portfolio selections, for example, I was a regular player like everyone else.

A second dimension of a framework for portfolio processes is socio-cultural. Because classroom portfolios depend on tryouts of suggested procedures, negotiations of appropriate behavior, articulation of standards, and the repetition of event structures such as portfolio sharing sessions, such occasions generate numerous social interactions. In this process, a culture characterized by norms and expectations, roles and responsibilities, rights and obligations forms. There is evidence in this study that explicit norms about how portfolio business was to be conducted—how annotation cards are written, what to do if you need a photograph of an artifact for your portfolio—and implicit norms—in this case a shared understanding of how listening would be conducted during sharing sessions—existed. The second feature operating in this framework of portfolio development is that of a culture, characterized by some balance of explicit and implicit understandings and rules for participation, is likely to operate in any classroom implementation of portfolio.
The classroom portfolio culture may govern the opportunities and possibilities available in the development of individual portfolios. This cultural aspect of the portfolio experience relates in some ways to Daiute's (1993) work on youth genres in writing. It is within this classroom culture that the developmental translations of portfolios are made. For example, a prevailing norm which also served frequently as a selection warrant is the much discussed "fun" standard, which applied to both work done during portfolio activities and to selections for the portfolio itself. This way of valuing work and experience appears to be both culturally supported and developmentally determined in that students are expressing a preference for playing as they learn (Daiute, 1989). Again, this framework would suggest that direct transmissions of adult standards for portfolio selection criteria are unlikely to occur since adult thinking must go through this cultural/developmental filter before it is taken up by students.

The proposed framework also attempts to account for the emphasis in many portfolio implementations on student choice and ownership (Tierney, Carter & Desai, 1991; Graves & Sunstein, 1992). Such an emphasis is likely to create a dialogic system (Bakhtin, 1986, Wertsch, 1991a). Portfolio participants in this study seemed to become empowered as "speakers" within a portfolio speech genre. This dialogic aspect seemed to grow over time as more responsibility for decisions about portfolio processes was assumed by students.
If this dimension of portfolio implementation succeeds, it carries with it the promise of both unpredictable language situations as well as tremendous opportunities for using language authentically to solve problems. This dialogic quality may be one of the chief indications that a community of learners, one which understands and accepts the responsibility for making important decisions about their learning, is functioning.

Finally a framework that describes portfolio implementations needs to account for the narrative quality (Bruner, 1986, 1991) of the experience. The portfolio experience in this study had two strong narrative aspects to it. First, the development process itself has a narrative structure to it with its initial chapters in an introductory lesson and the students' first experiments in selection and warrant-building. Student "speakers" (Bakhtin, 1986) pick up the portfolio story as they explain to visitors how we are creating this entity within our classroom. For me, the teacher, the suspense builds and the action rises as I watch closely to see if this particular class opens up the process, makes it their own, and provides demonstrations of how their thinking has changed. The class that is the focus of this study provided me with many moments of uncertainty in which I truly doubted that there would be a denouement resolving our conflicts and moving us to a different level of implementation.

Within the class story of portfolios there is a second set of narratives developed around individual students
working out who they are. They use the portfolio to capture significant experiences in their lives; they look backward, reflecting on how they have changed; they begin to look forward into possible futures. Language allows them to test their tentative narratives with classmates and friends.

This framework attempts to capture how portfolio processes take on an almost organic life in the classroom, dropping deep roots into students' everyday lives. What is constructed through language, what is agreed upon by teacher and students, becomes palpable. For me, entering into portfolio conversations from other classroom activities is like walking into a different room in a house. This is a comfortable room in which children can work and play at thinking.

A Test for the Framework: How Well Does It Account for Variability in Implementations?

The question remains, having developed a framework capable of explaining much of what happened within one classroom implementation, how well can it explain or predict events in other implementations? Such a framework should account for variations that I have experienced over the years and make warranted predictions for other classroom situations like Ms. Jackson’s hypothetical portfolio implementation described in CHAPTER I of this study.

Case #1—My Classes

I draw now on recollections of three previous portfolio
implementations, as well as the more precise analyses of the implementation in this study. In each of the four implementations of portfolios I have experienced, some students have followed my suggestions for setting up and maintaining the portfolio quite explicitly (e.g., they make their selections from categories I have suggested such as "work that shows your ability to plan well" and they use the annotation guide questions I have given them), while other students like Allen and Vincent have remained participants in classroom portfolio processes, but selected work that fit their own purposes and interests more closely than my suggestions did. Two classes articulated their needs to negotiate the specifications of portfolio and make them more flexible. In my experience, a cognitive and socio-cultural "construction" of portfolio has taken place within every class this impression is supported by the portfolios that students developed and shared within each implementation. For some students, however, the final versions of the portfolios when examined in the spring have been quite different from what I had envisioned. For example, in an earlier implementation, a student had included a baseball in his portfolio and supported his choice with a warrant describing how catching this ball at a Clippers game had been a significant accomplishment in his life. I believe that this constructive feature of the framework accounts for differences among classes (see, for example, the differences in the two criteria lists in Chapter VI) and the differences that can be observed at the individual level when comparing
Shalendra’s portfolio with Vincent’s (Chapter VII).

As this study has already indicated, one of my surprises in conducting the de-briefing interviews was the students’ open discussion of the norm of not listening to students whose work didn’t interest them personally. I believe now that such norms of participation are always constructed. I only noticed them in this instance because they were at odds with what I had experienced in the past: a co-construction or tacit agreement on the norms for listening and participation that I had attempted to transmit to students.

I also realize how extraordinarily fortunate I have been that each year a culture of acceptance, ownership, and excitement has managed to form around portfolio activities. The formation of the selective listening norm, which existed totally outside of my influence, demonstrates just how tenuous the development of any portfolio implementation is. It strikes me that one of the safety nets in portfolio development, one of the chief strategies that allows an implementation to self-correct if it gets into trouble, is to concentrate on keeping the dialogic quality visible and accessible to students. Even, if, as was the case with this class and their discussion of “selections,” it involves some risk and giving up a great deal of control over decisions about portfolio. I attempted to give up much of my control over the specifications of portfolios in discussions with two different classes. Because of the differences in the voices of the “speakers”, (e.g., whom they believed they were representing, and how they viewed themselves) the results
were quite different. But in both instances this public surrender of control (at least to the extent that I was actually able to do this), resulted in a much deeper commitment within the class to their own version of portfolios. In both these developments, however, the relatively tranquil discussion, and the fiery, abrasive one, I felt a twinge as I relinquished my sense that I was the "authority" on portfolios in the classroom. I am convinced, however, that this must happen in order for my students to develop fully as "speakers" in the portfolio process.

Speech genre theory also helps explain the variations I have seen in participation patterns in the last four years. A close analysis of the transcripts in this study would reveal major gender differences in who controlled space in the various conversations. There are also some students who rarely spoke at all in the unstructured conversations about portfolios ("selections" discussion, for example), although they did participate fully in the class portfolio sharing sessions. I see these differences now more as issues of "speakers," "authoritative voices," "utterances." and "responses." The class featured in this study had some of the most authoritative speakers that I can recall having as students. Students like Joe and Vincent seemed to have an unusual need to speak for themselves and others constantly, not just in portfolio conversations. Yielding the floor to these determined speakers became another one of the implicit norms of this class. I'm not satisfied with many aspects of this unequal participation pattern, but I understand more now
what the underlying causes might be. I think the concept of
“speaker” also applies to the way portfolios are developed by
individual students. The two case studies show students who
are speaking through their portfolios to audiences they have
identified as being of personal importance.

A particularly problematic source of variation (if
standardization of portfolios becomes a goal at some point)
that emerges in this study is how students select “best” and
“significant” works for their portfolios. Their definitions
for this type of notable work seem quite rooted in who they
are as speakers and participants not only in school, but also
within their families. Again, their selections of “best
works” can be viewed as a form of utterance directed at an
audience they are trying reach whether it be self, family, or
a future audience, as Vincent seemed to be addressing.
(“Come and see what I was like as a little boy.”)

Finally, the speech genre frame helps account for the
presence or absence of conflict in the various classes with
which I have implemented portfolios. If, as was the case in
the class profiled in this study, there are a number of
speakers with authoritative voices who are inclined to speak
for others (and enjoy making warrants and arguing), then more
instances of conflict can be predicted. This doesn’t mean
that an individual class is doing a “bad job” of developing
their portfolios (as I was tempted to conclude at times last
year). It doesn’t mean that a class isn’t “ready” for
portfolios and shouldn’t have the opportunity. The
conversations and behaviors, even in this class with its
somewhat unusual interactional patterns, were within the range of what might be expected to occur in a dialogic process. This is one of the most important insights I gleaned from the analysis of transcripts in this study. It gives me a new view of what might constitute a "normal" pattern of discourse for a class.

Case #2--A Hypothetical Class

In Ms. Jackson's version of portfolio implementation (CHAPTER I), many of the decisions about the construction of the portfolio appear to be predetermined. There would be less overt opportunities for the class to negotiate and construct their definitions of portfolio. The result is likely to be a set of portfolios that are much more uniform looking on the surface. The pool of work available for the selections and the categories of work appear to be more limited: monthly writing assignments. The negotiations would be likely to occur at the point when the most of appropriate ("best pieces" for their "showcase" portfolios) of these monthly compositions would be selected. Even if students were given selection criteria, however, this is where the developmental and cultural translations would be likely to occur. Unless Ms. Jackson makes the selections herself.

Without transcripts to analyze, the nature of the cultural mechanisms operating in such an implementation is highly speculative. It might be hypothesized that implicit norms would be more powerful than explicit norms in such an implementation. An ethos would probably form regarding the
perceived value of keeping a portfolio. Students might also establish norms about who is best suited to participate in this type of portfolio. Does it include or exclude students with interests that are primarily non-linguistic? What about students with good grades in writing versus those who receive average or poor grades?

The degree to which portfolio processes would operate as a speech genre in such a classroom is probably influenced by the amount and type of decisions that students are asked to make about their portfolios. Because more decisions have been made for students at the outset, this implementation appears to be less dialogic in nature than the classroom implementation analyzed in this study. Therefore, it might be hypothesized that less opportunities for students to function as speakers in resolving issues or problems related to portfolios would occur. An interesting feature of this implementation are the outside audiences (parents at one point and, later, teachers at the central scoring site where the portfolios will be judged at the end of the year) who could have a significant influence on what is said about the portfolios, to whom it is said (responders within or outside the classroom), and the degree of power or force that characterizes these utterances. The proposed portfolio framework suggests that these two audiences might produce different demands and expectations of the portfolio.

These issues of speakers and speech genres seem to touch most closely on ownership and investment in portfolios. A key to how robust this framework may be is its ability to
analyze a portfolio implementation for the degree of personal investment and sense of control it might engender in students and the support for learning it provides. In other words, how useful is the framework in formulating a portfolio implementation that provides maximum benefits to students’ thinking and growth through the development and selection of portfolio products (the artifacts), participation in the socio-cultural construction of portfolios, and opportunities for reflective thought and warrant development?

Returning for a moment to the instructional possibilities that seemed inherent in this portfolio study, the two most conspicuous examples were warranting opportunities and authentic, thoughtful conversations about familiar learning topics. Analysis using this framework might suggest that their presence in this study wasn’t happenstance. Given any portfolio implementation in which care is taken to build a dialogic context and to provide opportunities to make decisions about the nature of portfolio itself, including criteria and warranting (annotation cards), these learning opportunities are likely to be present.
CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, POLICY, AND RESEARCH

Introduction

This section reviews the major findings of this study and speculates on how some of these views of classroom portfolios might influence decisions of practice, policy, and research.

The study began with two versions of a single question: How do portfolios work? and How do portfolios work? I suggested that the first question might be examined through socio-cultural and constructivist lenses while the second question might use evidence from individual students to look at growth and change in children’s thinking, primarily reasoning and self-narrative abilities. This summary groups the major findings of this study around these two questions.

Construction of Portfolio Concepts and Culture

- The concept of portfolios was incorporated into children’s thinking almost from the moment they were introduced into the classroom, although some of this thinking included uncertainty, even anxiety about participating in the process.

- Although portfolio’s negotiated quality became increasingly evident as the year progressed, children were actively constructing and altering the meaning of portfolio from the time it was introduced in the classroom to the de-briefing interviews that were conducted after school was out in June. I conceptualized the portfolio as a system with teacher-
determined specifications that students must follow initially and which could be "relaxed" later in the process; in fact, from the outset, individual and group negotiations and translations occurred.

-I learned that it was neither possible or nor desirable to "transmit" portfolio specifications to my students.

-Students' constructions of portfolio had developmental features [e.g., valuing fun and social affiliation] that resemble those of youth genres in writing (Daiute, 1993);
- I assumed that I could "see" everything that was happening in the development of portfolios; students appropriated some of my norms about participating in portfolio processes, but other norms, tacit ones about participation, also formed in this process.

-The portfolio conversations and the portfolio experience itself might be viewed as a speech genre (Bakhtin, 1986). Students were involved in formulating utterances, addressing audiences, and responding to speakers. A speech genre framework proved especially useful for interpreting events in portfolio processes. There were some striking examples of students speaking for someone other than themselves and/or addressing audiences outside the classroom.

-A primary criterion students used for including works in their portfolios was that it had been "fun," which had a culturally determined meaning.

-Some conversations, specifically those in which standards and criteria were discussed, held such importance for students that emotionally charged arguments ensued allowing students to use skills of analysis and persuasion; one unanticipated language event that this portfolio implementation supported was the opportunity for children to
argue and build cases (Toulmin, 1958); *warrants* were also present in the reflective aspect of making portfolio selections.

**Influences on Thinking**

- Changes in students' thinking about what a portfolio is were evidenced in their oral language and appear to have been influenced initially by examples I gave them. Therefore, some portfolio conversations can be viewed as opportunities to work with a student in his/her zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1986); over time, group influences seemed equal in impact to the teacher's initial interactions with students, however.

- While I tended to view portfolios as vehicles for demonstrating intellectual achievements, their ability to preserve experience may have had equal influence on some students' thinking.

- Students selected works for their portfolio based on a surprising variety of personally determined and developmentally influenced criteria; they did not always select "best works" in a conventional, accountability-driven sense;

- Some students built their portfolios around themes or goals that are of personal importance to them and appear to be involved with constructing narratives through the portfolio;

- The selection process in portfolio involved students in constructing "warrants" (Toulmin, 1958). The warrants developed to support their work were constructed in different ways depending upon the perceived audience for the warrant; students made these shifts in warrant style without overt instructions from the teacher.
Implications For Practice, Policy, and Research

Although it is based in one classroom, this study may offer some views of portfolios and their possibilities that will be useful in discussions about the nature of classroom based assessment and its tenuous relationship to many of the external demands for portfolio assessment. This study indicates some areas of portfolio implementation that are likely to spark debates:

*Who defines what constitutes a portfolio and how it is to be constructed?

*What role does dialogicality play in meeting the needs of individual students and classes and how does dialogicality contribute to variability in portfolio implementations?

*What risks might teachers have to assume in developing a thoughtful portfolio implementation? How does this risk-taking get supported?

*What effect is perceived audience likely to have on the way students construct their portfolios and what purposes they are able to use them for?

*What are the questions for additional research that might follow from a study such as this one?

Defining Portfolios

CHAPTER I’s survey, particularly the Winter & Herman (1994) article, suggests that shared definitions about what constitutes a portfolio don’t yet exist. Policy makers and assessment designers seem to be ignoring the reality that portfolios have to be constructed. They can be constructed under conditions of high support and real cultivation, or they can represent a quick harvest of student samples. This study suggests that the instructional benefits accompanying
these two different approaches are unlikely to be the same. Whether the end products available in these two approaches can be compared is not only a technical question but an ethical one as well (Wile & Tierney, in press).

This study offers a perspective, that definitional issues regarding what the portfolio actually is and does are resolved in the co-construction of portfolios undertaken by teachers and students. This isn’t a matter of what policy makers think should happen; it appears that this process is what is likely to happen. It is wishful thinking that a definition standardized in an instruction booklet can be transmitted uniformly. Given the nature of learners and learning, it is likely that whatever is presented to students will be modified by the rules of participation and locally developed values (e.g., the “fun” criterion) either implicit or explicit that students construct. The rules can be a simple and powerful as, “Yes, we take this seriously and agree to try to do a good job with it,” or “This evaluation belongs to someone that we don’t know and perhaps shouldn’t trust: why should we try?” This study offers strong evidence that practitioners and policy makers would be ill-advised to proceed with portfolio implementation without acknowledging the role of student-constructed understandings of portfolios.

**Dialogicality**

In this study, once the basic “game” for portfolios was launched, the pattern appeared to be the more dialogicality, that is, openness and opportunities for negotiation, the
richer the thinking. Compare Carey’s tentative example of the “shoe maker” keeping a portfolio with the articulation of his discovery in January that the reflective questions don’t fit the way he thinks about portfolio. As practitioners, we don’t usually think in explicit terms about a dialogicality index. This something I intend to watch closely in future portfolio implementations, however. A simple question for teachers and administrators regarding dialogicality is Are students provided with opportunities to talk about their portfolios as they are being developed?

With more dialogicality (choices and ownership), however, more instances of play and developmental appropriations are likely to be evident in the portfolio implementation. This creates a dilemma for practitioners and policy makers in that child-selected “best works” may not be the same examples an adult would select for accountability purposes. This returns us to an earlier discussion of who controls what goes into the portfolio. Flexibility and the freedom to choose your worst works as exemplars of what you intend never to do again is likely to be problematic for those seeking “world-class” standards of achievement. Better thinking through more play and idiosyncratic portfolio selections will be hard to sell in some quarters.

**Risk-Taking**

As the dialogicality discussion indicates, many of the findings in this study would suggest that the greatest examples of individual growth or collective higher level thinking demonstrations demanded risk-taking from the
individuals involved. Both Shalendra and Vincent had to become comfortable with the sort of public persona that portfolios in school required. Some of my own greatest risks involved placing this particular class in open-ended discussion situations; I felt there was always the potential for an interpersonal disaster or the opportunity for colleagues to observe my class behaving in an "out of control" fashion.

Sometimes portfolio implementations may require both patience and courage from teachers and administrators as a dialogical storm must be ridden out with a particular class. For policy makers, however, it may develop that much more attention needs to be paid to providing opportunities for risk-taking within a classroom implementation to undergird efforts in collecting samples for standardized judgments about "performance."

**Significance of Audience**

One of the more intriguing findings in this study was how both Shalendra and Vincent developed different types of warrants for audiences they perceived as more distant and official. They seemed to have an intuitive sense of how to build their strongest case when talking to an outside audience about their work. This issue of audience perception in warranting and show casing work needs further study.

It also seems clear, however, that the classroom portfolios in this study were developed for an immediate, informal, and intimate audience, one in which many understandings were shared. Bruner (1991) and Bakhtin (1986)
would both argue, I believe, that these portfolios were really the co-constructions of individual students and the audience who received them. Construction is shared and meaning is contextualized both in the life of classroom events and family narratives (Bruner, 1991). Like the latest constructs of intelligence (Resnick, 1992), the accomplishments of individual portfolios tend to be distributed among the those who participated in the construction of them.

From a policy-making point of view, meaning, significance, and interpretive power appear to be lost when portfolios are removed from the sites in which they were developed and the individuals who developed them. Vincent's "best work" selections provide such an example. If one looks at his finished products only, they represent a fairly constrained portrait of his accomplishments with reasoning, goal-setting, and metacognitive insights.

Remaining Unanswered Questions

This study has been very much like a portfolio experience for me. Like Vincent and Shalendra, I had all the evidence gathered for some time. The meanings of the evidence, the narratives they contained, emerged over time. Sometimes, as in the case of the selections transcript, the meaning shifted quite radically. I thought an hour and a half discussion about what number to pick had little to offer in the way of higher-level thinking. I simply had to learn to look at this transcript in a different way, less like the teacher/participant who sat in the room and felt completely
exhausted from the tension during the discussion and more like a researcher trying recognize "development" and "higher level thinking" as it operated among these students.

A disadvantage of being a teacher/researcher in this situation is that so much of the analysis had to be done post hoc, leaving many questions unanswered or to be pursued later. If I had known, for example, how important the selections transcript was going to be, I would have introduced it as a topic in the de-briefing interview. The same thing is true for the analysis of warrants. I am left in the de-briefing interview transcript with fragments of things I would like to have pursued: Vincent saying that he "enjoy[s] arguing"; Taylor, remarking offhandedly in regard to the selections discussion, "We had an argument about that one, didn’t we?"

The following list represents further investigations that this study has suggested to me:

* More work with the narratives that may be developed in the portfolio process including the relationship between larger family narratives and the individual student’s narrative.

* More ethnographic research with on-line analysis and questions during the course of the data collection to probe the interesting questions (e.g., perceptions of higher level thinking demands like warranting; perceived audiences and portfolio decision-making) that emerge in process.

* More case studies including profiles of the "quiet students"; their warranting processes and narratives (if they exist) would be of special interest.
What role gender plays in determining portfolio participation; how a balance of speakers might be supported when one gender tends to dominate.

Warranting as it might occur in other instances of classroom talk; warranting’s relationship to other types higher level thinking in everyday settings.

Investigation of other possible instances of play combined with higher level thinking in classroom activities.

How students perceive audience in the development of their portfolios.

The conclusion of a study such as this one, which deals in the complexities of classroom life, would benefit from powerful and carefully chosen final words regarding its ultimate meanings. In many ways, however, the most powerful words in this study aren’t likely to be mine. A key feature of this study is how much of the story of these particular portfolios resides in the transcripts of the students’ conversations. The students are, as it should be, center stage much of the time with their own demonstrations of learning.

These were people I lived with for a year. I thought I knew them quite well. As a class, they were the most challenging group I had encountered in ten years of classroom work with children. I was reluctant to revisit certain stressful classroom episodes and to write about them. I
certainly didn’t expect to be dazzled by this group. But in living with them in this way, having an opportunity to sit with them once more, not as their teacher who felt responsible for managing their behavior, but as a careful and interested observer, I rediscovered them. I admire the brilliant thinking they engaged in—at times in spite of me.

Perhaps the transformed view of the learners in this study is a key to the real potential of portfolios. We may need portfolios as a valuing process much more than we need them as standardized assessment tools. We need their constant demonstrations of what critical thinking looks like when children take it up as their own without prompting from thinking skills workbooks. And we need the opportunity that portfolios give us to witness and influence the selves our students are inventing. We also need theoretically driven assessment models that acknowledge the limitations of external out-of-context evaluations in representing everything that a child has constructed and is able to do well. I close with these reminders from Vincent and Shalendra about the advantages of keeping portfolios:

Well, I’m glad that I changed because then I could broaden my horizons sort of . . . harder things sort of help . . . Portfolio is like sort of when I come back and [I can see] if I would be like this. And I think it’s really a reward, because if you really have a change you can see what your interests were when you were smaller and how it has affected you when you are older. (Shalendra, Age 11)

Sometimes you forget the little things and then you come upon them and you think they’re really neat . . . You can put in your best pictures, and then when you get older and you guys are like 30 or so, you’ll go back looking at these and you’ll see what you were doing when you were little. And that’s kind of like a record of your life of what you were doing at
What these children have discovered through their experience with portfolios gives them a connection with a larger process of intellectual inquiry and commitment to learning. Their language is comfortable, but its power to also describe the mature processes of researching, reflection and writing should not be ignored. I feel very much like Shalendra and Vincent about my own studies. Their discoveries about learning have been my discoveries, too. Classroom portfolios can offer children a natural initiation into the processes of inquiry, reflection, discussion, and debate and that may be one of the best opportunities we can ever hope to provide them with in school.
APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE S.1 SHALENDRA’S JANUARY LETTER
EXAMPLE S.2 SHALENDRA’S JUNE LETTER
1-3-94

Dear Reader,

This is my explanation of why I selected each of these pieces.

1. Non-Fiction/Informal
   For this selection I picked the research I did on the Incas. I selected this piece because all of the facts are true and it was really fascinating. What skilled farmers the Incas were. I also selected this piece because the Macchu Picchu was such an elaborate wonder that I think it would have taken good people that worked together to make something like that. I felt kind of good for them for achieving so much.

2. Fiction
   I have selected my ice age story for this category. I picked this ice age story because I felt good about it and I put part of (over) it.

Example S.1 Shalendra's January Letter
myself into it. It was really funny, and relieved when I had

Finally finished it. When I was

writing that, I felt the emotion

of being...
was the girl in the story. Like I had the same hatred for the Nazis as she did. And I was helpless and could not be saved.

I hope you as the reader enjoyed this introduction.

Sincerely,
June 1, 1994

Dear Reader,

I think I really improved this year. There are things I did well in reading and writing. For instance, my true Confessions of Charlotte Doyle reading log. Instead of telling the reader all that happened, I analyzed it instead. I wrote what I think, not just writing something for a good grade. My second idea was animal intelligence. A paper I wrote on thinking and analyzing skills. I think I was able to use my reading and research abilities well. I felt I was able to grasp concepts well.

My last choice is my science-fiction story. I did quite a bit of research to do this story. I think I put my facts into an imaginative story well. With reading, I read basic books on Venus and wrote a factual what would fit in well.
I feel that reading and writing is one of my best subjects.
APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE V.1  VINCENT’S DESIGNS AND PORTFOLIO ANNOTATION CARDS
EXAMPLE V.2  VINCENT’S JANUARY AND JUNE LETTERS
EXAMPLE V.3  VINCENT’S ANNOTATION CARDS FOR HIS SHOWCASE EXHIBIT
EXAMPLE V.4  VINCENT’S PORTFOLIO ANNOTATION CARD AND DRAFT OF “JOURNEY TO BECOME A MAN” (ICE AGE STORY)
EXAMPLE V.5  VINCENT’S PORTFOLIO ANNOTATION CARD AND FINAL COPY OF “THE WORLD OF ORANGUTANS” (ANIMAL INTELLIGENCES STUDY)
EXAMPLE V.6  TRANSCRIBED VERSION OF “JOURNEY TO BECOME A MAN”
I put this in 10:45 because I want to work hard on it.
EXAMPLE V.1  VINCENT’S DESIGNS AND PORTFOLIO ANNOTATION CARDS

--CONTINUED
I draw these because I like to draw. I put these in the portfolio.
Dear Reader,

This is my best work. I evaluated it to the best of my ability. I don't think about what it feels like to write. I just write when I feel like it. I don't really think about it. If you would like you to tell me more about what I need to write.

Sincerely,
I can read and write. And I can write in my own voice and make seem like I saying in it myself. I sense I understand what I read.
Dear Reader,

These selections show I'm a good reader and writer. They also show I can write in my own voice and make it seem like I'm saying it myself. Like in my Readers' Loge. It shows I understand what I'm reading. My poems show I can write poetry. My story shows I can write with another person.

This letter shows I can read these directions and follow them.

See you,

EXAMPLE V.2 VINCENT'S JANUARY AND JUNE LETTERS ——CONTINUED
Boy scout pins

These are special awards. I picked them because they mean a lot to me. I learned a lot earning them.

Ice hockey and skates

These are my hockey skates and certificate. I chose these because I love to skate. I also just learned how to skate this year.
My Uncle's house

This is a poem I wrote about my uncle's house. I picked it because it is the first poem I ever wrote. I learned poems are like music with the rhyme.
I put this in my portfolio because the story I've ever written is the loneliest.

It ran to weight.

EXAMPLE V.4 VINCENT'S PORTFOLIO ANNOTATION CARD AND DRAFT OF "JOURNEY TO BECOME A MAN" (ICE AGE STORY)
The Hunter Journey

Turns to become

Today, you are 13

Teen years, what do I have to do?

Yes, today you turn 13

Teen years, what do I have to do?

You'll have to go out with only

A dog and a small person.

That's before this long time

Out in the wilderness

By year self, you must

Have the spirit, with you, Simith

Did not know what grand,

Entertainment But he would

Seek. Soon, find out, with him,

Got his killer mask and

EXAMPLE V. 4 VINCENT'S PORTFOLIO ANNOTATION CARD AND DRAFT OF "JOURNEY TO BECOME A MAN" (ICE AGE STORY) --CONTINUED
put his wad mammoth and he put his mammoth on then he put his pants on then he was ready. Jonathan pulled the sled out of the house attached the dog said his name good bye to grand papa said he was off. Jonathan thinking of what grand papa said you must be prepared and you must have the mammoth spirit with you. Jonathan wondered about that meaning. He was find out soon enough. Jonathan put the snow back on the dogs sled down. Jonathan took the two shots of leather found on ice hang over Jonathan took the two shots of...
bison  esther  and  no  bison  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

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the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

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unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

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unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

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unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and

the  bison  lady  and  no  esther  lady  and  no  bison  lady  and  no

unbuckled  the  bison  and  took  them  in  to  the  dogs  and
a letter from the kill.
Joniton felt good
because he had service
for two days, he
only had 1 more
day left to go.
Now that he was
exhausted for the night
he thought about
what his grand-father
had said. You must have
the mammoth spirit
with you. Joniton
thought he took new
good grand-father ment.
He went you must have
spirit and hope with you.
He ate at all times.
And he relaxed. Joniton
woke up early the next
morning. Joniton ate
some meat, he got
his stuff loaded on the
sled. Then he hitched
the dog's up to the sled.
and they where off. on the way home, they traveled all day. by sun down Janitor was more than 2/3 of the way home. so Janitor made a left to feed his dogs. then he ate some his suse, then he drifted to sleep, then around 3 in the morning Janitor herd a loud roar. Janitor's dogs were on the to hit it. Janitor was frightened at first. but then he thought. proved his people would be if he brat a mammoth bone. So Janitor got his spears out and go the best to chase him. he said his life to him.
EXAMPLE V.4
"JOURNEY TO BECOME A MAN" (ICE AGE STORY) CONTINUED

As he walked along the beach, the mastiff, Brownie, ran ahead, sniffing the air. Vincent, the boy, followed close behind, his eyes fixed on the distant shore. A group of mammoths was seen in the distance, grazing peacefully. Vincent knew that they were sacred animals, and he had heard stories of how they could give strength and courage to those who sought their blessing.

"I want to be a mammoth hunter," he thought, "so I can join the best hunters."

He quickened his pace, determined to prove himself. As he approached the herd, he noticed one of the mammoths was wounded. It was clearly in distress.

"Help it," his brother, John, shouted from the beach. "We can kill it now!"

Vincent hesitated. He had always admired the mammoths, and the thought of harming them was repugnant to him. He turned to his brother, "We can't kill it. We must help it first!"

John rolled his eyes, "What would you know about hunting?"

Vincent looked at the injured mammoth with determination. "I know what I would do," he replied.

He ran towards the mammoth, his heart racing. The animal seemed to sense his kindness and tried to stand, although it struggled.

Vincent climbed onto the mammoth's back, and with a yell, he threw his arms around its neck. "Hang on, you great, strong animal," he cried. "I'll help you!"

The mammoth, sensing his purpose, lifted itself up, and Vincent felt the surge of its powerful limbs. Together, they made their way back towards the beach.

When they reached the water's edge, Vincent helped the mammoth to drink, and it slowly began to calm down. It was obvious that it had suffered much and was weak from injury.

"Thank you," the mammoth whispered, "you have helped me."

Vincent smiled, "I'm glad I could help."

The mammoth nodded, "I've heard of you, Vincent. You are a very brave boy."

Vincent beamed, his heart filled with pride. He knew that the encounter with the mammoth would stay with him always, a reminder of his courage and his determination to be a great hunter.
they were off to home. Joniton was thinking of his dream. He knew about who the great man was. It was him. It was Joniton, the great mamithunter, at midday. Joniton got home. His people were starving. They had not found any game. So Joniton gave them the mamith meat to eat. They had a rest in honor of Joniton, the mamithunter. Joniton told his people all about his army. They were all proud of him.
EXAMPLE V 5  VINCENT'S PORTFOLIO ANNOTATION CARD AND FINAL COPY OF "THE WORLD OF ORANGUTANS" (ANIMAL INTELLIGENCES STUDY)
The World of Orangutans

When you think about gorillas, chimps and orangutans you either think of them as monkeys or just apes. Am I right? I thought so. Until about 20 years ago people thought that Orangutans were just another ape. But they are not. If you compared orangutans with chimps and Gorilas, you would see they are very different. Chimps are much more violent, gorillas are much bigger and shier. Now here is the rest on orangutans.

HABITATS

Orangutans are the only native great apes to Borneo and Sumatra. Orangutans build new nests every day. They carefully construct them with big leaves and branches. Orangutans construct canapes out of leaves if it is raining. These home are usually located high in the trees.

Male and Female Territories

Male Orangutan's have territories that can strech up too 2 square miles.
Suspected missing page 294.
Mothers and Babies

Young Orangutans love to play. They spend a lot of time learning. Most of their knowledge is taught and not instinct to them. Young babies will not eat solid food until they are at least one year of age. They will nurse until one. The only time you will see two sleeping together is when it is a mother and her child. Mother orangutans really cherish their young.

How Smart Are Orangutans?

One way to show how intelligent orangutans are is how they raise their young. Another way is how they have been tested in research. They have used hammers and screwdrivers to pry open things. But we still wonder how smart they really are. We may never know that. We may find out tomorrow. My point is even now they do some intelligent things. They still are not smarter than us.
The Journey to Become a Man

"Jonathan, Jonathan!"

"What?"

"Today you become a man," said Jonathan’s father, Medla.

"Today?" Jonathan said.

"Yes, today you turn 13, and it is clan pride that you become a man. You have to go out into the wilderness by yourself for 3 moons with only a dog sled and small spears and 2 sheets of bison leather."

Before long he visited his grandfather the tribe smart one. Grandfather told him the story of when he was 13. Grandfather said, "You must be prepared and you must have the mammoth spirit with you."

Jonathan did not know what Grandfather meant, but he would soon find out. Jonathan got his leather mask and put his mammoth leggings on. Then he put his greased moccasins, jacket, hood, snow pants, greased knee boots on, and then he was ready to go. Jonathan pulled the sled out of the lean-to, attached the dog sled, and said his final goodbye to Grandfather. And he was off.

Thinking of what Grandfather said, "You must have the mammoth spirit with you," Jonathan wondered what that meant. He would find out soon enough.
Jonathan put the snow brake on the dogs' sled down. Jonathan took the two sheets of bison leather, found an ice hang over and made a door out of one of the sheets of bison leather. Jonathan unhooked the dogs and took them into the shelter. The dogs would [ ] be out of the cold, but they will keep Jonathan warm, too.

The next morning, Jonathan woke up early to go hunt. Jonathan hooked the dogs up and gathered the bison leather up. Jonathan yelled, "Mush!" very loudly to get to dogs to go. The lead dog caught a moose track. The dogs went wild chasing the [moose]. [When they] finally caught up with it, Jonathan quieted the dogs, got a small spear out, then he let the lead dog free. The lead dog teased the moose. The moose charged Jonathan. The dog jumped toward the moose. The moose turned its head toward the dog, making a straight path to the moose's heart. I [Jonathan] guided the small spear into the moose's heart killing it instantly. Jonathan thanked the gods for the kill.

Jonathan skinned the animal. Then he gave some meat to his dogs. Then he gave some to himself. Then he set up a lean-to using the leather from the kill. Jonathan felt good because he had survived for two days. He only had 1 more to go. Now that he was situated for the night, he thought about what his grandfather had said. "You must have the mammoth
spirit with you." Jonathan thought he knew what grandfather meant. He meant you must have spirit and hope with you at all times. And he fell asleep. Jonathan woke up early the next morning. Jonathan ate some meat. He got his stuff loaded on the sled. Then he hitched the dogs up to the sled, and they were off on their way home.

They traveled all day and by sundown, Jonathan was more than 3/4 of the way home. So Jonathan made a lean-to and fed his dogs. Then he ate some hi[m]self. Then he drifted to sleep.

Around 3:00 in the morning, Jonathan heard a loud roar. Jonathan's dogs were trying to fight a mammoth. Jonathan was frightened at first, but he thought how proud his people would be if he brought a mammoth home. So Jonathan got his spears up and then did the best to charge him. He saw his life before him. He saw a young man, a very brave young man called Great Mammoth Hunter. He wondered who he was. Then the mammoth charged.

Jonathan asked the gods if he could kill his brother mammoth. The dog leaped at the mammoth and the mammoth turned his head, leaving a space straight to the beast's heart. So Jonathan guided the spear into the heart of the mammoth. It died almost instantly. Jonathan skinned the beast and took as much meat as he could and all the leather. Then he loaded his supplied and attached the dogs and they were off toward home.

EXAMPLE V.6 TRANSCRIBED VERSION OF "JOURNEY TO BECOME A MAN" --CONTINUED
Jonathan was thinking of his dream. He knew who the
great man was. It was him. It was Jonathan the Great
Mammoth Hunter. About midday, Jonathan got home. His people
were starving. They had not found any game lately, so
Jonathan gave them the mammoth meat to eat. They had a feast
in honor of Jonathan the Mammoth Hunter. Jonathan told his
people all about his journey. They were all proud of him.
LIST OF REFERENCES


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