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A COLLABORATIVE STUDY OF STUDENT WRITERS' USES OF TEACHER EVALUATION

The Ohio State University

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A COLLABORATIVE STUDY OF
STUDENT WRITERS' USES
OF TEACHER EVALUATION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Charles Marc Edelsberg, B.A., M.A.T.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
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To Leslie, Don, Fran, and the eighth-period Intermediate Composition students
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Problem Background: The Back-to-Basics Movement

Concern today over students' proficiency in so-called basic skills is undeniably widespread. At last count, for example, no fewer than thirty-six State legislatures had mandated for their public school systems some form of minimum competency testing, an expanding technology and handmaiden to the back-to-basics movement. Although interpretations of what is basic vary radically, proponents are virtually unanimous in citing written communication competence as one fundamental skill essential to any student's high school education. While the precise nature and scope of writing competency desired by back-to-basics supporters remain unclear, it is certain that overt pressure to produce better student writers has focused national attention on all aspects of the teaching of writing.

As a result of this pervasive interest in back-to-basics, the matter of evaluating student writing now occupies a prominent place in the public debate over the quality of education offered in our schools. Accountability advocates contend that a return to strict, highly formalized evaluation practices will automatically improve student
worrying. Others—teachers, scholars, and political activists among them—protest that evaluation efforts fail because they rank pupils against a single standard and provide learners only scant information on their academic performance. Adherents to both positions urge English teachers to upgrade their assessment of students' written work.

The Research Problem

Amidst the clamor over basic skills, a number of publications have appeared which depict writing as a complex, process-based activity and those learning to write as dynamic, meaning-making individuals. This recent literature points to the need for direct inquiry into student experience of the school curriculum. The problem for my study acknowledges this call for research and rests on the premise that as researcher "I am not down to the basic data until I know what's going on in an individual child's experiencing." Because students are clients of the school, it is crucial to understand what meaning the evaluation of students' written work carries for individual pupils. Evaluation itself undoubtedly affects how and what students learn to write.

Stated in general terms, the research question for this study is: How does evaluation of students' writing function for learners?. In order to generate some preliminary descriptive material related to the research problem, I have conducted a participant-observation study of one high school composition class, examining the following issues:

- In what ways do students use teacher commentary on their writing?
What are the effects of teacher assessment on students' perceptions of their writing progress?

How do teacher-learner relationships influence individuals' performance in composition?

As part of the study, I have also explored the nature of teacher commentary, looking for answers to two salient questions:

- Of what does teacher-written evaluation consist?
- How might we explain why this particular teacher evaluates as she does?

Methodology

The process of becoming a writer is complex, perhaps variable and even idiosyncratic. Yet we have little research documenting for us the details of this evolution. Most research on both the learning and teaching of writing has been oriented toward what Virginia Koehler calls "improvement study." Typically experimental in design, this inquiry is positivistic, quantitative, and reductionist. Experimental investigations have either isolated parts of the writing/teaching act or extracted the writer/teacher from the school environment to which research findings are then directly applied. Clark and Florio, commenting on the limitations of improvement study, assert that Aiming for large scale, behavioral characterizations of writing instruction, the studies do not tend to arise from or contribute to a theory of writing and its pedagogy that is either holistic or grounded in the experiences of the teachers and students engaged in the process.
I do not believe improvement study is the sole, legitimate way to research writing. Before student response to teacher evaluation on students' written work can be quantified, for example, we require qualitative research describing the complete range and nature of evaluation's meaning for learners. The task of accurately disclosing how students experience teacher evaluation, it seems to me, is equally important as measuring that phenomenon. More to the point, my research premises that school writing instruction and students' school performance in composition ought to be studied in context, especially if findings are intended to address school writing concerns. Whereas experimentalism typically uses the laboratory for its setting, this inquiry is naturalistic: it focuses on participants' everyday, in-school experience of the composition curriculum.

In the attempt to capture a meaningful picture of student use of teacher comment on students' written work, I have used field research methodology, relying heavily on participant-observation strategies to collect evidence. Broadly speaking, participant-observation in this study entailed extensive note-taking on ongoing classroom events, participation in class activities--both in the role of student and teacher, collection of student and teacher opinions on class proceedings and on a variety of other writing-related concerns (partly gathered, it should be noted, via the use of such conventional devices as questionnaires, audiotapes, and interviews), and close study of student writing. Participant-observation has enabled me to explore how evaluation functions for students from their respective vantage points in the
educational process. Aiming to disclose the manner in which students experience teacher evaluation on their writing, I selected a research methodology which put me close to individual pupils, allowed for intensive, long-term observation, and gave me access to the mental life—the phenomenological reality—of both students and teacher. I have also included as an essential component of my methodology teacher collaboration. The classroom teacher, in other words, worked as a coresearcher, helping me to collect and interpret evidence. Thus the study incorporates two perspectives on the research problem. In Chapter Three, I examine in much greater detail the methodological features of this study.

Ideographic—descriptive—research of the kind I have conducted regards each context as unique and generalizes primarily within individual cases amid richly detailed reporting of situation-specific evidence. In this endeavor, the researcher subordinates testing of hypotheses to understanding how participants construe their world. By contrast, nomothetic science carried out in the experimental tradition, geared as it is for generalizing across numbers and situations, tries to hold environmental variables constant and averages out individual differences to produce statistically reliable data. The experimentalist screens out participants' account of events; the phenomenologically-oriented qualitative researcher tries to exploit individuals' natural powers to report on and make sense of their experience and thus uses their self-reports as an integral part of the research in describing the qualities of a particular phenomenon.
Whether or not phenomenologically-based qualitative research, also known as the disclosure approach, is an inherently better way to conduct educational study than experimental science is not at stake. I agree with Gail McCutcheon's observation that "rather than promote a new orthodoxy by arguing for the exclusive use of an alternative approach, the intent ... [in qualitative research] is to broaden our base of research tools."¹⁰ I would propose that while the respective research paradigms have their appropriate uses, conventional research instrumentation are not appropriate for this study, since they cannot produce the first-hand information I seek from students on their school-based, writing-related behavior: "Descriptions of products, controlled methodological studies, or studies in correlations are too far removed from reporting what children actually do to be of help... ."¹¹

**Rationale for this Inquiry**

Dwight Burton and Lois Arnold assert that

> Teachers and administrators have long assumed that is a student were... to have his paper carefully corrected, he would improve in written expression. With this study [that of Burton and Arnold] and others placing the security of such an assumption in question, the entire field of writing invites further exploration.¹²

We do not know why students whose papers are marked carefully do not improve their writing basically because researchers have not inquired into student experience of teacher marking. Most research in the field finds students examined merely in terms of information mastery and test
achievement. A review of the literature on evaluating composition reveals that "while there are occasional Papers (e.g., Stratta, 1969) written on responding, very little is known of the ways pupils receive these remarks, comments, and criticisms..." 13

One main reason for conducting this research, then, is to explore the student writer's world in a way that it is infrequently examined. I seek to balance etic understanding—an outsider's interpretation of a set of events—with a healthy dose of emic research—reports on students' personal, inside experience of teacher evaluation on their writing as described by students themselves. One kind of account without the other results in an incomplete rendering of what teacher evaluation on students' written work means to learners. In admitting student and teacher self-report as evidence, I am attempting to attend to the complexity of school life as experienced by its participants.

Even though "it is becoming increasingly clear that teacher evaluation of student writing, offered as a final judgement on a finished product, is only minimally useful as a tool for learning," 14 hardly any research documents what happens in the composition program where continuous feedback is the norm. A second purpose for carrying out this research is to report on such a program, one in which the teacher regularly provides for formative assessment.

Another related consideration not yet probed by composing researchers is the nature of teacher comment made on student writing. D.G. Kehl states that "it seems valid to conclude that the practice of commenting on student themes has often been faulted because the wrong kind of
comments have too often been written."¹⁵ This research project discusses the character of teacher assessment and its relative effectiveness as perceived by learners.

A fourth rationale supporting my research is its holistic approach to the study of evaluating writing. Most studies in this area consider evaluation independent of other elements in the curriculum. I assume that a teacher's evaluation practices and student response to them cannot be separated either from other parts of the composition program or from overall teacher/student interaction. How the teacher provisions (that is, arranges and orchestrates) the writing environment influences the entire evaluation process. Context helps to explain students' experience of evaluation. Classrooms are social places; they are small communities possessing distinct organizational structures and exerting powerful performance demands on members. As already noted, this study differs from most writing research in that it documents the function of evaluation for students in the process of their becoming writers within the classroom environment where learnings about composition skills ostensibly occur. Instead of trying to strip away context, I have immersed myself in the natural environment, fully expecting context to be the essential "resource for understanding" that it is in students' everyday lives.¹⁶

A sixth justification for doing this research is that the design calls for working collaboratively with a classroom teacher. More often than not, where teachers are involved in research, they are the objects of the study: researchers work on teachers, not with them.¹⁷ In such
cases, questions are asked and data subsequently collected which do not necessarily speak to the concerns of the teacher. In this research project, by contrast, the teacher has helped collect, analyze, and interpret evidence; she has been a partner in the research enterprise. My belief is that the teacher can add credibility and comprehensiveness to the research by supplementing it with her insights. Very simply, the teacher has access to information not available to the researcher, and she adds a perspective to the study that would otherwise be lacking. In particular, I have elicited teacher collaboration "because it increases the likelihood that the descriptive model thus devised will represent the sense-making of participants... and thus be valid ethnographically."18

In summary, the overriding rationale for this study is the belief that close, intensive, collaborative classroom inquiry can make significant contributions to our understanding of the whole school writing evaluation process.

**Two Theories of Composition and its Instruction**

According to Gunnar Myrdal, in doing any kind of research...

...the value premises determine the whole approach to a problem and have relevance for the definition of concepts, the formulation of theory, and the methods of observation and of presenting results.19

In order to clarify the value orientation underlying my research into composition, I now turn to consider briefly two contrasting models of writing and its instruction: the current-traditional and interactionist approaches.20 I will review each theory's assumptions on composing,
manifest evaluation practices, and student-teacher relationships as I understand (and have observed) them to evolve in the respective approaches.

The Current-Traditional Writing Model

The current-traditional model which characterizes conventional composition theory and practice is enmeshed in a product view of writing. In this model, there exist four modes of discourse, seven ways to develop a paragraph, one function for the topic sentence, and a topic sentence in every paragraph. Writing is approached through analysis of discrete words, sentences, paragraphs, essays, and research papers, consecutively. Writing also gets dissected from perceiving, thinking, expressing, and acting, as evidenced in the dis-integration of English skill instruction. Actual practice in composition is restricted largely to the formal essay and research paper. Pedagogy is most often behaviorally oriented. Students are expected to eliminate error in their writing simply by referring to handbooks. Furthermore, it is assumed that all writers can employ identical rule-governed procedures in every communication context and mechanically produce the "right" arrangement of words. An implicit requirement is for students to append "correct" information to teacher assigned theses statements. Knowledge supposedly can be accumulated one step at a time and becomes internalized through a chain of stimulus-response events. All learners proceed at the same rate through an identical series of exercises. 21

The prescriptive current-traditional approach to writing I believe presents a distorted image of the composing act. The model assumes, for
example, that all writing is essentially argumentative in nature when
both common sense and scholarship show us that much writing is funda-
mentally expressive. The approach also mistakes modes of writing,
**i.e.**, description, narration, exposition, and argumentation, for the
means by which writing is produced. Moreover, as Regina Rinderer and
others show, current-traditional theory gives us no insight into the
psychology of composing and disregards intuition, the unconscious, and
other significant affective dimensions of composing. In fact, this
model of writing codifies the act and demands uniform behavior of
students. It aims at standardization of writers' products. Given
such a perspective, the individual shrinks to an insignificant dimension.
Psychological factors present when the writer works are either over­
looked or deemed unimportant. An individual's personal history is thought
to be an irrelevant component of that person's writing behavior.

On another level entirely, the current-traditional model ignores the
social dimension of composing. Writing, although always an individual
act, is as well a social activity. For the interactionist (drawing
variously on the work of Piaget, Bruner, Moffett, Vygotsky, Adam Schaff,
Dewey, and Freire), writing springs from the interactions originating
among people in common, everyday social intercourse. These interactions
are stored selectively in individual consciousness, embedded in inner
speech, and then reflected in what the writer composes. Writing is a
manifestation of thinking, itself "socially conditioned and... impossible
without the thinking individual's participation in the human community... ."
Given this perspective, the interactionist perceives writing to contain both personal and social expression and attempts to understand how the writer's composing process reflects each and how the two can be more immediately interrelated to maximize writing development:

"From an interactionist's viewpoint, in writing (as in all communicating) the aim is to build bridges between one's own beliefs or ideas and those of others."26 In the current-traditional approach, attention is focused exclusively on product: writing is read literally, without effort to reconstruct the process by which and the underlying purpose for which the writer put the composition together in its particular form. In sum, current-traditional theory does not account for the place of the person in the process; it deflects attention from the individual writer to the finished product.

Evaluation in current-traditional practice evidences this disproportionate emphasis on standardized products. Teachers who operate out of the current-traditional framework can be observed to make most writing test-like. Students write on demand. They rarely are asked to compose several drafts of a paper. Evaluation focuses on mechanics—spelling, punctuation, usage, etc. Teacher markings normally include detailed symbols and words such as "clarity," "conciseness," and "coherence," which, as Irmscher notes, "are probably not very meaningful to students as abstract entities."27

With its excessive emphasis on a standardized notion of "correctness," current-traditional evaluation induces students to automatically equate error-free composition with good writing. Students' main objective in
writing becomes that of avoiding error. Sharon Pianko asserts that evaluation which creates this situation fails to help learners reflect on the substance of their writing and does not help them learn how to expand and elaborate their composing skills.28

Current-traditional evaluation is formal, summative, and external to writers. It stresses form over content. It also derives from the mistaken assumption that an essay's surface linguistic features represent direct translation of writers' thoughts.29 But "in fact, the finished essay is only an illusion of what composing actually is."30 In an insightful article on archaeological interpretation of student writing, Louise Phelps appeals for a reading of student writing based on "an effort to grasp the potential implicit in it, by a process of expert inference from clues in the text."31 Phelps contends that the teacher's first responsibility as evaluator is to respond to what the writer says, not to how ideas are conveyed. Phelps argues that teachers who read student papers as proofreaders/examiners, without providing personal comment on the message and meaning the individual writer has tried to present, short-circuit the communication function that writing supposedly fulfills. When the teacher poses as examiner, revision functions only to allow the writer to edit the essay, not to reformulate ideas or to recast sections of the composition. In this scheme, then, evaluation is not incorporated into the composing process. Evaluation for the writer means summative judgement on the correctness of expression as opposed to formative intervention aimed to promote self-actualization and cognitive restructuring. The current-traditional model seems to assume, however, that mechanisms
rather than persons compose,\textsuperscript{32} and so disregards the self-actualizing, socially transforming potential elemental to writing activity.

The way a teacher responds to student writing surely influences learner motivation and perception of writing. If the teacher alone evaluates writing (as is most often the case in the current-traditional composition classroom), neglects to extend pupils' linguistic and rhetorical options at the expense of eliciting correct form, and generally treats writing in such a way that students merely rehearse textbook-determined techniques, then students develop a debilitating dependency on teachers. What happens is that a distorting influence is "constantly at work upon the child's learning process,... not allowing sufficient space for the child to develop his own strategies for learning or his own paths for growing."\textsuperscript{33} Students stifled by this nonconsultative setting are unlikely either to value assessment procedures or to have much to say about them in terms of how evaluation illumines the composing task. Parenthetically, I might add that a non-negotiable curriculum does not entice researchers to seek information from students, even more so because traditional experimentation militates against inquiring directly into student perception and feeling.

Current-traditional writing evaluation strategies have not provided teachers with tested methods for verifying that their own assessments are correctly and responsibly interpreted by students. Current-traditional theorists and practitioners alike have ignored the proposition that learners' growth in writing is in some way contingent on the degree to which students can understand and act on teacher comments. Perhaps such
neglect can be traced to the perennialist or essentialist view of education which pictures learners as static depositories into which teacher knowledge is to be "banked." Ultimately, failure to account for how students receive and interpret evaluative comments on their writing stems from the product orientation toward composition inherent in the current-traditional model.

Along with William Irmscher, I believe "...that the single most important factor that affects improvement in the composition class is the teacher-student relationship... the personality and attitudes of the teacher will be a stronger influence than any of the materials." What composition instructors teach cannot be separated from how they teach, and how they teach dictates the nature of their relationships with students.

Current-traditional writing teachers argue that student mistakes waste time and reinforce undesirable behavior. In a typical current-traditional composition classroom we would probably see teachers guiding students through a series of textbook exercises, often in usage, culminating the lessons by administering standardized tests to measure pupil performance in "objective" terms. In this attempt to keep student writing error to a minimum, the current-traditional teacher practices transmission teaching, that is, instruction revolving around the teacher transmitting information to students. Writing is viewed "as an opportunity for pupils to memorize what has been taught to them, and as a means of finding out whether they have done so."
The epistemology in operation here holds that knowledge exists in independent, public forms (namely, the academic disciplines). The teacher assumes responsibility for transmitting formal, public information, requiring students in turn to master both the structure and content of whatever knowledge the teacher already commands. Barnes contends that "if a teacher sees knowledge as existing primarily in a public discipline he will set up classroom communication so that transmission and summative assessment predominate. This will compel pupils to adopt a mainly presentational performance... ."^37

In the classroom where presentational student performance is the norm, asymmetrical teacher-pupil relationships invariably seem to exist. Every aspect of instruction tends to buttress the one-way, monological, teacher-controlled system of communication: the teacher selects all course material, makes all the assignments, expects students to write on demand, evaluates every piece of writing, and grades papers against a fixed, abstract standard. Purportedly value-free and expert when it comes to composition matters, the current-traditional teacher of writing is a figure of authority whose role it is to test and correct whatever students write according to standardized valuations.

Class discussion and student writing in the current-traditional classroom most often converge on predetermined "right" answers, as ample classroom language research shows.°38 Pupil participation in class talk is nominal and mainly confined to information recall. Student freedom to initiate and contextualize writing assignments on their own terms is limited. Writing becomes an academic exercise, a routine of "dummy runs,"^39
implemented to help the teacher move students toward good writing, narrowly defined by current traditionalists as error-free writing. In relation to students, the teacher assumes a corrective posture. Teacher-student relationships are depersonalized.

An Interactionist Model of Writing

While a growing number of professionals reject the current-traditional model (and others like it that are product-based), it is my experience that a majority of writing instructors continue to sponsor the kind of activities and classroom arrangements outlined above. Institutional constraints, textbook publishing policy, and inadequate methods for disseminating scholarship explain in part why more teachers do not yet view writing as a process. It is also true that alternative theories of composition are only gradually being translated into tested, viable, affordable curricular formats. On-hands classroom material representative of the interactionist model is limited, for example, to a textbook or two and a very few activities scattered throughout the literature, even though the language theory base for an interactionist approach dates back some fifty years to the work of L.S. Vygotsky.

Vygotsky's Thought and Language and Mind in Society are central to interactionist theory. Briefly, Vygotsky posits a dialectical relationship between the individual and society, between thinking and speaking, and between speaking and writing. The essence of the dialectic is the irreducible changefulness and interrelatedness of all things human and their essential socio-historic character. For Vygotsky, all higher
psychological functions originate as interactions among people. Vygotsky believes "there is no separating the history of the individual from social history. Human psychology is historically determined." 42

Language in Vygotsky's scheme is also historical and social, arising out of humans' need to communicate and enter into enduring relationships with one another. Unlike the current-traditional theorist, whose behaviorist conception of language depicts language as an independent entity simply to be imprinted on the mind of the individual, the interactionist, drawing on Vygotsky's analysis, sees language development to be dynamically intertwined with a person's activity. Writing, a second-order language function, is a "complex cultural activity" also rooted in social relationships. 43 From Vygotsky, one concludes that to separate the teaching of writing from the social interactions through which writing finds motive would be to overlook the unity and mutual influence of the linguistic and social. 44

Interactionist theory rejects rehearsal of writing rules in favor of active, dialogical practice in speaking, listening, reading, acting, and writing. In an interactionist class, students learn to write by writing whole pieces of discourse, actively creating their worlds and knowledge about it in the process. Knowledge creation, it is held, teaches more about literacy than does isolated study of abstract rules and standards of writing. "The interactionist believes that intellectual development results from the conflicts which arise when a person confronts a writing problem which he or she cannot adequately resolve through application of routine strategies." 45
For the interactionist informed by Vygotsky's work, writing is a dialectical process. One writes recursively, moving back and forth through the composing act, mixing prewriting, writing, and rewriting activity, struggling to balance awareness of self, purpose, and audience and to elaborate highly predicated, maximally compact inner speech into meaningful, maximally detailed written speech. (Inner speech is condensed, abbreviated spoken language, that is, egocentric speech which has "gone underground."46)

The interactionist believes that development of writing skill happens in continual, uneven leaps; gains are not necessarily linear and incremental, as the current-traditionalist suggests. "Development... proceeds here not in a circle, but in a spiral, passing through the same point at each new revolution while advancing to a higher level."47 Whereas in current-traditional classrooms writers work at the same rate on identical textbook exercises, in the interactionist approach, writers work individually and in small groups, analyzing and appraising each others' writing (including the teacher's). A crucial distinction between the current-traditional and interactionist models is that the latter uses student-written texts--rather than handbooks on the rules of writing--as the major course content.

In current-traditional practice, student papers are matched against a standard and graded according to how closely they approximate that standard. Evaluation in the interactionist model is of a quite different nature. Teachers function as co-writers and editors, critiquing student writing with students as they progress through successive drafts of a
paper. Not all writing is graded. Students do a great deal of peer and self-evaluation. Evaluation is formative; ideally such activity empowers students to re-vision their writing and to discover personalized strategies for enhancing their overall composing fluency.

In the interactionist classroom, marking and correcting error is not primarily an academic exercise but a practical activity related to the writing process carried out for the purpose of producing a desired effect on the reading/listening audience. Errors are not assumed to be products of students' carelessness or interpreted to be signs of their ignorance. Error is not perceived as wasteful or counterproductive, either. It is in fact seen as beneficial, for students learn from their mistakes: "writing badly... is a crucial part of learning to write well." Errors are significant to the interactionist because they help the teacher (and eventually the student) to understand the thinking process of the writer. The teacher does not correct every error but instead assists students in their efforts to decipher individual patterns of error. Comment on student writing opens up for students tentative strategies for their making personal sense out of their mistakes. The teacher does not presume to know the exact sources of student error. The interactionist employs evaluation as a means to enter into recurrent dialogue with pupils, hoping that the dialogue liberates students to pursue less egocentric, more reflexive, purposeful, socially (re)constructive writing. The process then, is highly interactive and dialectical. Growth in writing unfolds in the consciously nurtured social context of "authentic dialogue between learners and educators relating as equally knowing subjects."
Mina Shaughnessy writes

Precisely because writing is a social act, a kind of synthesis that is reached through the dialectic of discussion, the teaching of writing must often begin with the experience of dialogue and end with the experience of a real audience, not only of teachers but of peers. Yet classrooms in their usual asymmetrical arrangements with the teacher on one side, talking, and the students on the other, listening—or looking at the backs of other students' heads—do not breed discussion.50

Dialogue is one of the hallmarks of the interactionist approach and the pivotal component of student-teacher relationships in the interactionist classroom. The interactionist assumes the role of facilitator in a mutual learning enterprise, enabling "pupils to see themselves as valued partners, collaborators, instigators, etc. The implications of this sort of mutual teaching-learning relationships are, of course, that there will be respect for the experience, expertise, language resources, etc. that each partner has to work from."51 The teacher expresses care for students, relates to them not as subordinates but as co-learners, and invites them to help formulate the curriculum. In this set-up, teacher and students are learning collaborators, talking and writing together. The teacher's stance toward students is not transmissive, but corresponsive.

In an interactionist approach, the teacher does not act as sole audience for and assessor of pupil's composition. Wide publication for student writing is sought, with the recognition that social context influences writing purpose and in large part determines the measure of relevance students attribute to composition assignments. If learners regard composition as a mere game, exercise, test, or hurdle, they are unlikely to invest themselves in writing tasks. Interactionist instruction
"...allows students to experience the possibilities for contextualizing a given writing situation in their own terms, ... [so that they] initiate and participate in the process by which they and their subject are transformed."^2

The pedagogical theory directing this particular picture of the interactionist model^3 is that of Paulo Freire, whose Pedagogy of the Oppressed eloquently describes dialogical learning. Freire demonstrates that dialogue and egalitarianism are impossible to achieve when humans are not committed to a search for truth but are devoted "rather to the imposition of their own truth."^4 Freire asks, "How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own?"^5 Recognizing, as do interactionist writing teachers Nan Elsasser and Vera P. John-Steiner, that equality between teacher and students as speakers and writers "often requires an alteration in current social relationships,"^6 the interactionist nonetheless tries to effect such an alteration because without it authentic dialogue is impossible. If dialogue is not a possibility, then the kind of interactions occurring in the classroom are greatly restricted, and the potential for student growth in writing consequently inhibited.

Review of Researcher Values

My values on the nature of the writing process, composition theory, and research into writing should thus be evident. I can summarize as follows: I believe writing is best understood as a fundamentally dynamic process saturated with social content. While I acknowledge that no one
philosophy of composition reigns supreme and consequently no single best method by which to teach it exists, I believe interaction between teacher and students as co-learners enhances the possibility for students to elaborate their composing skills successfully. In my estimation, the teacher best employs evaluation as a means to establish regular and continuous dialogue with students. This ongoing communication begins with the teacher believing that students have something meaningful to say. The essence of the approach to teaching writing I value is represented well by Douglas Barnes, who argues

It is not enough for pupils to imitate the forms of teachers' language as if they were models to be copied; it is only when they 'try it out' in reciprocal exchanges so that they modify the way they use language to organize reality that they are able to find new functions for language in thinking and feeling.57

Because writing is a "radically perspectival act,"58 research into the domain must of necessity account for the perspectivity of participants. Studies should not remove actors from their primary social setting if findings are to apply to those settings and accurately portray actors' experience in the natural world. Classical experimentalism often extracts subjects from context and always equates measured behavior with meaning. The research I have conducted aims not to measure, analyze, and predict across situations a single phenomenon's impact on learner behavior, but to explicate how individuals construe and experience a web of constituent, situation-bound events. The essential question for this study is not, How can I isolate and measure subjects' behavior?, but, What does the lived experience mean for participants?. 
Description of the Research Setting

Thus I have formulated my problem so as to situate me in a classroom, which is the appropriate place, I believe, to conduct research on almost any phase of school-sponsored writing. I considered three potential Columbus, Ohio school sites for my study, finally deciding on a north-end high school—given the fictitious name of Counts High in my study—for a variety of reasons. First, and most importantly, the teacher-partner candidate at Counts, Fran Spratley, demonstrated more familiarity and classroom experience with an interactionist approach to composition than the teacher-partner candidates at the other two sites. Fran's superior experience in this regard was obviously a crucial factor for me to consider in selecting a coresearcher, given that I wanted to study a writing curriculum as fully interactionist as possible. Secondly, Ms. Spratley expressed keen interest in the proposed research and volunteered to share more of her time than the other potential research collaborators could realistically promise to devote to the project. Thirdly, Counts High is located nearby, that is to say only about a fifteen minute drive from my home, enabling me to get to the research site frequently and sparing me some of the inevitable physical fatigue associated with field research. Saving on such wear is important because over the long run fatigue jeopardizes the researcher's sensitivity to the phenomena under investigation.

Again for mainly practical reasons, the researcher and teacher-partner together decided to focus the research on an afternoon class of eleventh graders. The class met eighth period of the school day, from 1:02 to 1:44 PM, as scheduled by the school's central administration. This
arrangement enabled me to use the mornings to prepare for class observations and also afforded me the opportunity to lunch occasionally with Ms. Spratley in order to review emerging questions and themes.

Eighth-period English is a heterogeneous group of thirty-one students, thirteen female and eighteen male, twelve Black and nineteen white students. Twenty-two of the students attend various vocational schools in the morning, where they take such courses as horticulture, auto mechanics, law enforcement, and cosmetology. The vocational students bus to Counts High during mid-day, arriving by sixth period to finish out the afternoon at Counts.

Counts High itself stands right in the center of a middle class neighborhood lying on the northern fringe of the city. This year the fourteen year old building for the first time in its history accommodates a significant Black population owing to recent court-ordered, city-wide desegregation. Nearly 1300 pupils attend Counts High.

The low-slung, two story, stone and brick structure is spacious and clean. It features several open space areas where students can informally congregate, a couple of courtyards around which the original building was constructed, and a new wing of carpeted, multi-colored classrooms. Plants hang here and there throughout the school. Show cases bulge with trophies brought home by victorious athletic teams. At least one entire hallway is lined with black and white pictures of Counts High graduates who have gone on to play college sports. The school boasts outstanding athletic facilities, including a large football stadium, two baseball diamonds, a soccer field, a track, and several outdoor basketball and tennis courts.
Counts High is an unmistakably modern American high school.

Counts offers a diversified schedule of sport and club activities. Its academic curriculum is traditional. There is a diminishing number of elective subjects for students to take with a heavy concentration of formal academic (ability-tracked) courses in the curriculum. Eighth-period English is a one semester course in "Intermediate English." The city's secondary school curriculum guide charges Fran with the task of teaching

...the basics of composition, including sentence structure and variety, development or topic sentences, logical paragraph development and transitional devices. Although emphasis will be given to narration and descriptive writing, the greatest stress will be on expository writing.59

Fran sees in this statement an evocation of the current-traditional model of writing. In assuming an interactionist approach to teaching composition, Fran will slightly modify the stated objectives to permit the goals for her Intermediate Composition class to mesh with her own theory on writing and its instruction. Fran's interpretation of her responsibilities will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five. For the moment, it is enough to get a sense of the overall instructional situation: Fran has about ninety periods of a maximum forty-two minutes in length each in which to teach the fundamental skills of expository writing to thirty-one sixteen and seventeen year olds who range widely in ability, scholastic achievement, vocational interest, and cultural heritage.
Overview of Chapters Two through Five

In general, then, this is the setting I entered for the purpose of studying how teacher evaluation of writing functions for individual learners involved in an interactionist curriculum. In Chapter Two, I examine what the literature has to say about this problem specifically and about evaluation of student writing generally. In Chapter Three, I review the rationale for my research methodology and explain procedures used to collect evidence. Chapter Four contains the actual narrative on Ms. Spratley's class, featuring a main story line highlighting students' experience of the curriculum. Chapter Five presents research conclusions, implications for practice, research recommendations, and some personal reflections on the project.

The heart of this inquiry is a narrative account on the issue of student use of teacher commentary on students' written work. Research in the field of English Education, certainly research into evaluation of student writing, is rarely couched in story form. In order to put this study into perspective, we turn first to Chapter Two for a review of the literature and then to Chapter Three for a close look at the relevancy of qualitative methodology to the questions being addressed.
CHAPTER ONE

NOTES


3. "Why Johnny Can't Write," Newsweek, December 8, 1975, pp. 58-65. It is my impression that this one article perhaps more than any other is responsible for having aroused the general public's curiosity and interest (and in some cases, rage) in regard to the "writing crisis."


6. Improvement research is designed to produce findings leading to prescriptions for change. This type of research assumes a one-way (and usually one-dimensional) causal relationship between teacher and student behavior. See Virginia Koehler, "Methodology for Research in Teacher Training." Paper presented at the invitational conference, "Exploring Issues in Teacher Education: Questions for Future Research" (University of Texas at Austin, January 10-13, 1978).


8. Gail McCutcheon has identified three types of generalization occurring in qualitative inquiry. The first and most prominent is generalizing findings within the setting being researched; the second is generalizing vertically across classrooms; and the third the private generalizations which take place within the researcher. See Gail McCutcheon, "Educational Criticism: Methods and Application," The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, Summer 1974, p. 17.


18. Frederick Erikson, in Florio and Clark, p. 16.


20. The term "current-traditional" is Daniel Fogarty's. See Roots for A New Rhetoric (New York: Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1959). To my knowledge, the interactionist model of writing was first defined in full by Nan Elsasser and Vera P. John-Steiner in their Harvard Educational Review article.


22. See James Britton et al., 1975.


24. William Irmscher, p. 29; Janet Emig, pp. 21-22. Emig points out that one of the ways in which current-traditional instruction codifies writing is by insisting, for example, that a writer proceeds through three immutable, distinct writing stages regardless of the composing task.


27. Irmscher, p. 143.


32. Emig, p. 93.


39. The term is Britton's, in Britton et al., pp. 104-105 and 217.

40. Donald Stewart has reviewed major best-selling textbooks in the field and found that twenty-seven of the thirty-four he assessed "were strictly current-traditional in their discussions of invention, arrangement, and style." Textbook companies are very slow to accept change recommended by scholars. See Donald Stewart, "Composition Textbooks and the Assault on Tradition," College Composition and Communication 29 (May 1978): 174.
41. A pure, full-fledged interactionist curriculum does not exist in textbook form, basically because this approach to writing resists textbook formulation. The James Moffett and Betty Jane Wagner text, Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976) comes closest to realizing the interactionist curriculum described in this section of Chapter One. Parts of Elbow’s Writing Without Teachers are highly interactionist.

42. In Milton Schwebel’s review of Mind in Society, American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 49 (July 1979): 532. On this matter of higher psychological activity originating in practical activity, A.N. Leont’ev, summarizing Vygotsky, writes: "In other words, the higher, specifically human, psychological processes may originate only in the interaction of man with man, that is, as intrapsychological actions, and only subsequently do they begin to be finished by the individual independently; in this process certain of them continue to lose their original form, and turn into interpsychological processes." See A.N. Leont’ev, Activity, Consciousness and Personality (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1978), p. 59.


44. For this idea, I am indebted to James Zebroski and Donald Bateman, whose contribution to my understanding of interactionist theory permeates this section of Chapter One.


47. Vygotsky, 1962, p. 56.


49. Elsasser and John-Steiner, p. 368.

50. Shaughnessy, p. 83.

51. Bryan Newton, in Davis and Parker, p. 78.


53. There are various interpretations of interactionism. Barry Kroll, for example, develops a description of an interactionist approach to teaching writing based on the theory of Piaget and Dewey as opposed to Vygotsky and Freire (Kroll, 1980).
54. Freire, p. 177.

55. Freire, p. 78.

56. Elsasser and John-Steiner, p. 357.


59. 1978-1979 Columbus city school course selection pamphlet.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter One indicated that little is known about the ways students receive and interpret teacher comments on their writing. The chapter pictured current-traditional composition theory as treating writing instrumentally, encouraging an error-elimination approach to evaluation, and promoting authoritarian-structured teacher-student relationships. The current-traditional model of composition deemphasizes the individual writer and the power of the medium to help individuals realize themselves and transform their worlds.

In examining current-traditional theory and practice, I suggested that those who subscribe to the model use writing as an exercise to see if students can display mastery of teacher-transmitted information. Transmission teachers make evaluation one-way, formal, summative, and external to the writer. This static, relatively asocial approach to teaching writing was contrasted with instruction in the Interactionist mode. The Interactionist teacher believes "writing is a social activity, and depends on our sense of the social relationships we are taking part in... . Writing to be an effective tool of learning needs to be more than a routine
exercise, and to become an act of communication."¹ Here evaluation is
formative and dialogical. Teachers and students relate as co-learners; they see their relationship "to be a privilege to work together--on both sides."²

Most research into the teaching and learning of writing, preponderantly experimental and correlational in design, has been isomorphic with the instructional tradition in composition. For example, teacher evaluation of student composition traditionally measures students' performance against some abstract norm of "correct expression." Likewise, experimentalism quantifies the writing experience strictly in terms of measurable variables derived from an abstract, atomistic, almost mathematical conceptualization of writing: length of sentences, paragraphs and essays, time it takes to complete a composition, number of assignments made, quantity of evaluative comments, and so on. Another example of the correspondence between classical research and current-traditional practice is the fact that the experimentalist selects a methodology independent of the character of events under study while in a like manner the current-traditional instructor uses an identical pedagogy in all composition teaching situations regardless of their varying demands. Some other similarities can be outlined as follows:
Current-traditional writing instruction

- writing dissected from thinking, perceiving, expressing, acting;
  the dis-integration of English skill instruction (e.g., literature, composition, speech; grammar, spelling punctuation)
- component approach to composition
- teacher purports to possess knowledge of primary importance
- teacher believes him- or herself to be value neutral
- predefinition of product

Classical Research

- participants' feelings and thoughts dissected from behavior
- component analysis of the social world
- researcher claims to be primary agent of understanding
- researcher acts as if s/he were value free
- predefinition of hypotheses

Composition Research and Positivism

This one-to-one relationship between classical research and traditional writing instruction theory and practice represents the workings of positivism, the paradigm which has virtually monopolized the field of composition research. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore the full implications of a positivistic world view as opposed, say, to a critical theory paradigm. Whole books have been written on the topic of paradigm debate.\(^3\) I have advanced a "correspondence" notion simply for the sake of suggesting that established school practice in composition and the theory guiding it mirror major assumptions about behavior inherent in classical research.

Adherence to any paradigm predisposes the researcher to accentuate certain aspects of reality. The dominance of a single paradigm results in a situation whereby only a limited set of questions are posed, a
specific segment of human activity regarded problematic, and a particular methodology put to use. Until recently, most writing research emphasized measurable behavior, insisted on the lawful quality of human learning, and equated the problem phenomenon with its operational definition.

Let us now consider the relevant research in the area of evaluating student writing, especially as that research illuminates the following topics:

1. Comment effect and content
2. Intensity of evaluation
3. The basis for teacher response
4. Tone of evaluative comment
5. Alternative evaluation strategies

Of particular importance in the twenty-three studies examined here are the questions raised in each of the studies as well as the ways in which the investigators sought to resolve the research problems. For our purposes it will be crucial to identify what this research tells us about students' experience of teacher assessment.

Comment Effect and Content

Perhaps the two most logical questions to ask with regard to teacher evaluation are, Does the assessment make any difference in students' performance?, and, What comment really affects students?. Ellis Batten Page, in research conducted over twenty years ago, sought to find out if teacher comments produced a significant improvement in student performance and also "if comments have an effect, which comments have more than others, and what are the conditions, in students and class, conducive to such
Page experimented with a tremendous sample, randomly selecting seventy-four teachers and 2,139 students from twelve different secondary schools.

Page proceeded with his research in this manner: teachers assigned students grades on objective tests as would customarily be the case. After ordering the papers according to grade received (best grade on top), teachers rolled a marked die instructing them to either make no comment on the paper, append a predetermined "Specified Comment" (formulated by Page), or add whatever comment the teacher wanted to make—called "Free Comment." Page's elaborate, rigorous, statistical testing of data lead him to conclude that the Free Comment treatment group achieved higher than the Specified Comment group which in turn outscored the No Comment group on the objective test measure. Page found no significant differences of comment effect based on school building or pupil age or ability.

Page's experimentation showed him that the average secondary school teacher should remark on student work because teacher-written comments "apparently have a measurable and potent effect upon student effort, or attention, or attitude, or whatever it is which causes learning to improve... ."

It is worthwhile to note that Page

1. investigated all conventional secondary school subject matter, not just English
2. relied on objective test measures as reliable and valid indicators of student achievement and progress
3. separated evaluation from other parts of instruction
presumed that assessment affected students without asking them if or how it did so.
5. altered naturally occurring events by requiring teachers to respond to pupil work in artificial ways.

Page's findings do lend empirical support to the idea that the way a teacher responds to pupil work influences pupils' motivation to learn. However, while Page tacitly recognizes the interactive essence of teacher assessment and student achievement, he omits any description of student perception of teacher response and also fails to analyze teachers' free comments (to see what teachers deemed important to write on students' work), thereby presenting us with a one-dimensional picture of the assessment process.

Page obviously recognized that teachers annually spend countless hours marking and commenting upon papers and questioned whether the effort improves student performance. Writing researchers have studied this exact problem. Both Bata and Williams discovered that teacher comment generally did not improve student writing, Bata investigating junior-college students' composition and Williams examining the writing of pupils in grades seven through ten. D.J. Underwood's research on the topic disclosed that grades and comment aid students in improving writing mechanics but not content.

Robert J. Marzano and Sandra Arthur of the University of Colorado at Denver have conducted the most recent experiment to see what effects various types of teacher comment have on writers' performance.
The researchers selected one class of twenty-four tenth graders and divided them into three groups, each graded differently by the classroom teacher. The papers of one group were marked to indicate faults. The teacher edited the writing of the second group. Group three's written work the teacher responded to subjectively, marking the papers to "foster thinking."

Marzano and Arthur used a basic pre-test/post-test design. Trained raters scored student essays holistically and analyzed them for five separate patterns of error and demonstrated competence in use of vocabulary, single word modification, and subordination. The investigators found no meaningful differences in students' writing from one group to the next. Marzano and Arthur concluded that commenting has insignificant impact on learners and "might just be an exercise in futility." In answer to the questions, Should teachers evaluate students' writing? and, What should be the content of that evaluation?, these researchers recommend teachers make as few or as many comments of any type they wish.

Marzano and Arthur wonder if teacher commentary followed-up by different kinds of teacher action will influence students' composition. Barbara Hansen has researched this issue. Hansen found that college freshmen whose essays were marked and graded (Hansen does not give any details on this evaluation) perform as well as students who receive similar feedback on their papers and then study the revision process with the teacher, eventually rewriting their themes. Hansen's research assumed the familiar pre-test/post-test format. Her project has been criticized for drawing a broad conclusion—"rewriting is a waste of time,"
Hansen pronounces—from such a small sample of students' writing (two impromptu assignments). Another problem with Hansen's research is that she equates writing achievement solely with gains in editing and proofreading skill advancement. As in all the research reviewed so far in this chapter, the researcher did not judge writing improvement in terms of such matters as originality, evidence of critical thinking, sophistication of theme, complexity of detail, or any other qualitative aspect of composition.

**Intensity of Evaluation**

Much research into intensity of evaluation has been conducted. In this section, I review what are generally considered to be the two major studies in the area of evaluation intensity.

More than twenty years ago, Earl Buxton analyzed the effects of two distinct types of teacher comment on student writing and found one to be a superior means for improving pupil performance. Buxton also sought to determine if regular writing practice resulted in improved writing skill, thus providing the link in evaluation research between comment effect and intensity of evaluation.

Buxton divided 257 first-year students at the University of Alberta, Canada, into three groups: Writing, Revision, and Control. The Control group, of course, received no treatment--no regular instruction or practice in writing. Both the Writing and Revision groups wrote often. Those in the Writing group found generous, favorable comment at the end of their papers, but instructors did not grade or require revision of essays. The
assignments of Revision group students were treated to extensive inter-linear marking, brief end comment, and formal grades. Instructors held short, in-class conferences with writers in the group and then required students to revise their compositions.

Buxton concluded that those who wrote often improved more than those who wrote infrequently. Buxton also discovered that College freshmen whose writing is graded and thoroughly marked and who revise their papers in the light of these matters can improve their writing more than college freshmen whose writing receives a few general suggestions but no grades or intensive marking and who do not revise their papers. (It is not clear, however, what the relative influence is of each of these three factors.) Further experimentation would be necessary, of course, before one could feel confident in making such a generalization about, say, high school pupils.15

Thus Buxton's endorsement of assessment which includes thorough marking, brief, positive end comment, and a grade is a qualified one. Additionally, although revising papers under supervision gets support from Buxton, it is not clear from his research exactly what aspects of composition are learned better through revision. While Buxton concludes that the group whose papers received thorough marking improved more than those whose compositions were given no marking other than a few positive comments, the researcher does not determine "to what extent the intensive marking was responsible for that superiority and to what extent revision of the paper merits the credit."16 Because the investigator isolated evaluation and limited his research to examination of written products, (and only certain aspects of the products, at that) the study could not
offer any report whatsoever on the various uses students make of evaluation as it unfolds in process.

Only five years after the Buxton study on college writers was published, Dwight Burton and Lois Arnold issued a report on high school student writers directly contradicting Buxton's findings. Burton and Arnold's experimentation proved to them that neither practice in writing nor careful evaluation contributed to one's performance in written expression. Their findings on the nugatory effects of frequent writing and intensive teacher evaluation of student composition have yet to be challenged by a major piece of research.

Burton and Arnold selected eight tenth-grade classes in two comparable high schools for the purpose of examining the twin hypotheses that writing improves automatically 1) if students write regularly, and/or 2) if the teacher carefully marks each essay. Two teachers taught the eight designated classes following four approaches which differed with respect to intensity of assessment and frequency of writing assigned. A 2x2x3 factorial design was used in the research. Measuring instruments were restricted to two Sequential Tests of Educational Progress (STEP) writing examinations.

Discovering that both frequent writing and careful teacher marking failed to help students improve their writing, Burton and Arnold advocated more in-depth study of the effects of evaluation and writing practice on students' performance in written expression. Anticipating Marzano and Arthur, Burton and Arnold acknowledged that time spent grading papers may be wasted effort, and therefore called for implementation and study of
innovative evaluation procedures. They also recommended research into "those teacher traits, abilities and methods most desirable for the teacher of composition." But absolutely no mention was made of the potential value of describing how in this case students reacted to either intensive evaluation and demand for frequent writing or moderate evaluation and infrequently assigned writing. Like most study in the field, Burton and Arnold's research thus gives us the impression that evaluation properly administered and researched is a one-way, teacher-based activity.

The Basis for Teacher Response

Many evaluation researchers are preoccupied with determining exactly why teachers respond as they do to student writing. Sarah Warshauer Freedman argues in her recent research that "one of the first steps in improving the evaluation and teaching of writing is understanding why teachers evaluate as they do." Freedman's experiment entailed systematic rewriting (by Freedman and four research assistants) of sixty-four college freshmen themes "to be weak or strong in four broad, but pedagogically interesting areas: content, organization, sentence structure and mechanics. Then teachers judged the overall quality of the rewritten papers. The teachers did not know I had tampered with the papers." English educators can find comfort in Freedman's research because it shows one "select, homogeneous group of writing teachers from a major university" are more heavily influenced--when evaluating students'
argumentative discourse—by content and organization than by mechanics and sentence structure. This is the way most experts in the field like to picture teachers evaluating writing, reacting, as they do here, primarily to substantive matters of essay content. On the other hand, since Freedman manipulated and literally changed students' writing, one cannot say with complete confidence that the experiment establishes anything definite at all about college teachers' response to original student composition.

Freedman's research has a precedent in the work of Winifred Hall Harris, who asked thirty-six high school English teachers to grade experimenter-edited student themes in an attempt to portray teacher response patterns to student writing. Harris selected and then edited twelve themes (from an initial group of over 200) so that six would be strong in Content and Organization and six others noteworthy in Sentence Structure and Mechanics and Usage. Participating teachers graded the essays. Harris also asked teachers to rank the twelve themes from best to worst and to fill out a questionnaire designed to elicit teacher opinion on the activity of evaluating student writing.

Harris discovered that an overwhelming percentage of teacher corrections on students' themes—66% of the 7,855 corrections made—pertained to mechanics and usage. Of the 567 teacher end-comments appearing on students' work, 23% related to mechanics and usage. Harris reported in addition that "only .007% of the annotations made as the teachers read and marked the themes were positive in nature."
In Harris's experiment, although teachers expressed a "slight preference" for valuing essay content and organization more than mechanics and usage, in actual practice teachers gave much greater weight to the latter. Harris concludes that "although competence in mechanics and usage may be expected or taken for granted at the high school level, any student who is weak in this category, despite strengths exhibited in other areas, is likely to be at a serious disadvantage when his writing is evaluated." Harris represents error to exert tremendous influence on teacher evaluation of student composition.

Other investigators have tried to isolate factors explaining why teachers grade as they do. Innumerable correlational studies have been conducted correlating teacher grades to everything from writers' sex to spelling prowess; handwriting is one of the most frequently examined variables in research where non-content factors as an influence on teacher evaluation are considered.

Chase, Briggs, and Soloff have independently shown that secondary school teachers award significantly higher grades to student papers with good handwriting, regardless of content. Most recently, Lynda R. Markham investigated the effect of elementary school students' handwriting on forty-five experienced teachers and thirty-six student teachers. Although Markham found differences in the ways the two groups of raters were affected by handwriting, she was able to conclude, as we would expect, that handwriting may influence teachers' evaluation of student composition. Yet the import of Markham's findings is seriously restricted by at least five research design weaknesses Markham herself enumerates, including
lack of randomization of experimental subjects and the presence of reactive effects on graders. Markham explains another of her design flaws as follows:

The fact that teachers and student teachers were influenced by handwriting in an experimental situation does not necessarily mean that they would be similarly influenced in their own classrooms.

It is to Markham's credit that she recognizes results obtained in an experimental setting cannot automatically be applied to everyday classroom operations. Too often in the past it appears as if experimentalists have failed to cite this limitation inherent in their work.

**Tone of Evaluative Comment**

As we can see, much research into evaluation of student writing depicts assessment as if it were a monological event. Those who have examined tone of teacher comment, however, talk about assessment in dialogical terms.

Thomas C. Gee's 1970 study recognized the interactive dimension of the evaluative act. He divided students into Praised, Criticized, and No Comment groups. He collected four compositions from 139 eleventh-graders written during a four week period, measuring the effects of teacher comment on quantity and quality of student writing. He also examined the effect of teacher assessment on pupils' subsequent attitudes toward composition, presuming that "whatever the teacher's marks, the student will respond." Gee portrayed evaluation as an intrinsically dynamic activity. Few researchers before him cast evaluation in quite
In Gee's experiment, "the Criticized group's papers were marked for specific errors in grammar, spelling, organization and usage... good aspects of writing were ignored. The Praised group's papers were complimented for their good points. The No Comment group found only a check mark on their essays to indicate their work had been read.

Gee's results are exactly what we would anticipate: the Criticized and No Comment students wrote less than the Praised learners and evidenced a less positive attitude toward composition (as measured on an eleven-item questionnaire) than the Praised writers. Gee did not uncover any significant differences among the three groups in the quality of students' essays. He concludes that "students seem to have more patience in working on their compositions... if they are encouraged along the way... . To withhold praise until the student has achieved an ideal performance is educationally unsound."

Gee undoubtedly drew some inspiration for his research from the work of Paul Diederich, who in 1963 authored an article entitled "In Praise of Praise." Diederich, a senior research associate at the Educational Testing Service and a reputable English Education scholar, has forever encouraged evaluators of student composition to make a point of praising writers and to cite "preferably not more than one thing" per composition for the student to try to improve in his or her next paper. "In Praise of Praise" and later work by Diederich, especially his Measuring Growth in English, stress that evaluator tone is an important element in teacher response because it translates to the student what the teacher thinks
of that individual, immediately influencing the writing students produce.

We would tend to believe axiomatically, as Diederich argues, that positive comment has a better effect on student writing than does negative response. Yet A.E. Stevens' study of twelve tenth and eleventh-grade classes proved otherwise. Half of the students in Stevens' ten-week experiment received only positive comments on their papers, and the other half only negative ones. Stevens' analysis, paralleling Gee's, revealed that the difference in tone of rater comment had no significant bearing on the quality of writing produced. For Stevens, like Gee, students whose papers were assessed positively showed a better attitude toward composition than writers who received negative comment.

Don Eulert's research with Wisconsin State University pupils demonstrated that student attitude is a major factor in the composition learning process. Starting with the assumption that "the individual student's attitude and emotional response, after all, are the determinants of how much learning goes on in a classroom," Eulert tested hundreds of first-year English students in order to identify factors affecting their achievement. He was one of the first composition researchers to explore students' reality from their perspective on events. While Eulert had nothing to say about evaluation per se, he did contend that the projects' "conclusions indicate that learning depends on the student's ego, his personal attitudes, and his motivation... ."

Patricia Broadfoot has directly explored the role teacher assessment plays in motivating students. Broadfoot's special concern is the
(British) "low stream" secondary school student whom she describes as having lost interest in education mainly because of the alienative effects of conventional teacher assessment. Broadfoot analyzes evaluation from a Marxist perspective, and proposes "that the essentially interactive basis for learning is not represented in the almost entirely one-sided nature of assessment." She calls for complementing teacher evaluation with extensive pupil self-evaluation.

Broadfoot's research is one of the rare studies to acknowledge evaluation's intrinsic, although often camouflaged, dynamism. Broadfoot talks of the "reflexive relationship" between instructor and pupil:

Diagnostic assessment undertaken by both teacher and pupil... may help to reinforce the awareness of both teacher and pupil that learning is essentially an interactive activity and that the attitudes and perceptions of both must therefore be taken into account. Broadfoot's empirical study indicates "pupils had begun to be more intrinsically motivated" when presented an opportunity to assess their own papers. Additionally, Broadfoot's preliminary findings show that both students and teachers favor mutual involvement in the assessment process.

To summarize, research into tone of evaluator comment is equivocal. Several investigators find comment tone to be irrelevant to student progress in writing. Others discover that a positive tone at the very least encourages students to assume positive attitudes toward writing. Broadfoot's study, while it does not focus on tone exclusively, is important because it shows assessment—no matter what its form—ultimately
"translates to the pupil how much the teacher... values not only that pupil's performance, but... how much that teacher values him as a person." 44

Research into Alternative Evaluation Strategies

One striking feature common to almost all research into traditional evaluation of writing is the call for implementation and study of innovative assessment practice. We find this appeal throughout the literature, and yet still today insufficient research into alternative evaluation strategies exists.

Options in evaluating composition have been researched by Coleman, 45 Lagana, 46 Ford, 47 and Beach. 48 Coleman, using a simple pre-test/post-test design, compared the relative effectiveness of audio taped and written commentary on the composition of four seventh-grade classes. Taped evaluative comment improved learners' attitudes toward composition and was particularly effective for students who scored poorly on the pre-test.

Lagana utilized individualized learning and peer-group evaluation as mainstays in an experimental tenth-grade composition program Lagana himself created. Compared to control group students, writers in the experimental class made significantly greater gains "in organization, critical thinking, and overall appropriateness. The control group, on the other hand, gained more in conventions." 49 Lagana's research is the first well-known study to document support for peer evaluation.
B.W. Ford's 1973 experiment is a second major source which speaks to the efficacy of peer evaluation. Ford had an experimental group of college students grade and edit each others' themes. Ford then measured improvement in grammar usage and overall quality of themes. The experimental writers achieved significantly higher gains than the control students in both areas tested.

Richard Beach of the University of Minnesota has very recently researched high school students' revision of rough drafts as affected by teacher evaluation (TE), guided self-evaluation (SE), and no evaluation (NE). In an earlier informal study, Beach examined the self-evaluation strategies of twenty-six college juniors and seniors, categorizing the writers as extensive revisers or non-revisers based upon analysis of their written products. In this exploratory research, Beach noted that the textbook methods for revision generally do not assist students and advocated providing "alternative, helpful models of the revision process."

Beach's recent experimentation with eleventh and twelfth-grade students involved actual comparison of conventional and alternative evaluation formats as an influence on extent of change and change in quality from students' rough draft to final copy. The alternative evaluation technique asked students to self-evaluate their writing systematically by following a form directing them to pose questions about their draft "as if they were a reader." This identical procedure was used with TE writers, except that teachers, rather than students, did the evaluation. The NE
group revised their drafts without benefit of guided self-evaluation or teacher assessment.

Beach found that TE essays showed a significantly higher degree of change than that apparent in either SE or NE compositions. However, changes made by TE writers did not necessarily improve the quality of their compositions as compared to the writing of SE or NE students. Only in the area of support did TE writers differ significantly from SE and NE subjects. Beach conjectures that for one reason or another evaluators might have placed more emphasis on matters of support. He recommends studying raters' assessments as applied to writing representing different stages of the composing process. Noting that SE subjects did not revise any more than NE subjects, Beach calls, too, for research "on developmental differences in the ability to self-assess and the effects of instruction in self-assessing strategies on revising." Both these matters, although not the exact focus of my study, constellate major points of interest in the question, How does teacher evaluation on students' written work function for students?.

Summary of Evaluation of Writing Research

I have categorized research on evaluation of student writing into five overlapping areas of inquiry. The main questions I understand researchers to have asked are:

1. Do comments have an effect, and, if so, what comments have more of an effect than others?

2. How does the intensity of evaluation influence students' writing?
3. On what bases do teachers react to and assess composition?

4. Are students affected by tone of teacher comment?

5. Do alternative approaches to evaluation improve students' writing?

The literature as a whole yields no laws on evaluation. Frequent comment praising students' writing usually engenders positive attitude toward composition but only occasionally results in better pupil performance. Improved performance means almost invariably greater sentence length, more words per essay, fewer spelling mistakes, reduced error in punctuation, or some other atomistic, strictly quantifiable writing matter. Any number of factors seemingly influence teachers' response to students' writing, only a few of which have been identified; and none of those factors have been described as they operate in context. Both form and content of teacher assessment appear to influence learners' motivation, although the precise nature of the effect has yet to be circumscribed. Conventional evaluation does not seem to help students change the way they think or actually go about writing, but alternative approaches to evaluation have not satisfactorily been demonstrated to accomplish this task, either. The research is inconclusive.

Nearly every study done on evaluation of student writing is experimental or correlational in design. Researchers manipulate and measure isolated variables; they consistently attempt to separate cause and effect, positing fixed, one-directional relationships between treatments and their effects. In this effort, scientists break reality down into component parts. Evaluation of writing research typically simplifies the complexity of reality.
Beach's research exemplifies this reductionist tendency. Beach regards growth in writing to be a complex, highly individualistic process. Effective evaluation for Beach functions in a heuristic fashion, enabling writers to recast their writing into substantially new and improved compositions. The tenor of Beach's analysis aligns him with those who believe that "...writing improvement does not occur in isolation. Merely assigning themes and arranging for some sort of evaluation prove insufficient because writing is related to speaking, listening, and all other avenues of communication available for processing information."56 Beach conceptualizes school writing in holistic terms, yet he then proceeds to carry out experimental study on evaluation of writing, rending it from its natural instructional context and dissociating it from the rest of the composing process to which it is inextricably connected. This incongruity between an individual researcher's composition theory and investigative practice characterizes much study into evaluation of writing.

Extracting learning from its context distorts naturally occurring events. Researchers often assume behavior in experimentally manipulated conditions matches that in the everyday social world. Writing and the evaluation of it are social activities. We could benefit from descriptions of individual development in writing as it unfolds in situ, where exchanges of meaning originate, for mastery of communicative systems "arises in the course of social life and it supported by the community in which it occurs."57 In short, adequate understanding of writing-related classroom behavior "can only be provided through information about the "contexts" of behavior: the subject matter taught, the physical setting of
the classroom, the personal 'front' of the teacher, and student opinions and interpretations of teacher behavior." An overwhelming bias in evaluation of writing study is to examine assessment from teachers' point of view only. In answer to the question posed in the introduction to this literature review, namely, What does research tell us about students' experience of evaluation?, we find the literature offers hardly any first-hand report at all from student writers themselves.

Recall Sarah Freedman arguing that "one of the first steps in improving the evaluation and teaching of student writing is understanding why teachers evaluate as they do." While we would concur with the need for such understanding, it seems equally important to simultaneously mark off the writer's territory, citing learnings and expectations individual students bring to composing tasks and mapping their varied interpretations of teacher evaluation.

Composing Research: Descriptive Study of Writing as Process

Composing research of the last decade provides guidelines for conducting descriptive studies into students' experience of writing. Studies by Emig, Mischel, Stallard, Sommers, Perl, Graves, and Pianko picture and analyze writers writing. The one assumption binding this research together "is that in searching for a more adequate understanding of a human process, it is important to observe people engaging in that process." Janet Emig's seminal research report, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, employs case study methods to examine the writing behavior of eight sixteen and seventeen year old Chicago-area students. Emig
met four times with each student. The sessions, all recorded on tape by Emig, followed this format:

Session 1: twenty minutes informal conversation
student then simultaneously composed aloud and wrote a short piece on any topic of his/her choice
student told of assignment for upcoming session

Session 2: composing aloud on the previously assigned topic
Emig informed student that next meeting would be devoted to individual recalling as completely as possible all writing s/he had ever done

Session 3: subject gave writing autobiography
Emig asked student to bring in an imaginative piece of writing for final conference

Session 4: student recounted process followed in creating imaginative writing

Emig's findings on students' composing behavior were revealing. She generalized, for example, that "students do not voluntarily revise school-sponsored writing; they more readily revise self-sponsored writing." She also deduced that

Most of the criteria by which students' school-sponsored writing is evaluated concerns the accidents rather than the essences of discourse—that is, spelling, punctuation, penmanship and length rather than thematic development, rhetorical and syntactic sophistication, and fulfillment of intent.

Assertions like this challenge teachers to change the way they make assignments and grade papers. For our purposes, the study is of interest because it raised questions this project addresses: for example, Why
don't students willingly revise school-assigned writing? And what happens in the classroom where the teacher carefully assesses essences of discourse?

Emig was one of the first English Education researchers to use the case study approach successfully in examining students' writing behavior. She popularized the practice of investigating students actually involved in the act of composing. She also argued persuasively in favor of researchers generating "humanistic data." The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders provided a model and demonstrated a compelling need for descriptive study into both how and under what conditions students write.

Terry Mischel, in a 1974 research project, emulated Emig's approach, although Mischel worked with just one student—Clarence, a twelfth-grader enrolled in a Buffalo, New York, city high school. Mischel listened to Clarence compose aloud, interviewed him about his writing experiences, and analyzed Clarence's written work. Mischel's biography of Clarence as writer shows Clarence to hold many of the same negative attitudes toward teacher-assigned writing as those expressed by Emig's subjects. Clarence also exhibited differences between self-sponsored and school-sponsored writing behavior such as were evident in Emig's student writers.

Case study methodology put Mischel up close to his subject. Given this perspective, Mischel, like Emig before him, unearthed new information about student writers' attitudes and in-process performance. From a methodological standpoint, Mischel's research is noteworthy because it successfully replicated Emig's and thereby helped legitimate a qualitative mode of inquiry.
Charles K. Stallard's research into "the complex question of what happens when good writers attack a writing task" is another in this series of descriptive studies on the writing behavior of senior high school students. Stallard observed fifteen "good" and fifteen randomly selected twelfth-grade Virginia public school student writers. Students individually wrote one essay for Stallard, who noted significant behaviors as they occurred during the composing process. Immediately after each student finished the writing assignment, Stallard interviewed the individual, asking the student to recall what s/he thought about while writing. The third component of Stallard's research involved analysis of essays for evidence of other prominent behaviors. Stallard detected behaviors in the good writers not observable in the control group writers, claiming that "the significance of these behaviors lies in what they might suggest about the cognitive processes good writers use to produce their material."'

Stallard, unlike Emig and Mischel, did not ask students to compose aloud. Nor did Stallard inform students they were being observed while they wrote. Despite methodological differences, the research of Emig, Mischel, and Stallard converges on a common purpose: to characterize descriptively the writing behavior of twelfth-grade students. All three investigators used multiple sources of information—observation, student self-report, and analysis of written products—in successful efforts to profile writers involved in the process of writing.

Lillian Bridwell has also examined twelfth-grade writers, exploring their revision processes as manifest in students' written products.
Bridwell did not systematically observe students while they composed, ask them to compose aloud, or solicit student self-report. Yet Bridwell's work seems important to mention here because like others before her she sought to describe the characteristics of twelfth-graders' composing (specifically, their revising) processes.

In Bridwell's study, 171 high school seniors were assigned to write an essay describing something "they knew well." Students wrote the assignment in their regular English classes over a three day span. On the first day, students were given the assignment and asked to record any prewriting notes they wished to make on blank sheets of paper. On the next class day, students wrote their essays in blue ink after having been instructed, Bridwell says, "to lightly cross through any changes they might make as they write... ." Students used black pens on day three to revise their essays. Bridwell examined papers for an array of linguistic level changes reflected in students' writing, employing rigorous statistical procedures to conduct her analysis. She also studied such items as changes in margins, handwriting, essay length, and total number of revisions students' made from one draft to the next. Three English Education doctoral candidates rated the papers using Diederich's Quality Scale.

Among her numerous findings, Bridwell discovered that the most extensively revised papers did not necessarily receive the highest quality ratings. Other results led Bridwell to conclude that good writers and poor writers revise differently: poor writers concentrate on surface level mechanical changes, e.g., spelling and punctuation, while good
writers work more at higher levels of phrase, clause, and sentence change.

Prior to Bridwell's study, Nancy Sommers researched the revision processes of eight college freshmen and seven experienced adult writers. Participants wrote three compositions in three different modes, rewriting each composition twice. Sommers also asked writers to suggest revisions for a control composition. To complete her case study work, Sommers interviewed each writer on three separate occasions.

Sommers, too, investigated linguistic level writing changes (in this case, word, phrase, sentence, and theme level modifications). Sommers found that the experienced adult writers made the majority of their revisions on the sentence level. The college freshmen by contrast concentrated their changes on the word and phrase levels. Sommers discovered from her interviews that the student writers did not have an articulated theory of revision whereas the experienced writers did. Yet other evidence persuaded Sommers to conclude that both groups of writers applied operational revision procedures to the rewriting task.

Sondra Anne Perl, using case study methods to portray unskilled community college writers at work, has found that basic writers possess operational composing procedures. Perl asked five college students to write and simultaneously compose aloud for her on four separate occasions. Perl taped each session and then appraised composing behaviors based on a coding system the researcher herself devised. Perl discovered that contrary to popular opinion, unskilled writers do know how to write and in fact encounter problems in writing "because of the nature of their
already internalized, deeply embedded composing process."

Had Perl examined unskilled writers' finished products alone, she
would not have been able to observe the recursive nature of their com­
posing behavior. Perl's investigation attests to descriptive studies' power to generate vital new knowledge on writing behavior. Indeed, case studies in the last decade of writers at work provide an entire body of information unavailable to us in the conventional research literature on composition.

Emig, Stallard, Mischel, Sommers, and Perl recognize that understanding how students write obliges researchers to observe and describe students actually writing. Appropriately matching research methodology to problem phenomena under study yields fruitful results, as valuable humanistic data captured by these five investigators illustrate. On the other hand, watching students compose under laboratory-type conditions is not the same as observing pupils' in-class writing behavior.

Case study researchers in composing have been slow to acknowledge that reactive factors inhere in clinical settings. Demand characteristics present in clinical situations necessarily differ from those operating in classrooms. The reports of Emig et al. have dramatically amplified our understanding of students' composing processes yet have contributed little to our awareness of their in-class experience of composition instruction.

Donald Graves and Sharon Pianko have observed student writers working under nearly normal classroom conditions. Graves examined second-grade students in an effort to delineate children's initial composing development. Pianko researched seventeen college remedial and traditional writers in order to characterize their composing processes. Graves identified two
distinct types of writers ("reactive" and "reflective") among his second-graders. Pianko, like Perl, found remedial writers resemble traditional student writers but do not reflect as deeply on their composition.

Both Graves and Pianko studied students situated in classrooms, but neither researcher looked explicitly at context as an influence on student performance. One of the critical assumptions guiding my study is that social conditions under which individuals write influence their writing behavior.

Christopher Clark and Susan Florio, researchers at the Institute for Research on Teaching who are currently documenting young school children's classroom evolution as writers, construe "writing chiefly as a social activity." Clark and Florio assume it is necessary to appraise individual development in the context in which the growth occurs. In order to portray student writers' development accurately, Clark and Florio eschew conventional research methodology in favor of descriptive, qualitative study, enabling them to conduct "naturalistic," "ethnographic," and "holistic" inquiry.

My research project, like that of Clark and Florio, conceives of writing as fundamentally a social activity and suggests that writing behavior and, indeed, report on it are context-dependent. Both studies adopt qualitative methods as the most appropriate form of inquiry for documenting the process of becoming a writer within the classroom. Descriptive study of this sort "falls... out of the mainstream of research extant in writing and its instruction."
Summary

As previously noted, research into evaluation of student writing identifies a host of relevant variables to impinge on teacher assessment and student response to it. The literature examines key questions, e.g., On what basis do teachers react to and evaluate composition?, and, Does teacher comment have any effect at all on student achievement?. Yet research in this area often depends exclusively for its results on analysis of students' written products as influenced by experimentally manipulated variables. Pupils' perceptions are rarely included in this research. Such experimentation reduces writing to a mechanical, product-based dimension and dissociates evaluation from its dialectical relationship to composing. We are left with plentiful information on discrete parts of writing programs but no images of writers writing.

Composing literature capitalizes on student self-report to help clarify for us students' writing experience. The composing literature reviewed for this study reveals writing to be a complex process favorably subject to descriptive, qualitative inquiry. Until recently, however, composing researchers did not examine students actually writing in classrooms. Both evaluation of writing and composing literature thus fail to report on classroom participants' lived experience of in-school writing instruction. There is, moreover, a dearth of research describing evaluation of writing in its social context. The question is, How does evaluation work for teacher and student during the time they spend together?.

This collaborative research venture focuses on a teacher who consciously uses formative evaluation to help students achieve composing
fluency. The study examines the nature of teacher commentary and the uses to which it is put by students in an interactionist composition curriculum. On-the-spot student reaction to teacher evaluation and pupils' long-term uses of it are explored. I examine such influences on pupils' response to evaluation as learning motivation, students' past experience with school-sponsored writing, and individual views on Fran's instruction. Factors affecting teacher evaluation—for example, school routine, the teacher's personal theory of writing and its instruction, and her attitudes toward students—are also discussed. Unlike other evaluation of writing research, this study acknowledges the

continuing interpersonal state of affairs in existence between pupils and teacher, based on the orientations of each party to the other. The individual's knowledge, perceptions and evaluations of the other, including their common knowledge of past interactions, all influence current interaction and behavior. Thus, to ignore the influence of the attitudes formed by pupils through such interaction...is to ignore a significant part of the reality of classroom life... .76

Methodologically speaking, it has not been widely recognized by writing researchers that instruments used to investigate composing activity in part determine the nature of research findings. Elaine O. Lees argues that in fact "...research instruments—whether the holistic judgements of student papers or atomistic measures like vocabulary counts, syntactic analyses, t-unit studies, or analyses of intellectual processes—actually create the findings."

Different kinds of research problems require different methodological approaches. Ideally, the selection of a methodology is a function of
questions advanced by the study. Again, the immediate issues in this project are to describe how evaluation of student writing works in a particular kind of writing class, to disclose some of the reasons why it operates in this manner, and to discuss what the evaluation dynamic means in its natural school context. Qualitative methods used in conjunction with certain collaborative research procedures provide the best set of techniques for conducting this project. In Chapter Three, I will discuss qualitative methods and collaborative inquiry, propose a rationale for their usefulness, and then proceed to detail how this study was carried out.
CHAPTER TWO

NOTES


13. Robert Fulkerson, "Some Cautions about Pedagogical Research," *College Composition and Communication* 40 (December 1978): 463-466. Most of the research reviewed in this section bases its findings on analysis of a limited number of student writing samples—usually two essays per student, one written at the beginning and another at the end of the experiment. When researchers seek to measure the effect of a particular experimental treatment, "gain scores" are computed by comparing the difference between the initial and final averages for experimental and control groups. The treatment effect resides in the "total gain score" difference between two groups. This is the method Hansen used. It is not a very reliable research procedure according to Paul Diederich, who wrote of it in 1963: "I would not touch... [it] with a ten-foot pole." Paul Diederich, "Problems and Possibilities in the Teaching of Written Composition," in *Proceedings of the 1963 San Francisco Conference, Research Design and the Teaching of English* (Champaign, IL: NCTE, 1963), p. 61.


16. Braddock et al., p. 36.


24. Harris, p. 185.

25. Harris, p. 185.


27. Markham.


34. Diederich, p. 59.

35. Paul Diederich, Measuring Growth in English (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1974).


38. Eulert, p. 62.

39. Eulert, p. 64.


41. Broadfoot, p. 3.

42. Broadfoot, p. 7.

43. Broadfoot, p. 9.

44. Broadfoot, p. 4.


49. Lagana, in Jerebek and Dieterich, p. 185.

50. Beach.


52. Beach, 1976, p. 164.


54. Beach, 1979, p. 114.

55. Beach, 1979, p. 118.


59. The seven studies are:
   - Janet Emig, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders (Urbana, IL.: NCTE, 1971);
   - Donald Graves, "Children's Writing: Research Directions and hypotheses Based upon an Examination of the Writing Processes of Seven Year Old Children," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The State University of New York at Buffalo, 1973);

60. Perl.

61. Emig, p. 93.

62. Emig, p. 93.

63. Stallard, p. 206.

64. Stallard, p. 218.


68. Sommers.

69. Perl.

70. Perl.


72. Graves; Pianko.

73. Clark and Florio, p. 6.

74. Clark and Florio, p. 5.

75. Clark and Florio, p. 5.

76. Broadfoot, pp. 5-6.

Introduction

Traditional research into evaluation of student writing involves use of quantitative methods because investigators seeking to improve practice believe they can most graphically represent change via measurement. Traditional researchers understand scientific inquiry strictly in hypothesis-testing, deductive terms, most often equating measurement with meaning. Qualitative and collaborative researchers view science differently. In the first part of this chapter, I examine traditional versus qualitative and collaborative notions of research, consider briefly the various labels applied to qualitative inquiry, explore the meaning of both qualitative and collaborative procedures in the context of this study, and propose a rationale for their use. The second part of Chapter Three contains a step-by-step description of the research process in this project, concluding with a delineation of criteria on which to judge the adequacy and usefulness of this report.

We turn now to examine competing responses to the question, What is research?.

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What is Research?

Traditional educational research revolves around statistical design, deduction of findings following necessarily from hypotheses posed by the researcher, a belief that numbers can be assigned with precision to whatever is being examined, and laboratory experimentation. In this hypothetico-deductive model, research is a law-seeking enterprise devoted to experimental manipulation of isolated variables and the gathering of quantifiable information. Research of this sort advances the case for prediction, control (i.e., holding so-called extraneous variables constant), testing, and, above all, objectivity.

"Subjectivity" in the hypothetico-deductive model of research is a pejorative term implying opinion, intuition, and bias. "Logical science," Patricia Carini's phrase for this research, assumes that scientists view phenomena and readily identify their "facts" independent of any perceptual filtering.¹ The researcher is purportedly peripheral to the data—a detached observer. Presumably, one observer is (and ought to be) interchangeable with any other observer. In this approach to research, it is incumbent upon the social scientist to conduct objective, value-free inquiry. Any other type of research is not regarded scientific.

Critics of the logical science definition of research see investigators to be constituent to the meaning of events under study.² "This ... position means that we are always dealing with perceptions, not 'facts' in some absolute sense.³ Concomitantly, this position suggests that value-free research is impossible. Gunnar Myrdal states that "a 'disinterested' social science has never existed, and... can never exist."⁴ For Myrdal
and others, problem formulation and selection of research methodology are value-laden tasks. Researchers need to articulate and rigorously monitor what Myrdal calls "valuations" and to report findings in light of the stated value premises. Personal involvement and explicit recognition of one's valuations in this notion of research are requisite elements in the research endeavor. Ross Mooney writes: "The more sensitive I can be in investing myself consciously in realizing my values through my research activity, the more profoundly I can penetrate universality."6

In traditional research, inter-rater reliability supposedly assures objectivity. A reliable study is one that can be replicated at different times and consistently yield similar results. Reliable research, it is postulated, equals objective research. Reliability is attained by having several subjects code behavior on a measuring, i.e., observation instrument. Observation instruments ostensibly eliminate the problem of human subjectivity. They permit behavior to be coded easily. Yet they also dictate that observers see phenomena in much the same way. Any observation instrument is finally more than just apparatus for recording behavior, qualitative and collaborative researchers argue. Instruments—and observers who use them—are facts of the phenomena under study:

Any technique we might use to 'look objectively' at our reality becomes a part of the event in question. We are an indeterminately large part of the function that shapes the reality from which we do our looking. Our looking enters as one of the determinants in the reality event that we see.7
Instrumentation of any sort prevents certain items from being recorded at the expense of those the instrumentation was devised to accommodate: "we can only see, only count, only code those things admitted to perception by the instrument." Instrumentation may distort a complex set of behaviors by over-simplifying them and thus actually misrepresent events under consideration. Reliable studies are not automatically objective.

All research contains its subjective aspects. That subjectivity is elemental to qualitative and collaborative research is not in dispute. Subjectivity, however, need not mean bias, opinion, or mere impression, but rather a point of view on the data. In qualitative modes of inquiry, researchers are the instruments of research. Investigators' past experience, knowledge, theoretical bias, and perspective on the events being studied influence the descriptions and interpretations they construct. Such subjective elements are shared with readers and become a valuable component of the research report: "The researcher shares perceptions, biases and facts and re-educates the audience intersubjectively. The conceptual context, the interpretations made and issues raised in the study may provide concepts and issues worthy of thought in readers' situations as well." Researcher subjectivity can lead to intersubjective agreement between researcher and audience and eventuate in shared understanding.

What is research? It is on the one hand experimental study carried out by detached observers who produce a collection of facts on isolated phenomena represented in abstract numerical equations for the purpose of
predicting (and thereby in some fashion controlling) future behavior. But research also can be immersion in natural settings by involved investigators who describe and interpret interdependent events in narrative form with the intention of enhancing our understanding of ongoing exchanges of human meaning. Research broadly defined involves the application of critical intelligence to critical, carefully-defined problems.  

**Labels used to define Qualitative Research**

The two conceptions of research outlined above portray science as both a predictive and descriptive enterprise. Predictive science tests predetermined hypotheses and is generally experimental and quantitative in nature. It is a deductive form of inquiry. Descriptive science concentrates on description and interpretation of events and is non-experimental and primarily qualitative (although it can be statistical, quantifying experience, as Bridwell's research does). Descriptive study in the qualitative mode is associated with inductive discovery.

Qualitative research is relatively new in educational inquiry, yet a confusing array of labels have already been used to describe it. Among the terms found in the literature are: ideographic research, naturalistic description, the constructivist approach, ethnography, constitutive ethnography, participant-observation, field study, fieldwork, thick description, case study, descriptive study, the ecological experiment, holistic research, the disclosure approach, and educational criticism. These labels are often used synonymously, although several of the terms denote different perspectives on research strategy and function. For example, while the
educational critic may use participant-observation to collect evidence, educational criticism encompasses an appraisal component not embodied in participant-observation. In a similar fashion, case study is one approach to doing ethnography, but not always the equivalent of carrying out ethnographic research.

The Meaning of Qualitative Methodology for this Study

Of the various labels commonly attached to qualitative research, several have meaning for this study. First, this inquiry can properly be called field study because I conducted this research "in the field," the field in this case being an eleventh-grade public school English composition classroom. Second, the research is ethnographic in the limited sense that it attempts to depict participants in their own terms (providing for what is known as an "emic" perspective). Thus I offer both extensive description of what I observe participants doing—an "etic" view on events—and numerous firsthand participant accounts of what participants see themselves doing. Moreover, I embed teacher and student activity in its densely-textured social context to try to present a meaningful portrait of writers writing, to create an ethnographically valid "picture of the people" being studied.

Third, this research is naturalistic. Believing that teacher and student activity is influenced by context, I studied research participants in their natural classroom setting. In order to understand pupils' everyday uses of teacher-written evaluation I thought it necessary to observe everyday classroom routine. Furthermore, the study was not directed by
any formal hypotheses nor limited to findings yielded by the application of a predetermined set of investigative instruments. The ongoing, natural flux of classroom events guided my research.

Fourth, participant-observation accurately describes the means by which I collected evidence. Participant-observation entailed regular, long-term observation of class lessons, selected videotaping of those lessons, occasional participation in both teacher planning sessions and class activities, teacher and student interviewing, informal conversation with research participants, and interpretive analysis of student audio-tapes and writing as well as teacher-written assessment. As a participant-observer, I assumed the role of a class member who "... participated in the social structure of the classroom developing significant relationships with the teacher and students."\textsuperscript{11}

Lastly, the overall approach followed in this project was one of disclosure, whereby I carefully examined school writing evaluation dynamics in an effort to disclose significant aspects of students' uses of teacher-written evaluation. Focusing on the qualities of this phenomenon, I rely on narrative language to convey a classroom story of student experience of teacher commentary in the hopes that such report will enable readers to experience vicariously the events I describe and to achieve selective intersubjective understanding as alluded to earlier.

Based on the type of evidence I collected, the procedures I used to gather it, and the kind of research report I produced, this project can be classified as qualitative research. Yet it also contains elements common to collaborative inquiry. The following section discusses collaborative
inquiry and examines the collaborative component of my research.

Collaboration in this Study

In collaborative research, the researcher and practitioner conduct the inquiry together. The insider's role is assumed fully by the teacher and the outsider's view cultivated by the professional researcher (who may try to acquire as well an emic understanding of events). Two perspectives rather than one are represented in report findings.

There exist several acceptable patterns of collaboration, all having to do with the varying degrees of practitioner involvement in problem formulation, collection and interpretation of evidence, and drafting and presentation of findings. In this particular project, I defined the research problem and initiated the research process. Fran got involved in the investigation during our first interview (conducted a few days before the school year began), at which time she started consciously probing her evaluation practices, helping me to interpret them. Then throughout the semester, Fran assisted in collection and interpretation of evidence. She also read the research write-up, suggesting revisions that she thought would add accuracy or comprehensiveness to the report. For my part, I joined Fran in her daily work, planning an occasional lesson, tutoring students, monitoring group work, taking attendance, and sharing my insights with Fran as a way to aid her in reflecting on her instruction.

By definition, in non-collaborative qualitative research, practitioners typically do not take an active, co-investigative role in the research process. Collaboration adds a powerful dimension to qualitative
methodology, enriching it with a second perspective on the situation deemed problematic. In this study, collaboration proved an invaluable research approach. For example, both Fran and I read student writing. Significant changes made by a student from one paper to the next which one reader possibly overlooked were often detected by the other reader. Then together Fran and I talked about how teacher evaluation on the student's past writing might have influenced the individual to make such changes as were in question. Having closely observed daily class lessons and having conversed at length with students about instructional matters as I had done, I could add to this discussion with Fran information about classroom effects as a possible factor in the student's writing changes.

In my continuous, informal dialogue with students, I was able to gather statements on how students interpreted various teacher comments which appeared on their papers. I could check with Fran to see what she meant by a certain remark and point out instances where students had failed to comprehend the comment's meaning. This interaction helped Fran achieve a greater degree of precision in her evaluation.

Thirdly, I participated in many classroom activities in the role of student. I could offer feedback to the teacher on ways in which the activities operated for me; these reactions helped Fran reflect on the relative success of her lessons.

A fourth example of collaborative research benefiting this study found students sharing different information about their writing-related experiences with Fran and me. Fran and I compared notes, so to speak, and built up profiles of evaluation's meaning for individual students more complex than those that could have been constructed by a single
observer.

Collaboration served yet a fifth meaningful function. When an emerging question occurred to one of the research partners but not the other, the collaborative research set-up provided the opportunity for sharing that question. Occasionally, a question surfaced impelling Fran and/or me to focus attention on an important, previously unexamined issue.

A sixth benefit of collaborative study was that in my absence, Fran, because of her sincere interest in the study, took special care to note what happened in class that day. Fran reported back to me what she had observed. (Student reports were also solicited.) This uninterrupted record of class proceedings contributed a measure of continuity and validity to the research.

For this study, I identified a taken-for-granted event (student use of teacher comment) to be complex. Once having agreed with me on the problematic nature of this event and on procedures for examining it, Fran found herself undergoing a novel experience in a familiar setting. In the role as coresearcher, Fran reflected on her instruction in unique ways, acquiring new insight into her teaching and writing evaluation practices. Meanwhile, my effort to appreciate student perspectives on evaluation involved considerable dialogue with Fran, who helped clarify and validate research discoveries. Thus a final distinct benefit of the collaborative research arrangement was that it entitled Fran and me to share in each other's professional development.
Rationale for the Use of Qualitative and Collaborative Procedures

Understanding the range of student uses of teacher evaluation calls for long-term observation of classroom events. Most research into the effects of teacher commentary on student writing analyzes only a few compositions characteristically written within a one to two month duration. Furthermore, study on teacher commentary has generally neglected to explore how follow-up actions by the teacher affect student writing. A qualitative approach requires the researcher "to become part of the scene" --to be in the presence of the people s/he is studying for a reasonable length of time. One advantage to using qualitative research procedures is that immersion in the classroom setting enables the researcher to monitor evaluation-related teacher actions and to gain perspective on changes occurring over time in student response to and use of teacher evaluation.

Classroom effects, it is being argued here, are of considerable importance in arriving at an explanation of how teacher evaluation on student writing functions for learners. One of the ways to gauge the influence classroom proceedings exert on student use of teacher comment is simply to pose the question to students. Qualitative inquiry promotes such an approach, wherein the researcher asks participants to describe in their own words what they experienced in a situation of interest to the researcher. This epistemological feature of qualitative study--provisions for portraying reality from an insider's point of view ("emic" representation)--is a second major justification for adopting qualitative methodology.
In both qualitative and collaborative inquiry (as in action research, the predecessor of the two), "... compensation is realistic. The results have meaning for practice because they are a consequence of inquiry under life-like circumstances." With qualitative methodology, the outside researcher usually has major or total responsibility for the study. Collaborative research by contrast makes for shared researcher/teacher responsibility. Collaborative research holds great promise for balancing the contributions of researcher and practitioner. "Such a democratizing of the research process is desirable on both substantive and ethical grounds," and is a major justification for the use of collaborative procedures.

Additional pertinent reasons for employing collaboration have been advanced by Diane Wells Kyle. Kyle notes that if research questions at-hand are ones to which both the practicing teacher and investigator seek answers, then both individuals are assured the project's findings will contain relevant information. Secondly, under normal circumstances, teachers are too busy and often too close to what goes on in their classrooms to gather evidence an observer free from these constraints can collect. The researcher uses the classroom not only as a setting for research but also as a focus for study: s/he gets involved over the long-term in classroom proceedings and thereby has an opportunity to look at problems developmentally. Another rationale for the use of collaborative procedures, then, is that the researcher can support the teacher in documenting and analyzing issues of evolving concern to the teacher.
Of course teachers' experience qua teachers cannot be duplicated by researchers. The teacher as an insider, immersed in the flow of classroom activity and invested with a unique perspective on the cascade of events, adds a point of view otherwise lacking from the research. In this project, for example, I solicited Fran's understanding and interpretations of how students acted on her evaluation, feeling that her insights would add comprehensiveness to the research report. I was also interested in documenting Fran's experience of evaluating student writing at her own level of meaning. The third important reason for adopting a collaborative approach in this project is that collaboration allows both researcher and teacher interpretive frameworks to operate in describing events and disclosing their significance.

We have considered philosophical, theoretical, methodological, and definitional matters of research as they bear on this project. In the next part of this chapter, I will present in literal detail the manner in which I formulated my research problem and carried out this study.

II

The inquiry process in this study involved the following interrelated stages of research: problem formulation, selection of a coresearcher, entry into the setting, establishing a classroom role, collection of evidence, interpretation of what had been observed and experienced, and write-up of the research report. This chapter reviews the stages sequentially, perhaps giving the impression that they succeeded one another in an orderly, linear fashion. Of course during the actual research
project stages overlapped and interacted. Establishing my role in the classroom, for example, was a continuous affair. Throughout the eighteen weeks during which I was a participant-observer, I repeatedly modified and refined this role, with each adjustment dictating the kind of evidence I was then able to collect.\(^{17}\) As another example, analysis and interpretation of evidence began as early as my first interview with the teacher collaborator. I carried out observation and interpretation concurrently during most of my fieldwork. In short, the research process was far more fluid than what can be captured in the discussion to follow.

Problem Formulation: Conception, Incubation, Production and Verification

Conception

The composition-related literature that I have found most illuminating both as a classroom teacher of English and graduate student studying writing theory and pedagogy\(^{18}\) explores language and writing growth in developmental, descriptive terms. Personal accounts by established writers on their working methods,\(^{19}\) observational studies by language researchers such as Vygotsky,\(^{20}\) Piaget,\(^{21}\) and Labov,\(^{22}\) and case study reports by Emig,\(^{23}\) Graves,\(^{24}\) and others have been of particular value to me. These sources openly or tacitly reject behavioristic conceptions of language learning in favor of an interactionist theory. Essentially, it is argued that simple stimulus-response theories fail to explain the role of apprehension in language development and neglect to shed light on the socio-historic content embodied in language.\(^{25}\) Whereas behaviorism treats language as an entity unto itself, an object to be mastered
by practice of static rules, interactionist theory regards language learning "to be dynamically interrelated with the actions of learners," a form of consciousness one fully realizes for oneself by communicating and acting in the world.

A behaviorist view of language suggests a mechanistic approach to composition and an experimental, logical positivist orientation to researching it. Logical positivist research analyzes apparent relationships between certain teaching behaviors and increased student achievement in writing. But this research as a whole is often contradictory and inconclusive. Its concept of writing achievement is limited. Moreover, it makes no comment on natural classroom writing experiences encountered by students and teachers engaged in the processes to which research findings are supposed to be applied.

It has been noted previously that behavioristic writing research averages out individual differences and offers no profiles of the individual pupil at work. The individual student writer as a meaning-maker however, is the focus of both my own classroom composition instruction and research interest. Descriptive accounts of individuals' writing processes always seemed more relevant to my concerns than abstract statistical summaries on the written products of large numbers of students. Because detailed description of writers' activity and systematic interpretation of that activity's meaning consistently helped me to acquire new insight into my students' composing behavior, I myself sought to do descriptive, interpretive inquiry. Additionally, my coursework in qualitative research and practice evaluating classroom instruction
qualitatively combined with my skepticism on the taken-for-granted routines in the teaching and evaluating of student writing predisposed me to formulate a problem calling for qualitative study.

In a seminar on Program Evaluation which I took in the spring of 1979, I wrote a paper entitled, "Evaluating Student Writing," claiming then that no single assessment method provided as comprehensive a framework as is necessary to appraise the full complement of skills the writer employs in composing. It was during the literature search for this paper that I began to conceive my research problem.

The majority of studies I reviewed on evaluation of student writing displayed investigators to assume that every student has the potential to, or indeed does, respond to teacher marking identically. Furthermore, the research pictured teacher commentary—and no other facet of pupils' classroom experience—to cause students to make changes in their writing. The literature thus did not either describe how individual student writers variously use teacher commentary or explain how classroom context influences what students do with that evaluation.

I puzzled over this dearth of report. Persuaded by my own school experience (both as student and teacher) that the individual learner and classroom context are key variables affecting pupil response to teacher-written evaluation, I initially considered designing an experimental study to test my hypothesis. It soon became obvious, however, that hypothesis testing was not my real concern. I did not want to test something that was not first described in the broadest terms possible.
My study in Curriculum Foundations and Research had acquainted me with classroom research literature, where the qualitative paradigm poses a bonafide alternative to traditional quantitative approaches. Within the last few years, a portion of the qualitative inquiry in education has been devoted to consideration of pupil perspective on schooling. Classroom researchers provide a model for naturalistic inquiry into the students' world. Ultimately, I utilized this framework, the research principles adopted by Emig et al., and interactionist theory on writing to conceptualize my research problem, originally phrased in this way: How does teacher evaluation of writing function for the individual student?

Having identified a broad research topic, I then proceeded to work through alternating stages of reflection and activity (respectively called "Incubation" and "Production and Verification" in the sections to follow). I eventually produced a detailed problem statement, bringing my research question into focus and outlining a viable research design. The next two sections trace the process I experienced subsequent to initial problem definition.

Incubation

A period of incubation followed my formulating the problem. I spent several months reviewing the literature, searching for reports related to the research question I had outlined. While papers on methods and systems for evaluating writing are legion, I discovered that discussion of the theoretical bases for these proposed marking systems is lacking. Indeed,
publications on theories of evaluation are rare.

One essay dealing in depth with evaluation theory is a 1976 paper by Janet Emig and Robert Parker. The authors draw on the work of M.H. Abrams, Dewey, Polyani, Sartre, George Kelley, Piaget, and James Britton to analyze the teaching and evaluating of writing with respect to instructors' "ability to respond to self, to others, and to natural and human-made phenomena." Evaluation is portrayed as a complex, transactional activity, success in which demands that teachers interact with writers' statements and presume meaning is embedded in those statements even if the writing obscures the intended meaning.

Emig and Parker explore the influence evaluators' own school-sponsored writing history wields on their expectations of students. The authors suggest school instruction induces one to value a certain kind of composition and to judge writing almost exclusively on matters of form, i.e., whether the piece is well-organized and grammatically correct. They argue this approach to evaluation corresponds to the objectivist criticism criterion delineated by M.H. Abrams in his four coordinate map of literary criticism. For Emig and Parker, an objectivist approach to evaluation represents a product orientation toward writing which in turn disregards the developmental dimensions of composing. The authors go on to equate each of Abrams' other three coordinates with what they see to be parallel coordinates in the teaching and evaluating of writing. The article concludes with a list of questions Emig and Parker think will help writing teachers to identify the bases on which they judge student composition.
This article on evaluation of writing theory and others by William Dusel and Timothy Donovan clarified basic writing assessment issues while also assuring me that evaluation of student composition is a complicated matter much in need of research. The Emig/Parker, Dusel, and Donovan material suggests how a researcher might determine teachers' grading preferences and uncover reasons explaining those preferences. Yet my primary interest was the student, whose point of view on what happens in school and the writing class in particular has been persistently neglected by English Education researchers.

While reviewing the literature on evaluation of student writing, I studied the language theory of Lev Vygotsky, his colleagues A.R. Luria and F. LaYudovich, and Adam Schaff. I eventually examined some of the work of A.N. Leontiev and A.A. Leontiev as well. In two separate graduate seminars, class members and I endeavored to translate the theory of Vygotsky into instructional practices in composition reflective of his interactionist theory of language development. The seminar groups sought out existing composition programs which traced their philosophical origins back to Vygotsky. We unearthed such a curriculum in the Nan Elsasser and Vera P. John-Steiner interactionist approach to advancing literacy. Seminar members generally agreed that the James Moffett/Betty Jane Wagner writing curriculum outlined in their Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13 also embraced several of the major language growth principles espoused by Vygotsky and his colleagues. Yet no participant in either seminar could claim to have had first-hand experience with an interactionist composition curriculum. This, then, became a feature I aimed to incorporate into my research, namely, to
locate a composition class taught by a teacher who was familiar with the work of Vygotsky, Elsasser and John-Steiner, and Moffett and Wagner and who attempted to involve students in an interactionist writing program.

I discussed my proposed research with my Ph.D. program adviser, Dr. Frank Zidonis, who agreed that the area of writing evaluation is in need of study. Dr. Zidonis acknowledged that the qualitative approach to the problem I outlined for him seemed a suitable way to proceed, contending that "it is a virtual impossibility to get information regarding students' personal response to evaluation other than by some form of interview." I also consulted Dr. Christopher Clark, an experienced researcher currently engaged in an NIE-funded classroom study of the acquisition of written literacy. Dr. Clark supported the use of qualitative methodology as an appropriate strategy for collecting evidence on the problem of how teacher evaluation on students' written work functions for individual learners.

Production and Verification

Throughout the incubation period, the individual learner and the topic of evaluation of pupil writing remained in the forefront of my thinking. I wanted to try to understand how individual students made sense out of their school-sponsored writing experience, and I envisioned research into student use of teacher evaluation as one way to get at that meaning-making process. Evaluation continued to be of interest to me mainly because schools, I reasoned, are in the business of evaluating learners, carrying out the responsibility in multifarious ways, with
evaluation of student composition being perhaps the most controversial, least adequately researched practice in the entire assessment area. Furthermore, evaluation in the composition curriculum I knew from experience shapes how students learn about composing and often dictates what they write.

In an informal, summer, 1979 study group, I drew up a research prospectus, revising it from week to week with the study group's assistance. The group included Dr. Donald Bateman, my dissertation adviser, Dr. Robert Bargar, a professor in Educational Foundations and Research, and James Zebroski, an English Education graduate student who had examined most of the language and composition material I had studied. (Dr. Robert Jewett, then chairman of Ohio State University's Humanities Education Department, occasionally participated in these meetings.)

My focus on evaluation originally appeared too narrow of a problem definition to Dr. Bateman, who argued that an account of writing evaluation dynamics would not provide teachers or the research community with sufficient understanding of the interactionist composition class I hoped to portray. I posited that, first, I was not confident a thoroughly interactionist writing class in which to do research could be found, second, that without a specific focus of some sort I could "get lost in the data," and third, that comprehensive description and interpretation of all components of a writing curriculum was probably too large a project for a single researcher to undertake. Together we agreed on an acceptable research focus: I would study a composition curriculum in action and explore major contextual, classroom effects on writers' use of teacher
commentary.

In laying out methodological details, Dr. Bargar stated that in my role as participant-observer I need not "go beyond natural impact to proactive influence on classroom events." Undoubtedly, my presence in the classroom would alter its dynamics. The extent of my involvement in class proceedings could not be determined in advance because I could not predict what allowances the teacher would finally make for me in helping her to establish the learning environment and conduct instruction. I did include as part of my proposal provisions for working with the teacher, aiding in planning and instruction and also interpreting events when asked to do so. This was a political decision: to be in the classroom means to influence, however slightly, its development. It is advantageous to all parties to try to make that influence positive. "The researcher, ...rather than being seen as a 'value free' outsider, should be a committed but critical participant." In this sense, I would proactively affect what happened, contributing one of several perspectives on classroom phenomena, "with clear recognition that... [my] claims to understand reality in a special way should be modest in the light of the primitive state of social science research."43

I presented a formal draft of my research prospectus in the summative study group's next to last meeting. Questions were raised about certain passages and suggestions offered as to how to improve those sections of the proposal. Most importantly, this two-hour session and follow-up conferences with Dr. Bateman and James Zebraski convinced me that the prospectus successfully stated a researchable problem and viable methodology
for studying it.

Verification of a different sort came from The Ohio State University's Human Subject Committee, a body of academicians and community representatives who inspect all university-sponsored research proposals involving study of "human subjects" in order to insure that the rights and well-being of the people to be studied are protected. The fact that an independent body would review my proposal prompted me to reassess it, to identify and revise weak passages, molding the proposal into its final form. The committee approved the prospectus, requiring two minor but important additions to my methodological procedures.44

Shortly after I entered the field, I once again reviewed the prospectus, sharing it with Dr. Gail McCutcheon, an experienced qualitative researcher and author of several articles on research theory.45 Dr. McCutcheon suggested that a more elaborate discussion of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of qualitative inquiry than what appeared in my prospectus might be incorporated into the formal research report. In general, Dr. McCutcheon reacted favorably to the prospectus, and based on her own considerable practice with qualitative methodology, attested to the power and usefulness of the approach outlined in my problem statement.

**Selection of a Coresearcher**

Several prescriptive criteria were applied to the selection of a coresearcher. For example, I sought a teacher who had taught for a minimum of three years. Research shows beginning instructors are concerned
primarily with classroom control, whereas experienced teachers are more likely to care chiefly about the consequences of their instruction. It was important to me to ally myself with a teacher who had already negotiated the demanding first years in the profession, avowed competence at managing basic classroom routine, and was therefore in a position to concentrate on the details and ramifications of her instruction.

I was interested in collaborating with a teacher who had done some recent composition study. Composition theory and research is a rapidly expanding field. Increased attendance at national conventions on teaching composition, new journals on writing and its instruction, and a growing number of dissertations and books on the subject testify to the burgeoning activity. The interactionist approach to composition represents a contemporary model of writing theory and pedagogy. The writing teacher who was not somewhat current in her study would most probably be unfamiliar with interactionist terminology and concepts, a condition that could not possibly facilitate the research. It was in fact obvious from the outset that success in this inquiry depended in great part on securing the cooperation of a classroom teacher committed to an interactionist approach to writing instruction. To have selected a teacher whose philosophy on the learning and teaching of writing was incompatible with mine would have found me researching something other than the interactionist, interpretive-based composition class I planned to study.

Given this interest in exploring an interactionist composition curriculum, I wanted to identify a teacher who used evaluation formatively and envisioned it to be integral to the overall development of
students' composing fluency. Such an attitude toward evaluation typically emerges from a process view of writing. In my experience, composition teachers who are most sensitive to the process nature of writing are themselves writers. Donald Murray and Janet Emig, among others, have discussed how important it is for the practicing English teacher to write regularly. The individual with whom I worked would thus have to be not only a teacher of writing but a writer as well.

Another consideration in selecting a teacher as coresearcher was to choose an individual who had expressed interest in the idea of collaboration. I had spoken with many classroom teachers—both in my capacity as a supervisor of student teachers in English and as a graduate student in Humanities Education seminars—about qualitative inquiry and the possibilities inherent in collaborative study. Several of these teachers encouraged me to consider them as a potential coresearcher. A teacher who did not endorse collaboration could not be expected to participate fully in the research project or even perhaps to welcome me into the classroom on a regular basis for an entire semester. Professed interest in collaboration on the part of the teacher was a key consideration.

Nothing in these criteria dictated that I select a teacher with whom I had previously explored issues in composition theory, research, and pedagogy. On the other hand, having shared this information in advance enabled me to assess informally teacher attitude toward an interactionist/interpretive conception of writing and its instruction and to gauge the degree to which respective teachers already practiced or would be willing to experiment with such a pedagogical approach. I believed having
established a prior working relationship would promote efficient use of research time. 47

Other factors of a personal and practical nature influenced my selection of a coresearcher. I wanted to study in an integrated, urban, general composition high school classroom because I felt that the student diversity typically found in such a setting would make for an interesting research project. This preference limited the number of available sites, dictated a certain teaching schedule, and hence excluded several potential coresearcher candidates. I also eliminated as possible research settings schools located a great distance from my home, again restricting the number of teachers from which to choose. Finally, I anticipated that without administrative sanction for the research at both the district and building level, I could not successfully conduct my inquiry. A few teachers who might have been outstanding coresearchers were not considered for the collaborator role due to administrative resistance to the project.

Columbus city schools provided me numerous teachers who fulfilled major selection criteria. A meeting with the city supervisor of English Language Arts turned up six potential coresearchers. A close check of the respective candidates' teaching schedules and building situations (i.e., likelihood of support from the teacher's English Department chair and school principal) reduced the list of possible coresearchers to three individuals. The teacher whom I eventually selected as collaborator demonstrated the greatest familiarity with and commitment to interactionist theory and the most interest and availability of time to carry out collaborative study. Additionally, this particular teacher--Fran Spratley--was
one with whom I had taken three graduate seminars, including a course in Composing Theory and Research. I had also previously done curriculum planning with Ms. Spratley in a workshop I conducted for an English staff to which she formerly belonged.

Profile of the Coresearcher

Fran Spratley is an experienced teacher of composition and an avid writer herself. She has taught high school English since 1972, working for six consecutive years at one city high school and then at different institutions each of the past three academic years (1978-1979, 1979-1980, 1980-present). Typically, Fran Spratley's teaching schedule includes courses in composition, General English, and media. By her own account, her most rewarding instruction has been the teaching of creative writing. Fran, who has a Master's degree in English Education, regularly writes on her own, composing almost daily (and often voluminously) in a journal she has kept for six years. She also maintains steady correspondence with several friends and is currently at work on an idea for an article she hopes to publish in a prominent local magazine.

In two separate preliminary interviews I conducted with Fran, she claimed her own past experiences with school-sponsored writing profoundly affect her instructional style. Raised an "army brat," Fran attended eighteen different schools in seven different states by the time she graduated from high school. With only one exception, Fran's English courses summon up unpleasant memories for her, particularly those she associates with her junior high school English curriculum. In this program of study
she "learned what fear was," enduring what she now labels "repressive" instruction. Fran says the way writing was invariably taught to her involved didactic pedagogy and "learning that is divorced from the self." This experience impressed upon her "how much the opposite I want to be as teacher."

Largely as a result of these school encounters, Fran professes to be especially conscious of creating a classroom writing environment which makes students feel comfortable and gives them ample opportunity to acquire confidence in their personal powers of expression. Having students produce error-free composition is to Fran's way of thinking secondary to the task of mobilizing them to "just get thoughts and feelings down on paper."

Grammar instruction, Fran protests, is "fruitless" in and of itself; she normally teaches grammar only when an individual student says, "'How do I fix this?'".

The back-to-basics movement makes Fran "rebellious." She believes it is "regressive," turning teachers away from a concern with fresh, honest, fluid writing to an unhealthy preoccupation with technically correct yet frequently labored, vapid composition. Personally, Fran tries to help students use writing as a means "to come to know alternate ways of dealing with problems in the world." To fully realize this goal, Fran predicts she will have to become less directive and more student-centered in her pedagogy.

Fran's view of herself as teacher is that of a facilitator and her understanding of composition decidedly process-based. Her instructional methods ideally enable the student "to see where his feelings and logic
are in error." Speaking, listening, reflecting, and dramatizing activities are intertwined with her writing assignments. Language learning, she suggests, is interrelated to learners' action. She explains further that she often requires students to compose three drafts of a paper, for "rewriting helps a person to confront what he or she has thought." Fran frequently urges students to start their second draft by focusing on the conclusion of the original essay. Writing for Fran is a generative act.

Fran does not grade every piece of student writing. She worries that pupils absorb the self-images transmitted to them by teachers' grades. She sees her responsibility to be that of an interested reader first and evaluator second. Fran comments extensively on student papers based on the personal reaction the writing evokes from her. Her commentary is designed to aid students "revamp ideas, add adequate support... examples, anecdotes, whatever... and to recover their natural voice." 49

Fran envisions conferences as an ideal forum for conducting evaluation of student writing. The conference arrangement enables her to clarify for writers exactly what elements of their composition elicit the specific reaction Fran had as reader. At the same time, students can offer insight into their reasons for structuring the discourse in a particular manner. Fran believes writing growth hinges on dialogic interaction of this sort, noting that unfavorable teaching conditions (i.e., large classes, frequent interruptions, short class periods) prevent her from making conferences a stable feature of her instruction.

To approximate the essential reader-writer dynamic Fran believes teacher-student conferences promote, she institutes other evaluation
formats. For example, at the beginning of the year, each student is
asked to select a "significant other," either a classmate or trusted
acquaintance who will read and critically respond to all the written
work done by the individual student. Fran also explains that through­
out the semester pupils will do group grading. In this activity, three
or four learners comment individually on a like number of papers not their
own, and then assign each paper a single group grade, derived consen­sual­ly. While not providing student writers the face-to-face contact
and immediate feedback they receive in a conference, group grading does
supply students multiple sources of response to their writing and,
Fran adds, helps to reinforce the idea of writing for audiences other
than the teacher.

The concepts and practices Fran discussed in our two preliminary
interviews are notions I had heard her talk about before in several grad­
uate seminars we took together. Primarily as a result of her reading
for a course on "Composing Theory and Research," Fran is current with a
good portion of the literature on an interactionist approach to compositi­
on. Her study in this seminar she states "put words around things I'd
been doing all my life." She was encouraged to find theoretical support
for her practice and also curious to know what research had to say about
interactive-based composition programs.

From the very first mention of my plan to inquire into the class­
room teaching of writing, Fran expressed an interest in participating in
the research. She openly welcomed the opportunity to collaborate in
systematic study of one of her classes. Although she did not help to
formulate the research problem, Fran indicated the desire to examine any facet of classroom life that could lead to new insight into student experience of her writing curriculum. Actually, very early in the project, Fran embraced the research problem as one containing personal significance for her. The evening of my second day of observation Fran remarked that her former students "used past papers to correct by," but then in the same conversation acknowledged she had never verified this to be true. We briefly discussed the range of possible uses to which students put teacher commentary, with Fran recognizing it could be very important for her to know how individuals reacted to her written evaluation. It was in this exchange that Fran found motive to commit herself to the research problem per se.

The information gleaned from the two preliminary interviews in combination with the detail appearing in some essay writing Fran did for me assured me it was reasonable to have selected her as coresearcher. The essay I assigned Fran specified that she present her philosophy of writing in metaphoric terms and describe--again, metaphorically--how she conducts her writing classes and what role(s) she sees herself to assume in those settings. Fran's essay follows:

Archeologists search for the new amid the old. While a team searches for a particular artifact (or indeed an entire town), it proceeds to unearth, layer by tedious layer, time's hidden surprises. Seldom does a sight yield only what was expected. Indeed, what is expected in such a hunt is to discover the unexpected.

After a particular team has been trained/prepared by an experienced archeologist, or one who has familiarity with the target site, it is free, armed with sundry tools, to dig within
the perimeter of the different site areas. Team members are assigned duties which correspond to their own levels of experience, talents, etc. They dig carefully, thoroughly, and report findings to the senior team member. If a particular area appears fruitful, the entire team may isolate itself there until possibilities are exhausted.

The entire process of the dig is laborious—absorbing weeks, months, years. In the end, little may be discovered, perhaps nothing. Yet there remains the educated chance that what may be eventually unearthed may be significant to our knowledge of past civilizations. Illium under seven cities. The tomb of a nineteen-year-old prince named Tutankhuman.

Such is the nature of the process.

As a writing teacher I see myself essentially as the "senior" team member in the metaphor. I have taught writing before, and although I have much to learn in each new circumstance, I can bring to my students my collective expertise such as it exists at the time. The site, of course, is themselves. The search, of course, is for themselves. Writing is the digging tool; the earth, individual consciousness embedded in human creativity.

Each student who is willing to cultivate the patience required of the process peels back layers of the self. (The (w)hole self?). Students help one another — discuss each others' work, rewrite idea after idea, refine thought, share in the labor. The entire class may strike upon an idea discovered by one, common to all, which excites and may lead to deepened self-knowledge.

Site exhausted, archeologists' job is yet undone. Artifacts are scientifically catalogued, labeled, photographed, preserved. This technical task is necessary so that others may research systematically, learn — gain. In writing, too, the student eventually turns scientist. (S)he completes his/her final draft, rids errors, creates of the process a product — self turned inside out — idea refined — finished, shining — a gold mask on a god-king's face.
Fran's essay corroborated what she had articulated in our interviews. She clearly conceptualizes writing as a process, depicting it to unfold in stages. Writing growth, like the archeological dig, takes time, but if patiently cultivated, may lead to significant discovery and development. Writing for Fran is an individual act—"the search...is for themselves"—and also a social activity—"students help one another...the entire class may strike upon an idea, common to all, which excites and may lead to deepened self-knowledge." Fran's role in the composition class is to facilitate writers' search for themselves and to learn from their discoveries, adding knowledge to what she calls her own "collective expertise." Fran individualizes instruction. The main text for her writing class is not a grammar manual or a literature anthology, but the writing texts students themselves produce supplemented by Fran's personal expertise as writer.

Relative to evaluation, Fran's portrayal shows that message and meaning for her take precedence over the form writing assumes, although at some point attention to technical detail (grammar, usage, mechanics) becomes functional. Evaluation is not at all a prominent feature in this picture. One gets the sense nevertheless that Fran's major concern regarding evaluation is that it not terminate the search; assessment must to the contrary invite further exploration (that is, additional writing).

Entry into the Setting

Relatively little has been written on the topics of gaining entry into classroom settings and establishing working relationships with
teachers in the field. For this inquiry, I followed procedures culled from the writings of various social scientists to effect my entry. Although the bulk of this material did not address the issue of making entry into educational institutions, its focus on negotiating complex social organizations—which schools and classrooms certainly are—provided a useful set of guidelines for gaining access to the desired research setting.

The general strategy I used in entering the field was to "work the hierarchy." My first point of formal entry into the organizational structure of the school system in which I hoped to carry out research (namely, Columbus city schools) was to contact the city supervisor of English Language Arts. Meetings with the supervisor served a threefold purpose: first, the sessions gave the supervisor a chance to review my research proposal and to indicate whether or not he would sanction the inquiry; second, having expressed support for the project, the supervisor then directed me to others in the administrative hierarchy whom I needed to consult in order to obtain authorization for my research; third, the supervisor helped me identify a pool of potential coresearchers.

With the supervisor's sponsorship, I proceeded to move in two directions simultaneously: "up" the hierarchy to solicit approval from the Columbus School Department of Management Planning and Information and "down" the hierarchy to talk with teachers about their interest in conducting collaborative study. In every instance, I provided individuals with whom I met an Entry Statement. In this document, I briefly identified myself and then outlined my research aim, intended duration of study,
commitment to participant confidentiality, and plan to offer all concerned parties an abstract of my findings. I supplemented this statement with copies of my research prospectus and Human Subject report form.

Following the recommendation of Schatzman and Strauss and others, I explained to school personnel my interest in understanding host activities and stressed I was not inclined to evaluate those events. Administrators and teachers alike could not have been expected to respond favorably to an outsider who posed as an expert on the educational phenomena particular to their situational experience: "...the researcher should play down any expertise... he may have on the subject of which the hosts may claim to be expert: the researcher is and should act the learner..." I explained that I aimed to describe and interpret ongoing classroom learning; my research was consequently seen to be a practical, fact-gathering endeavor with potential benefit to the host system.

Because I was studying a single classroom and not an entire organization, it was not imperative to develop a close rapport with all key school personnel. Yet once I had selected a coresearcher, I did confer with the building principal, vice-principal, and English Department chairs, repeating the entry introduction I had used previously. The wider the institutional acceptance, the greater the mobility and freedom I would likely have to conduct the inquiry. Student teachers in English placed under my supervision at Counts High necessitated additional contact with the staff and opportunity to observe classrooms other than the one I was researching, thereby enabling me to acquire broader perspective on life at Counts High.
"... Naturalistic field research... is accomplished principally through human relations."55 In common sense terms, successful entry into Fran's Intermediate Composition class depended on conveying genuine interest in the educational program and respect for participants' activity and honestly representing my study. Once all personnel who needed to approve my research had in fact done so, I turned my attention to the collaborator and to the matter of working out with her what my classroom role would be.

Establishing a Classroom Role

Collaboration as I proposed it to Fran entailed in part her helping to collect and interpret evidence and my aiding in design and implementation of instruction. We agreed that in presenting myself to students, I would talk in terms of functioning as an assistant teacher. Together we explained to students on the very first day of the school year that Fran would make assignments, give grades, and conduct formal classroom business as students knew it; I would assist Fran in planning the curriculum, occasionally teach a lesson myself, monitor and participate in group activities, work with students on an individual basis, and often take the role of just another student in the room.

Students were informed that I would spend the semester with them in an attempt to understand how Fran's evaluation, specifically her comments on students' written work, functioned for individual learners. I emphasized it was not important to me to prove or judge anything. Rather, I sought to describe and interpret the evaluation dynamic as it unfolded
in this one class.

No attempt was made, then, to conceal my research purpose. In revealing research intentions to participants, I adopted the rationale formulated by A. Richard King, who states that

> It is not necessary to obscure research intentions because, once they are made explicit... the primary attention to task performance in the role of teacher will quickly obliterate the observation elements of the teacher's behavior. Observation is a teacher's business...: recording data is an expected teacher behavior, and interest in the general community as well as individual students and their families is applauded when demonstrated by teachers. It is perfectly possible for any teacher to exhibit these behaviors in an intensified manner, even when people know he is a researcher as well, without establishing an artificial external observer set of responses.56

Of course, I was not the single, "real" teacher in this class, and hence King's reasoning did not fully apply to my situation. Yet I did perform many teacher tasks (such as designing some lessons, helping Fran to evaluate papers, and coaching students on their writing), acquiring in the process more a status of teacher than observer, an occurrence facilitating the teacher as researcher function described by King.

In developing my assistant teacher role, Fran and I were careful not to invest it with the same authority associated with her position as principal classroom teacher. Two practical reasons explain why we attended to this role distinction: first, in that I would be leaving at the end of the semester, both Fran and I anticipated student transition to her instructional leadership alone would be simplified if it was established from the outset that Fran had "final say" on all classroom
affairs. Second, whereas Fran as ultimate authority had sole responsibility to grade student work, my non-evaluative position created the possibility that learners would discuss matters with me they might not take up with Fran. Often times, in fact, students talked to me about a grade or comment they had received to which they reacted negatively but seemed hesitant to discuss with Fran. These conversations revealed much about both student reaction to teacher evaluation on their writing and the sources of this response.

I devoted considerable time to talking with students about non-academic concerns. The longer I stayed in the classroom, the more hours I spent in the school building, the easier it seemed to be for students to converse with me about whatever it was that happened to be on their minds. My observational notes are full of references to conversations I had with students on such topics as science fiction movies, cars, sports, music, partying, family, and so on. I valued what students said and tried to get to know them personally. Yet despite the fact that we shared the Intermediate Composition classroom experience, I was never entirely of it. A part of me remained detached as I strived to develop "a dynamic tension between subjective role of participant and the role of observer... ."57

Publicly, Fran and I distinguished between our two roles. As assistant teacher, I had the flexibility to be both educator and student. Privately, I differentiated between my scientific, research role and cultural, classroom role:

The scientific role and the cultural role of the researcher are interdependent and complementary. The personal lives of the people he is studying
are of great importance to him in both roles. It may be assumed that without this primary interest in them as persons in his active role as participant observer his study and findings become subject to distortion. ... (He also assumes that no wholly 'neutral' relation can exist in personal relations; such attempts often result in being impersonal, which in effect is being personal in a negative way.) He believes that valuing his subjects as persons increases the likelihood that he will come to understand them in their true state. The two roles not only coexist and complement one another, in some ways they can be seen as two reflections of the same social process as the researcher becomes a natural part of the life of the people he studies.58

Collection of Evidence

I used an array of procedures to collect evidence on the problem of students' uses of teacher-written evaluation. These procedures included keeping field notes, compiling two types of interpretive notes, conducting interviews, planning lessons with Fran, administering questionnaires, reading teacher handouts and reviewing student papers, and doing highly selective video and audio taping. The discussion to follow elaborates on each approach.

I devoted four and one-half months to participant-observation, attending the Intermediate Composition class seventy-one out of the eighty-seven days it met in the period from early September, 1979 to late January, 1980. Field note-taking served as the primary method for documenting research in progress. Sometimes I took notes while involved in classroom activity; on other occasions, I recorded my impressions only after I had left the field. These notes, preponderantly observational (i.e.,
descriptive) in nature, incorporated fairly extensive detail on such matters as the physical environment in which events took place, my feelings on what was happening, and information on participants' conversation, movement, and activity. Notes were cast in the form of a running account of the classroom "story" complemented by occasional interpretive remarks I made on my nascent understanding of what had transpired. I expanded and refined these interpretations in a second, separate set of notes. In yet a third note-taking activity, I attempted interpretation on the level of theoretical conjecture, building on my interpretations to speculate on possible theories explaining students' uses of teacher evaluation. I shared notes with Fran, asking her to concentrate her attention on my interpretive work. Fran either confirmed interpretations or volunteered alternative insights, periodically suggesting questions I had overlooked which she felt deserved study. My focus on classroom phenomena was cued by interactions occurring in class, my vantage point on events (where I was stationed in the room determined what I saw and heard), and investigative interests emerging from my interpretive notes and from discussions of them I had with Fran.

Every once in a while during the normal flow of class activity I informally interviewed students. These interviews enabled me to inquire directly into individuals' reactions to a particular comment or series of remarks Fran had made on an individual's paper. The unstructured nature of these interviews meant that students partly shaped the interview's progress, resulting in conversation that often found individuals reflecting on their total school experience with teacher evaluation. Personal
histories of this sort helped to explain student response to Fran's evaluation practice. In a similar fashion, interviews with Fran uncovered much about her personal history and its influence on her assessment techniques.

Several times during the semester I assisted Fran in planning curriculum. On one level, these sessions enabled me to contribute to the development of an interactionist curriculum; on another level, I could observe Fran informally assess student papers. Lesson plans often evolved from informal teacher assessment, whereby Fran identified a pattern of performance to typify previous student work based on her holistic impression of a complete batch of student papers. For example, Fran perceived that students' first drafts for a narrative writing assignment in general contained very little dialogue. She thus designated use of dialogue as a skill she needed to teach, and together we designed activities for showing students how to include dialogue in their story writing. The point is that as a result of our cooperative planning sessions I was able to trace how evaluative content which might not have appeared in comments on individual pupil writing worked its way into Fran's instruction. The instruction in turn affected how students subsequently read and responded to teacher commentary on their writing.

Questionnaires were employed as a means to aid me in arriving at a sense of students' personal attitudes toward evaluation. Realizing that a questionnaire can be a very reactive research device, I did not resort to statistical analysis of questionnaire results. I used interviews and questionnaires mainly because they provided alternative ways to
generate information on particular research themes. In this manner, I accomplished triangulation, i.e., the technique of examining an event from various points of view for the purpose of enhancing research validity. Karl Weick writes of triangulation: "the idea is simply that as field observation progresses, researchers continually add new processes of data collection to those already being used."\textsuperscript{59} Judith Hansen offers a broader definition of triangulation that more adequately reflects its application in this study. Hansen says the triangulation is "the use of multiple sources of data, multiple techniques, and multiple theoretical frames on the collection and analysis of data."\textsuperscript{60}

Videotaping served to support the triangulation effort. The videotapes preserved a record of class sessions that Fran and I viewed with an eye toward verifying the adequacy of my observational notes. Comparison between my write-ups—done after I had left the site and before I viewed the tape—and what had been recorded on camera revealed the extent to which I was able to recall in literal detail what had occurred in class. Fran and I used this exercise as one way in which to minimize chances for flawed description of classroom context. On one occasion, we used a videotape for "stimulated recall," asking students to watch the tape and to explain what they remembered themselves doing. Additionally, we invited several educators with differing theoretical orientations toward analyzing classroom phenomena to view one of the videotapes. Their observations helped us to construct a triangulated framework for describing classroom environment and for interpreting its effects on student response to teacher's written comments on student writing.
Other artifacts in the form of teacher handouts, central office curriculum policy statements, student papers, and student audiotapes were collected during the research project. These items were useful for determining such things as what evaluative criteria the teacher built into her assignments and what changes students made in their writing from one paper to the next. The audiotape strategy, it should be mentioned, was used on only one occasion. Three students recorded while they composed, explaining as best they could during actual production of the essay how past evaluation influenced the substance and form of the writing in progress. This procedure was novel to students and unique in its demands on them; it did not reveal much about choices they made while they wrote.

In summary, this research project involved collecting evidence from a variety of sources in a number of different ways. The final two sections of this chapter discuss interpretations of evidence amassed and communication of findings.

Interpretation of Findings

The procedures used to gather evidence in this study resulted in immersion in classroom life in an attempt to grasp various dimensions of learner experience of teacher-written evaluation. Recording devices (field notes, videotaping, etc.) captured events upon which I could reflect at a later date. Maintaining interpretive asides during the research process helped me to make explicit my own experience of the phenomena under study. Interpretation then derived from an interplay between
assembled observational information and my reflected thought on what had been collected and experienced:

...in the accrual of recorded observations and other records of phenomenal meaning over time, patterns of meaning emerge through the increasingly revealed complexity and interpenetration of the phenomena observed, and through the increasingly articulated thought of the observer.61

Since it is clear that "data do not 'speak' for themselves,"62 do not, in other words, issue forth their own interpretations, I had to develop strategies for working with the data that would produce a valid interpretive account of student experience of the evaluation dynamic in Fran's Intermediate Composition class. The initial step I took toward this end was to describe in a straightforward way how the class was organized and what members in it did. I tried to see how events in the classroom were related to each other and to individual students' writing performance. At this stage, I was engaged in what McCutcheon calls "patterning," an intrinsic type of interpretation which defines the overall classroom framework by constructing plausible links between separate phenomena.63 Patterning of this sort revealed, for example, that Phil's reluctance to use Fran's written commentary could at one point in the semester be traced to a previous confrontation Phil had with Fran over classroom seating arrangements. In this way, I attempted to give coherence and meaning to discrete student actions.

A second step in interpretation involved indexing field notes according to major themes, properties of scenes, classes of events, etc. which seemed to typify some noteworthy aspect of student response to
teacher-written commentary. Throughout the research project, I examined student papers to see what concrete changes individuals made from one paper to the next. Based on these changes, I made inferences about student use of teacher comment and then identified themes—possible explanations of the variety of ways in which students reacted to and subsequently used teacher commentary—to pursue in my classroom participant-observation. For purposes of doing interpretation, these themes were then a) juxtaposed against the indexed field notes and basic description of class rules, procedures, activities, and customs, and b) discussed with actors likely to have something to say about the particular theme under study. The intent here was to accomplish interpretation of social meaning, a second type of intrinsic interpretation reviewed by McCutcheon and designed to connect behaviors to meanings insiders and the researcher ascribe to acts. In Fran's class, for example, the fact that Jeff did not participate in a given in-class writing lesson did not mean he was incapable of writing or that Fran failed to notice Jeff not writing. Rather, the inactivity resulted from Jeff's disinterest (a meaning I attributed to Jeff's behavior and which he often later confirmed) in conjunction with Fran's habit of not demanding that Jeff compose for fear of reinforcing his overwhelmingly negative experience with school-sponsored writing (the meaning Fran herself assigned to her behavior).

For each intrinsic interpretation, then, evidence from a variety of sources was applied to corroborate structurally and thereby strengthen that interpretation. Findings were reviewed with research participants; points of disagreement between what I reported and what students and/or
Fran had to say on the issue were noted and findings in question re-viewed.65

Relating student experience of teacher-written evaluation to ex-ternal factors constituted a third type of interpretation. The fact that Counts High was enmeshed in its first year of court-ordered deseg-regation, for instance, influenced classroom events. Other external matters, such as educational trends (back-to-basics) and composition theory (the interactionist paradigm) were considered and their impact appraised. I attempted extrinsic interpretation because "our under-standing of what occurs in a classroom may be improved when these con-tributing forces are accounted for in interpreting the situation."66 Certainly, for example, greater insight can be gained into both Fran's manner of relating to students and methods of assigning and evaluating writing given a discussion of interactionist writing theory.

Communicating the Study

Ultimately, in writing up research findings, I included only those interpretations that appeared to fulfill three criteria of adequacy: sufficient amount and quality of evidence, due consideration of alterna-tive explanations, and apparent usefulness and significance in interpre-tations.67 Readers can ask similar questions of the report in appraising its meaningfulness.

The primary task in reporting findings was to provide a richly de-scriptive account of Fran's composition class enabling readers to experience it vicariously and to form therefrom a basis for judging research
conclusions. With regard to the overall validity of the report, the following non-quantitative indications should be considered:

(1) As in everyday life the general honesty and credibility of the report can be relied upon; this is the ad hominem test. (2) The plausibility of the document in terms of our own past experiences, as they are relevant, can be considered; even if our past experience is meager we know something of the range of human potentialities by which we can judge the probable truth of an account. (3) The test of internal consistency or self-confrontation has to be widely relied upon. A document that hangs together, that represents a structured configuration of human life and harbors no impossible contradictions has at least a prima facie validity.68

A good report, it has been argued, is factual, detailed, quotive, and illustrative.69 Lines of reasoning leading to interpretations are delineated and various potential explanations of events entertained. Research which gives readers significant exposure to both classroom context and researcher thinking allows readers to determine the usefulness of interpretations on readers' own terms. Chapters Four and Five to follow contain the actual description of Fran Spratley's Intermediate Composition class and interpretation of findings, including conclusions and implications for further study. These two chapters constitute the essence of interpretive evidence on which readers are to judge the value of this research report.
CHAPTER THREE

NOTES


2. Carini, p. 29. Carini does not mean to suggest that only hypothetico-deductive research is logical in nature. She uses the phrase "logical science" as a way to indicate that logical science researchers do not investigate the phenomenological world.


5. Myrdal, p. 15.


12. Fran remarked to me often that my reports on how students interpreted her evaluative comments made her more conscious of the necessity to write clear, precise commentary. Whereas at the beginning of the semester students sometimes told me they were not sure what was meant by a specific teacher comment, later in the term this occurred infrequently. The reduced confusion was likely due in part to students' growing more familiar with Fran's evaluation terminology. Fran in turn became more sensitive to individuals' language comprehension abilities as the semester unfolded. Reading all Fran's evaluative comments myself, I had the impression that in and of themselves they became less ambiguous over time.

13. This strategy admittedly poses some problems because of threats to interpretability of evidence inherent in the procedure. The threats are 1) general reactive effects of the conversation/interview situation, 2) potential for distortion in participant/interviewee self-report, and 3) the inability of certain participants/interviewees to accurately report on the subject matter under discussion. For an analysis of this issue, see John P. Dean and William Foote Whyte, "How Do You Know If the Informant Is Telling the Truth?," in George J. McCall and J.L. Sommers, eds. Issues in Participant Observation (Reading, MA.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), pp. 105-114.

In this research project, I found that students occasionally strained to give me information they thought I was looking for, even though it was apparent such information did not really reflect students' beliefs or practices. Some individuals claimed, for example, that they systematically used teacher evaluation to guide their writing from one paper to the next but upon observation failed to demonstrate any trace of this behavior. To guard against the threats enumerated above, I followed strategies reviewed in Dean and Whyte and in numerous other essays in the McCall and Simmons text.

It is important to note that I was not looking to identify a universal experience characterizing student uses of teacher commentary. In interviewing and talking informally with both students and Fran, my main concern was to be sensitive to what their statements revealed about individual feelings and perceptions and to ask myself what inferences on evaluation dynamics could be made from their statements about classroom events they had experienced (see Dean and Whyte, p. 114).


17. At the beginning of the semester, for example, students were wary of showing their work to me. I never insisted that I see any piece of writing and was careful not to make judgements on what I had read. Over time, as I gained acceptance by demonstrating that I could be trusted to keep student confidences and counted on to appraise their work fairly, students began to actively solicit my opinions. This kind of exchange signalled to me that I could begin to develop fuller relationships with students.

18. I taught high school English, grades nine-twelve, for three years. My doctoral program has included six seminars in Composition Theory and Research. I also teach two undergraduate English Education courses --- "Linguistic Materials for Teachers" and "Teaching Language and Composition in Secondary Schools."


27. Karl Weick notes that skepticism is an important element in field observation commitment. Karl Weick, "Summary Comments on Observational Methodology and NIE Fundings," Copy of an Informal Note on an NIE conference on a grant program in Organizational Process in Education, 1979, p. 8.


Philip Jackson's Life in Classrooms is generally acknowledged to be one of the original major studies which discussed insiders' views of the schooling process. Philip Jackson, Life in Classrooms (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968).


30. Emig and Parker, abstract to their ERIC article.


43. Whiteside, p. 108.

44. The changes suggested by the committee were that I send letters home to students' parents or guardians informing them of the nature of the research and requesting consent on their behalf, and secondly, building into my research plan provisions for learners who might not have wanted to be included in the study. I followed the committee's suggestions. (As it turned out, student and parent/guardian consent was unanimous.)

45. Dr. McCutcheon was consulted at this late date owing to the fact that she joined The Ohio State University College of Education faculty after I had begun my research.


52. Schatzman and Strauss, p. 25; John P. Dean, Robert L. Eichhorn, and Lois R. Dean, "Establishing Field Relations," in McCall and Simmons, p. 69.

53. Schatzman and Strauss, p. 25.

54. The Counts High English Department is co-chaired.


59. Weick, p. 3.


64. McCutcheon, p. 14.

65. A. Richard King, among others, argues that participant verification is crucial to arriving at valid findings. See King, p. 401. See also Schatzman and Strauss, pp. 134-135.

66. McCutcheon, p. 16.

67. McCutcheon, pp. 21-29.

68. Gordon Allport, *The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Research* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1942), p. 128. Allport is concerned with the validity of personal documents (e.g., letters, diaries, journals) used in psychological study. It seems to me the same constructs of validity can be applied to qualitative research report.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE CLASSROOM STORY

Introduction

The classroom story to be presented in this chapter is divided into six sections. We will move back and forth in time over the course of a one semester curriculum. The story begins in medias res, half-way through the eighteen-week term, with students working on a "descriptive narrative" assignment. In this section, entitled, "Student Motivation and the Rewrite Process," we will see how students holding different purposes in mind when they write use Fran's commentary in diverse ways. In the next section, "A Closer Look at Student Rewrite Activity," learners will be observed to rely on different sources of teacher evaluation to guide their composing. Brian is studied carefully in an effort to understand exactly how one student draws on various elements of Fran's instruction to cue his writing performance. In section three, "Interlude: Students Comment on Their Uses of Teacher Evaluation," individual pupils discuss their reactions to Fran's commentary appearing on their written work. Mark's profile shows that both previous experience with school-sponsored writing and classroom context can impact on student use of teacher evaluation. Fran's
particular classroom environment is explored in the next section, "Journal Writing." In "Journal Writing," we will examine how Fran's interpersonal relationships with students influence their response to her commentary on their writing, especially with respect to students' journal work. The shift Fran makes from journal writing to formal expositions (occurring about the fifth week of the semester) is described in section five, "Transactional Writing." In making this shift, Fran adds correction to her evaluation repertoire, thereby altering her role as evaluator. The correction itself we will find has consequences for the way students respond to Fran's evaluation. Finally, in section six, "Writing Labs, a 'How To' Paper, and the Final Examination," we review the remaining major assignments in Fran's Intermediate Composition curriculum. More description and interpretation of students' uses of teacher evaluation are offered. We will also continue to probe the reasons why Fran assigns and evaluates student writing as she does right up through her last assignment of the semester.

Student Motivation and the Rewrite Process

It is Friday, November 9th, the end of the ninth week of the 1979-1980 school year. I am waiting outside room 214, Fran Spratley's seventh-period sophomore English class, having arrived as usual at Counts High about fifteen minutes in advance of my scheduled observation. Pacing the corridor on the second floor of the main wing of the building, I never seem to wander more than a few yards in either direction from Fran's room, repeatedly returning to peer through the narrow, rectangular band
of glass abutting the classroom door for a look at the activity within. The long corridor, bordered by grey lockers sealed shut with copper pins and blue and black-faced Master locks, is momentarily silent. Then suddenly at the end of the hall some familiar faces appear. A tall, angular, bespectacled girl accompanied by a tiny and frail classmate pass by. A group of Black girls, talking loudly over their intermittent, rhythmic finger-snapping, follow them, hardly paying notice to me now, accustomed as they are to my presence.

At the sound of the 12:59 bell, Brian darts out of the room immediately across the hall from Fran's and edges his way into 214, slicing through the wave of students pouring out of Fran's seventh-period class. When I enter the room—after all the sophomores have departed—Brian has already assumed his customary seat in the exact center of the back row, from where he will circumspectly view class proceedings, a quiet, fixed feature and one of the various stable points of reference that gives Fran Spratley's eleventh-grade Intermediate Composition class its shape and order.

I nod to Fran, who is ringed by sophomores raining down questions and requests on her. It is said teachers are involved in as many as one thousand interactions per school day, a figure which I am sure accurately represents Fran's daily total of exchanges with students, administrators, and fellow faculty members. The transition from seventh to eighth period reflects the extensive demands placed on Fran's time and attention. For even while the tenth-grade students engulf her with their questioning, another small circle of pupils forms around the sophomores: these are the junior Intermediate Composition students waiting to take up their own
concerns with Fran.

At 1:02 another bell rings, signalling the beginning of eighth period. I have positioned myself almost in the middle of the room, just to the right of Fran's desk, in the third seat of the third of eight poorly formed rows. Jeff and Jim have followed Brian into the room. Geri and Joni, typically attired in jean overalls and broad-checked flannel work shirts, appear right after them. Others file into 214. Predictably, Sherri and Sharon are last to make their entry. Formica-topped and old, disfigured wooden desks are pushed around, switched, and turned at right angles to one another. This rearrangement makes it easier for certain pairs and groups of students to converse. Talk among students will continue sporadically throughout the entire period.

The shifting of desks occurs almost ritualistically in eighth period. Fran does not appear to be bothered by it. At this moment, she is still at the front of the room, chatting with several students, letting pupils get settled, and internally "shifting gears" herself, a phrase Fran uses to describe the process she undergoes in mentally adjusting from one class to the next as the school day unfolds.

It is about eight minutes after one o'clock when Fran addresses the whole class. Stationed between her desk and the first row of pupils, Fran holds up a stack of papers and explains to learners that "today we will rewrite Greg's '10'." ("10" refers to a ten-minute free writing exercise students in this Intermediate Composition class do on a regular basis. Greg is one of the class members.) Fran tells students that by rewrite she means "...restructuring and rearranging the whole content so that it
makes a good story." This comment reinforces the writing as process theme that Fran has presented to students time and time again since the beginning of the year. Today, all students will rework the same paper, namely, Greg's ten-minute writing on a frightening experience. While passing out the ditto of Greg's paper, Fran informs students that she would like them to spend the balance of the period (about thirty minutes remain) working on their individual rewrites, noting that "I'd rather you try to change it [Greg's original] and get only half of it done than to rush to finish it [the assigned rewrite]."

On the board, Fran has drafted a rewrite which she now reviews with students. Fran shares her writing with students because she feels one of her essential responsibilities in teaching composition is to show herself as writer to students and to examine with them the process she goes through in constructing discourse. (Fran insists she does not share her writing for the purpose of modeling "good" writing.) On the board, then, is Fran's rewrite of Greg's passage:

Three sharp, impatient blares of the Volkswagen horn brought me quickly to the living room window. In the driveway sat Rick in his parents' V.W. bug. Jeff was with him. They were laughing, bent over in their seats as Rick continued to lean into the horn. I shot over to the hall closet, grabbed my coat, and bolted out the door to join them.

"Let's do some cruisin'!" Rick nearly yelled as he jerked the car back out of the drive.

"Your parents gone?" I asked Rick, knowing they must be.

"Yeah, Vesco, how else could I "borrow" the car?" he questioned sarcastically. "You know I don't have my license."

The streets looked like thick slabs of rock-pitted glass as the V.W. fishtailed wildly several times before we made it to route 161 where the road surface was slightly less treacherous.
Fran reads her rewrite to the class, stopping to explain certain word choices and emphasizing to students that she has tried to select language which creates a vivid picture for the reader. Fran says something like this to the class: 'I shot over ... grabbed my coat and bolted out the door... shows action, motion, I think, enabling the reader to become part of the scene.'\(^3\) She offers other examples, stressing use of concrete detail and "showing action" as opposed to "telling what happened." I am aware that Fran's explanations do not always reveal the decision-making steps she experienced in rewriting Greg's original. For instance, Fran cites "The streets looked like thick slabs of rock-pitted glass..." because the sentence contains a figure of speech and therein supposedly evokes an image that is easy for the audience (reader) to envision. But Fran does not explain why she chose that particular image or how it occurred to her in the first place. As usual, Fran is rushing to get through the activity so that students can have a reasonable block of time to actually work on the designated class exercise.

During Fran's monologue, several students direct their attention to the ditto she had distributed. It contains directions for the assignment, information about grading, and Greg's few paragraphs complete with unedited teacher marking. The handout reads as follows: (See Illustration 1)

As soon as Fran concludes the analysis of her rewrite, she reads through the handout directions. Many students have already begun to compose. Initially, there are very few questions from students. They seem to have anticipated the assignment, which is not at all surprising since
INTERMEDIATE COMPOSITION
NAME ___________________ REWRITING A DESCRIPTIVE NARRATIVE
DATE ___________________

DIRECTIONS: Everyone rewrites Greg's paper. It is reproduced here just as it was written. Using what you have learned about imagery (appeal to the five senses) and concrete detail (giving dimensions of objects, etc.) give the rewrites a sense of life and immediacy. You may rearrange the structure of the incident if this will make the story better. Just maintain the basic events of the story. Correct mechanical errors too. Rewrites will be scored on a 1-3 scale. (1=poor, 2=adequate, 3=good.)

DUE AT THE END OF THE PERIOD

My most frightening experience happened last winter. My parents had a Volkswagen and we always took it out for a drive, even though he didn't have his license. One night his parents weren't home, so we took the car and went cruising around. After awhile we found ourselves over by Beechcroft High School, and decided to go in their parking lot and do some doughnuts (make the car spin around.) When we were pulling in, we hit a patch of ice (the whole lot was ice) and started to slide sideways. It would have been okay if it weren't for those two poles. We nicked the front one with the front end and slammed into the second one head on going about 30 mph. The front end was mangled.

But everyone was OK. That was the important thing.

DIRECTIONS: Everyone rewrites Greg's paper. It is reproduced here just as it was written. Using what you have learned about imagery (appeal to the five senses) and concrete detail (giving dimensions of objects, etc.) give the rewrites a sense of life and immediacy. You may rearrange the structure of the incident if this will make the story better. Just maintain the basic events of the story. Correct mechanical errors too. Rewrites will be scored on a 1-3 scale. (1=poor, 2=adequate, 3=good.)

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But everyone was OK. That was the important thing.
Fran has told them several times during the week that they would be
delegated this task. Yet a few moments after Fran tells students to
begin working, concerns surface. Craig exclaims, "I don't know where to
begin." Others voice a similar kind of confusion and anxiety. Fran
circulates around the room to answer questions. I myself consult a
few pupils sitting around me and help them to get started with the assign-
ment.

Characteristically, different students work in dissimilar manners.
In the far northwest corner of the room, Bryan and Gregg go over the
assignment together and assist one another with their writing. They di-
vide their attention between the handout with the original "10" on it
and Fran's board rewrite. By contrast, Christy, who is sitting immediately
in front of me, reads the ditto carefully while all but ignoring Fran's
rewrite. After studying Greg's original, Christy moves fluidly back and
forth between her own writing and Greg's, using the full twenty-five min-
utes remaining in the class period to compose her draft. She confers with
no one during this time. Rick relies primarily on Fran's rewrite for his
stimulus and does not focus at all on the assignment sheet. Jennifer can-
not seem to get untracked. Stalled by spelling problems, she blurts out,"I can't spell!" and appeals to Joyce for help. Another student, Tami,
writes without making any obvious use of either the rewrite by Fran or
Greg's original story. She composes rapidly, writing one full page and
copying it over before the 1:44 bell sounds. Sherri adopts the strategy
of persistently calling Fran over to solicit her reaction to what Sherri
has just written and to seek advice on how she should proceed.
What is happening is that students at different levels of writing competence and with different motivations to develop their writing expertise are responding to Fran's commentary in highly individualized manners. Jennifer, for example, obviously encounters difficulty manipulating the surface features of language. Her use of teacher evaluation on her papers derives from Jennifer's felt need to gain some degree of control over basic transcription skills—spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. (Jennifer's main objective, it should be noted, is to get good grades and not truly to develop her overall writing competence: "I go straight for the grade," she says.) Sherri also lacks basic transcription skills, and yet seems persistently more interested in securing Fran's favor than in mastering the conventions of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and the like. For this particular assignment, it appears as if Fran's evaluative content—as embodied in assignment directions, a sample of her writing she demonstrates to the class, advice she offers to students in brief exchanges she has with individuals throughout the period, etc.—is being put to use in a variety of personalized ways.

The evaluation dynamic in this one activity is an exceedingly complex matter. There are five detectable sources of evaluation to which students respond. Learners' on-the-spot behavior, the written work they finally produce, and details they relate to me in subsequent conversations we have about their revision practices specifically as related to the assignment indicate this is so. However, not only are there multiple sources of evaluation on which learners draw, but also distinct motivations and purposes that students bring to this and other writing tasks throughout
the semester. First, a few student writers overlook nearly everything on the assignment sheet but the most didactic instructions, "Just maintain the basic events of the story. Correct mechanical errors too." Students who think "punctuation is very important" in determining the excellence of a paper will later report that it is this small segment of the assignment which structures their writing.

Kim is one of these students. Her revision evidences little substantive or structural change in Greg's story. Of her previous experience in English, Kim says it was as if "they [her teachers] know it all and you write to what they know." Although Kim believes Fran to be "more open-minded," giving Kim greater freedom "to write for myself," here she resorts to the strategy of writing to get the essay right, that is, revising Greg's original largely for the purpose of eliminating mechanical error. During class, Kim rarely looks at Fran's example on the board and appears not to reflect extensively on the ditto. Kim writes quickly and fills up a standard size notebook page in fifteen minutes. Kim's revision looks like this:

Last winter on an icy night some friends and I took my parents volkswagen even though I didn't have my license. We decided to take the car cruisin anyways. Man we went cruisin around high schools and was showin off and them bam we hit a patch of ice and went sailin into two poles, I didn't know what to next. Well all I could think of was what my parents were going to say and how much the car was going to cost and especially since I didn't have a job yet and now I wont be able to get my liscense. But I do have to admit we all were okay and that we wernt hurt. All I can do is thank god! My friends were goin wild like they were drunks or something they were laughing like crazy and then I started to laugh. I swore to them and myself I would not do donuts anymore, donuts are when you go in a sharp turn in circles. So guess
what I did? I did more donuts on the way out like a fool and my hubcaps started to fall off. So we got out of the car and got all the hub caps put them on and went home and I had to think of some explaining to do to my parents the next day. Boy am I in trouble.

Kim's rewrite shows that she is conscious of the comments Fran has made on Greg's original. Kim, we notice, does heed Fran's advice to eliminate Greg's introductory sentence and to describe "doughnuts." But Kim in no way modifies or restructures the story line. And although her rewrite does not manifest Kim's overriding concern for correctness, she herself explains that her experience with school-sponsored composition, be it a first draft or revision, has always been a matter of writing "correctly." Although Kim can envision "not worrying about mechanics in Ms. Spratley's class," her first impulse when revising this story of Greg's is to try to "get it right." Kim's ingrained tendency is to use teacher evaluation primarily to get a good grade.

Of course there are pupils who find in Fran's rewrite an implicit evaluative criteria. These individuals feel that if they can somehow imitate Fran's board work they will produce quality prose. Secondly, then, several students during this November 9th class work from the passage Fran has placed on the board, modeling their writing after hers, and acknowledging that they do so. Their goal is to meet teacher standards and to thereby secure the approval of an external authority figure. These pupils attempt to reflect back to Fran what they anticipate she wants to see. Unlike Kim, who seems above all to desire a good grade, these individuals want first and foremost to impress Fran. They direct their
attention to a significant other, namely, the teacher, whose approval satisfies a personal ego need and potentially results in enhanced social status in the classroom. The motivation here is not to get a grade, but to be a model student.

Philip operates in this way, composing without the benefit of the assignment ditto, which he puts aside after glancing at it once. Phillip does not begin to write until the final ten minutes of the period, using the time before hand to talk with those around him and to complete a worksheet for his ninth period history class. Starting at about 1:30, Phillip dashes off this paragraph:

I ANSWERED THE DOOR TO SEE JOE STANDING SHAKING WHITE CLUMPS FROM HIS SHOES. WHAT YA DOIN? HE SAID WITH A HORSE DEEP VOICE. "NOTHIN MUCH. JUST GOOFIN OFF." "YOU WANT TO GO RIDING." "IN WHAT" I LOOKED OUT THE DOOR AT A ORANGE VAN WITH A THIN COAT OF ROCK SALT AND MUDY SNOW AND ICE. "YOUR PARENTS LET YOU HAVE THE RIDE." "SOMETHING LIKE THAT" HE SAID SUSPICOUSLY. "THEY KINDA LEFT THE KEYS ON THE TABLE... IN THEIR BEDROOM BEHIND A LOCKED DOOR... UNDER A PAIR OF FUNKY BLUE SOCKS AND A PAIR OF ITCHY WOOL PANTS.

Phillip is a bright, articulate individual who typically puts forth minimum effort. Earlier in the year, for example, four weeks after Fran has assigned journal writing, Phillip confides in me that he has yet to make a single entry. In class, he usually starts assigned activities only after considerable delay. He is often found perusing a Science Fiction or Electronics magazine or practicing his drafting for the Vocational Design program in which he majors. Phillip complains frequently about school rules. He deems much school routine a game which he believes he plays
exceptionally well. He tries to "psych out" teachers, to discover what it is that they evaluate positively, and to then produce that kind of work, especially in his academic (as opposed to vocational) courses. By looking at Fran's example, Phillip can see that strong verbs, dialogue, and graphic detail fulfill the criteria for the descriptive narrative assignment. He models his writing after Fran's, informing me at the end of the period that in effect he has 'done just what she's done.'

Thirdly, some students read Fran's comments on Greg's original and concentrate on those remarks per se as a basis for their own individual rewrites. The essence of the rewrite strategy for these pupils is to leave Greg's story pretty much in tact and to respond primarily to Fran's marginal and interlinear directives and questions. Student writers of this sort will, for example, "describe doughnuts," "describe [the] sliding feeling," and name Greg's friend (see the copy of the handout on page 133 of this chapter) just as Fran has directed without altering much else in the story. Laura revises like this. She begins her rewrite "I was waiting at the door at 7:00 pm Saturday. I was waiting for friends John and Gary to come." The fact that Laura chooses to include two friends in the story as opposed to featuring a single friend (as is the case in Greg's original) leads Laura to make some obvious content change. Nevertheless, Greg's story remains basically the same in Laura's initial reworking of it. Yet when Laura rewrites the story a second time, she dramatically alters its content.

Laura ultimately appears motivated to capitalize on Fran's written evaluation to help her achieve a genuinely new level of competence in her writing. Laura remarks that Fran's commentary "helps you solve your
problems." Late in the semester, she adds: "I've learned a lot from Ms. Spratley's evaluation about just plain looking over mistakes and correcting them." Laura and others use Fran's feedback as a problem-solving aid. These students believe Fran's evaluation helps them attain competence, i.e., to do better writing.

Still a fourth group of pupils in the class reacts primarily to the statement contained in the directions at the head of the assignment reading: "Using what you have learned about imagery... and concrete detail... give the rewrites a sense of life and immediacy." This one sentence refers students back to their classroom activities of the previous week, activities involving pantomime and sense imagery writing. Fran's direction here requests students to apply what they have learned in the week's lessons. Student participation during the week was openly praised by Fran. Her verbal assessments conveyed to students that she valued the skills students demonstrated in these classroom exercises. Mark, as we will see later in this chapter, draws directly on his positive experience with classroom activities to guide him in his writing, a process Mark himself attributes to the action triggered when he reads the statement to which I have alluded. It turns out that Mark's use of Fran's commentary revolves around his compelling need to sort out troublesome teen-age conflicts and to become a more stable, secure individual.

Finally, there are individuals in the class whose negative past experience with school-sponsored writing, indifference, or resolute independence induces them to recast Greg's "10" in their own terms without any apparent reference to Fran's directions, her commentary on Greg's
"10," or evaluative remarks she has made in conversation with the class throughout the week's activities. A student who ignores all these sources of evaluation does so "because teachers always find something wrong with my papers, always." Another individual, Larry, tells me that he "changes subjects and wording from one assignment to another on my own." These students' motivation is difficult to interpret. The superficial incentive seems to range from that of avoiding any meaningful interaction with Fran to antagonizing her (by composing outlandish or obscene passages, as Larry does on occasion). Alienated, negative pupils are hard to approach both because of their high absenteeism and reluctance to talk with any figure of authority (including me as researcher). We might conjecture, albeit very cautiously, that an indifferent or negative response to Fran's evaluation is a way for these students to get some much needed attention and an indirect appeal to be understood in their own terms.

Geri is yet another student who for this rewrite of Greg's "10" does not seem to rely on any direct reference to explicit or implicit teacher data. One of the academic standouts in the class, Geri claims she carries out her rewrite "by just sensing what's expected of me." Geri is not indifferent or antagonistic, but rather intuitive and slightly detached. Writing is a way for her to derive new insight. She writes constantly, composing letters, poems, diary entries, doodles, and the like. She acknowledges that previous experience has taught her writing can be a means by which to promote personal development.

At various points throughout the semester, Geri carefully considers Fran's written evaluation appearing on Geri's papers. She consciously
seeks to deepen her self-understanding and realizes that interaction with Fran might facilitate the process. Geri is not highly motivated to use Fran's feedback in order to "correct" her writing. She notes she values the evaluation because it helps her to become both a more expressive, stylized communicator and "self-enlightened" individual. (Geri's "to become" motivation is an articulated one, we notice, whereas Mark's is not.)

The possibility certainly exists that Geri and Phillip, or for that matter Laura and Kim, use similar strategies in rewriting Greg's "10." Geri may do more imitating (of Fran's prose) and Phillip more "sensing" than either recognizes. Similarly, students are not always driven by a single motivation. Nor are motivations the same in kind necessarily identical in degree (as in the case of Mark and Geri). The point is that Geri and Phillip and also Laura and Kim understand themselves to be performing in distinct ways and for different purposes.

What is it Fran herself desires students to do with this descriptive narrative rewrite assignment? Half of her comments on Greg's paper are questions, e.g., "Would it be good to begin w/ who? where? when? what etc.?" and "More detail at climax itself. How did you feel? Did bodies in car jolt? Did anyone yell anything? What?". Fran has confided to me that she hopes students will read her comments, consider the questions she has posed, and build into their rewrites responses to these questions in the form of words, sentences, and passages conveying information in vivid, concrete detail. The class activities of the previous four days have been designed to help pupils understand the function of imagery and concrete
detail in narrative writing. Fran trusts students will capitalize on skills they have acquired, reminding students in the assignment directions to apply what they have learned during the week. Fran does not give students a prescriptive list of information for them to reproduce. She does, however, provide guidelines and strategies which she believes if followed will lead to competent narrative writing. There is some expectation on Fran's behalf, then, of convergence: she hopes students will supply action verbs, concrete detail, and dialogue, thereby tying into the deep structure of narrative writing form. Fran's comments on Greg's original "10" and the related classroom activities—which we will shortly examine—are pitched to elicit this revision emphasis from students.

On the one hand, Fran instructs composition to teach students to do competent writing. This instructional orientation finds students interacting frequently with each other and Fran. Students evaluate their classmates' work. Typically, Fran does not present "correct" information or require rule memorization but rather invites pupils to discover a range of functional responses and strategies. Multiple writing styles are accepted and encouraged, although ultimately Fran looks for congruence to carefully articulated standards of excellence having to do largely with matters of content and organization. Her written evaluation, most frequently couched in the form of questions addressed to the writer, directs students to formulate more appropriate (to the rhetorical context) written constructs.

On the other hand, Fran also desires to teach writing as a means to self-development. In this approach, convergence on standards is considerably less valued. The individual writer creates new meaning via
experimentation with unique writing forms and contents. The emphasis is on personal experience, and the student is more a co-learner than a subordinate to the teacher. Fran assumes a facilitative role in this model, counseling students on their writing as they struggle to become more fully realized individuals. Fran's written commentary points out dilemmas, discontinuities, and paradoxes in students' lives as manifest in their writing. Fran does not intend her remarks necessarily to resolve the prevailing ambiguity but instead to highlight the dialectical nature of the lived experience. Writing is one element of the individual's interaction with the world, a medium possessing considerable power to put students in touch with their own realities. Writing is a way of knowing.

Fran's two perspectives on the teaching of writing are not contradictory or even necessarily incompatible. However, it is extremely difficult to create writing assignments where the perspectives can function simultaneously since, for example, each approach suggests a different model of teacher/student relationship: writing to do implies a kind of master/apprentice relationship whereas writing to become calls for a collegial arrangement. But more importantly, Fran's interest in promoting composing as a means to act effectively in the world and to create one's own meaning—both of which are decidedly interactionist in nature—violates some of her students' experience with writing as an instrument used solely to get a passing grade or to win teacher approval. Students accustomed and/or committed to this latter view—a knowledge transmission paradigm—we will discover are hard pressed to adjust to Fran's interactionist instruction.
For the teacher, the gulf between conceptualizing writing instrumentally (to get; to be) and thinking of it as more an interpretive, expressive action (to do; to become) is wide indeed. Derek Rowntree argues

To put it crudely, one end of the continuum tends to attract the teacher whose first loyalty is to a public corpus of pre-existing knowledge or expertise (which he knows everyone ought to acquire) and the need to 'get it across' to a succession of students who learn, as far as their limited capacity and motivation will allow, by absorbing and reproducing the products of other people's experience. The other end of the continuum attracts the teacher who distrusts generalizations about what everyone ought to know, and who, believing people to have unlimited potential for growth unless 'discouraged', gives his first loyalty to individual students and encourages them to exercise their own developing motivation and sense of purpose in mastering cognitive and affective capacities, making their own meaning and creating new knowledge out of their own ideas and experiences.5

The two different pedagogic paradigms involve divergent notions of evaluation:

...teachers attracted towards one end of the continuum may be more inclined to see assessment as an objective and accurate means of determining students' present achievement and future potential, thus legitimizing selection and special treatment; and, insofar as students are aware that many are called and few are chosen, as a powerful device for control over the wayward and idle. Conversely, teachers attracted to the other end of the continuum may tend to see assessment primarily as a means of developing the relationship between the student, themselves and the subject matter, by giving both the student and themselves more information about the present state of the student's understandings...6
Fran of course does not operate totally within the interactionist paradigm. At the end of the semester, for example, she will utilize a very traditional, highly transmissive set of lessons in a last-ditch effort to have students master some fundamental transcription and grammatical skills. Her instruction and evaluation in this instance are oriented toward purely instrumental ends. Generally speaking, however, Fran does not confuse means with ends. She uses her writing assignments to give students a chance to explore their own beliefs and attitudes, promoting social interaction, and teaching writing standards only when individual cases dictate the need to do so.

The dominant function at work in Fran's written commentary on student work is to initiate and sustain a dialogue between her and pupils. By exploring with individuals the current state of their knowledge, opinions, and beliefs, Fran strives to develop her interpersonal relationships with students. The exchange is also meant to fortify students' relationship to (that is, understanding of) their writing topics. This relationship building function so pervades Fran's evaluation—especially at the beginning of the year—that it is difficult for her to successfully introduce other functions into her evaluation repertoire.

On the discrete skill level, Fran hopes her evaluation will help students discover and then amend their own patterns of error and also acquire more sophisticated rhetorical strategies. This evaluation prompts the writer to do better, more independent composing. Yet as we have seen, Fran also envisions her written evaluation ideally to foster creative thinking, risk taking, and new insight, thereby enabling the writer to
become a more fully realized individual.

Just as Fran does not always teach and evaluate with the same end in mind, so, too, do students operate with varying motivations and purposes. Early in the school year (on September 18th, the eighth day of class, to be exact), when asked to respond to the query, "Why do you think writing is important?," students provide a range of answers: "to get a job," "to prepare for college" (to get), "to maintain/perform in job and/or school related activities" (to be), "to enhance one's sense of competence, success, pride: 'I can do this well'" (to do), and "to express/cope with feelings; discover one's self" (to become). Obviously, certain students are not predisposed to use Fran's commentary as a means of developing their writing competence or sense of self. Yet some individuals are so inclined, while even others indicate a complex set of motivations. For Geri, writing is important because it helps her "to get a job, to communicate, and to achieve self-enlightenment." Thus students identify themselves to function at various points along the to get/to be/to do/to become continuum, with a few pupils indicating that multiple purposes represented in the continuum influence their writing performance.

Let us now return to the classroom context to examine the activities surrounding the Friday, November 9th rewrite of Greg's "10." While looking in on the class, we will consider how students' respective positions on the motivational spectrum I have depicted affect their use of Fran's commentary both in this narrative writing unit and throughout the semester.
A Closer Look at Student Rewrite Activity

On Monday, November 5th, Fran has planned to return to pupils the ten-minute writings on a frightening experience they composed for her two weeks ago, Friday, October 26th. Monday's class begins with conflict, as Phil and Gregg tussle playfully over a desk before the period begins. Fran intervenes, breaking up what she perceives to be a potential scuffle. Phil reacts strongly to Fran's intervention, claiming he had repeatedly been denied this certain seat. Fran explains to Phil that he can have the seat another day—that it is not all that important a matter. But apparently to Phil it is a significant issue, or symptomatic of something that it is, for his anger turns to hostility. Dressed as always in a blue police cadet uniform (which he is required to wear for his Law Enforcement vocational program), Phil creates a scene, storming out of 214 and slamming the door behind him. The outburst silences those in the class, at this point about two-thirds full. Only twenty-four students will attend today, the fewest number yet this school year. On the average, twenty-eight pupils are in attendance in Fran's eighth period Intermediate Composition class.

Fran does not pursue Phil or ask a student to check on him. She has apparently decided to follow-up on the affair after class on her own time. The students watch Fran carefully, wary of her reaction. She shrugs off the confrontation with a deep breath and a shake of her head, addressing students shortly after the 1:02 bell rings. Students look attentively at Fran. She greets the class and outlines for them their schedule for the week. Fran informs students that they will be devoting their attention to sense imagery writing activities in an effort to learn to show action
in a narrative as opposed to simply telling the story. Fran promises to reproduce one student's "10" complete with her comments for the class to review, discuss, and rewrite. Eventually, she goes on to say, each individual will take his or her own original free writing on a frightening experience and expand it into a full-fledged descriptive narrative. A few days earlier, Fran has commented to the class: "I don't believe in splitting descriptive and narrative writing. You write descriptively when you tell a story." Here she takes obvious exception to the discourse model implied in the city curriculum manual (which separates description from narration), refashioning the stated objectives to fit her own consciously evolved goals. The modification does not affect students in the least, however; they never indicate they know anything whatsoever about a city-wide curriculum plan.

Pupil reaction to the battery of assignments outlined by the teacher is mixed. Some students make it known that they do not like the idea of having to do two rewrites. Other individuals are less concerned about the amount of writing than they are interested to know if their own "10" might be selected for reproduction. The balance of the class accepts silently what has been sketched out for them.

Fran then returns the batch of "10s" to which she has referred earlier. Her evaluations are exhaustive, designed, she has told the class, to indicate how each student might elaborate an idea in his or her "10" and develop it into a theme for the upcoming narrative writing assignment. Fran has not graded the "10s". Students read over their papers intently. The room is quiet. Phillip remarks, "There are enough comments on this story,
Phillip is in the habit of writing for a grade, seeking a high grade as a token of the teacher's approval of his work. The grade itself is not as important to Phillip as the teacher "liking what I do," he has commented. In this instance, finding no letter grade to adorn his paper, Phillip is surprised and perhaps a little frustrated, as the tone of slight disgust in his comment indicates. Nonetheless, Phillip pores over Fran's remarks, probably hoping to uncover signs of approval in them.

Fran gives students several minutes to review her comments on their papers. She then distributes a worksheet on "Sense Imagery." The first part of the worksheet directs students to determine which of two sentences in a couple of pairs of sentences "paints the more vivid picture." Students are also supposed to identify the human sense to which words in the colorful sentences appeal. The contrast between the less vivid and more colorful sentence in each pair is so stark and drastic that it makes the activity seem ludicrous. In the initial pair, "The log in the fireplace finally caught fire and burned" is matched with "The flame leaped toward the log like a hungry dog attacking a bone with its heaving jaws, and before long the crackling of the dry bark and the odor of pine and pitch filled the room." Fran notes wryly that the colorful sentences in both pairs are perhaps a bit over written. Students laugh, expressing their agreement. Some students in the back of the room are so amazed at the preposterous comparisons and overblown colorful sentences that they reject the worksheet entirely in favor of conversation on a popular rock music group.
Part II of the Sense Imagery worksheet instructs students to append "sense" words to the words "orange soda," "peppermint ice cream," "popcorn," "rain," and "soup making." Fran tells students to substitute five words from their ten-minute writings for the worksheet words. The first half of the activity has not served Fran's purposes well, it is clear, and so she makes an adjustment to try to salvage the exercise. She really wants students to be working on their own writing, analyzing its pieces and revising sections, preferably with the whole piece of original discourse in front of them while they work. The textbook, sentence-level approach violates the rewriting process Fran seeks to foster.

Classes Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday meet with more favorable student response. The sequence of activities finds learners using sensory apparatus to generate description, both oral and written. The relationship between what they produce in these activities and the impending rewrite assignment is not at all obvious to students, however, as the ensuing episodes reveal.

On Tuesday, Fran has five volunteers blindfold themselves. Each individual is assigned the task of defining a specific aspect of an array of objects, presented to the group one item at a time. Tara must describe the temperature of the object, Rick its weight, Geri its shape, Phillip the object's size, and Jim its texture. Descriptions are to be as imaginative as possible. The rest of the class is supposed to name the respective items after the blindfolded students give their descriptions. Fran of course wants students to realize that their writing should speak to the human senses, that the images one associates with an object should be
conjured up in the descriptive narrative, where "showing and not telling," reiterates Fran, "make for good writing."

In spite of her reminder, the connection Fran makes between the activity and composition is not clear to students. Jeff calls out in the middle of Tuesday's lesson, "Why are we doing this?". "What is this for, anyway?" a few other students want to know. The questions go unanswered until the end of the period when Fran explains once again to students that the descriptive narrative they will write should contain a lot of action (active verbs), sensory detail, imagery, and metaphor and that the exercises this week are going to help students master the technique of sense-laden writing. Jeff and others like him (today, the group includes most noticeably Rick and Craig), who usually relate to Fran's instructional activities as a means to the immediate end of getting through the impending assignment with a passing grade, appear mollified. They nod their heads and mutter "o.k." in response to Fran's explanation, relieved that she has formulated the day's lesson for them in instrumental terms.

Had there been time during the last part of today's period, students would have picked out from their "10s" on a frightening experience things and places conducive to the kind of description provided by Tara, Rick, Geri, Phillip, and Jim. But as has so often been the case throughout these first eight weeks of Intermediate Composition, the forty-two minute period comes to an end before Fran's planned activity is fully implemented.
Student improvisation and pantomime consume all of Wednesday's class. Three students—Mike, Phillip, and Geri—volunteer to create situations and act them out in front of the class. Students sit in a circle to watch the performances. Fran joins the group, instructing the student audience to pay special attention to specific gestures, expressions, and movements which in each instance best convey the situation portrayed. By seeing and simultaneously taking notes on body movement, Fran expects students to realize opportunities for depicting action graphically in their own writing. The three actors move fluidly and perform without inhibition. Mike is especially animated, using his lanky black body and expressive, boyish face to project powerful images of a coach teaching a novice how to bat a baseball. Mike is dynamic. Students seem to enjoy the acting immensely. They laugh and applaud, commenting at the conclusion of the period how much they would like to repeat this activity.

Fran is pleased with the class response to the blindfold and improvisation exercises. Although she has planned the week's schedule in advance, she decides to modify it to try to take full advantage of student involvement in activities she feel will better equip pupils to write their descriptive narratives. On Thursday, November 9th, Fran spends the entire period having students do sense writing. She plays musical ballads for students, instructing them to "write down the words, phrases, expressions from the song lyrics that relate to the appropriate human sense..." The first ballad is loaded with images which speak to the senses. Listening to the song play, Fran writes phrases from the song on the board, matching them to columns marked "sight," "sound," "taste," "touch," and "smell." Students work at their desks while Fran writes on the board. Class members
compare their lists to the one Fran has compiled and discuss the lyric's appeal to their senses. A similar procedure is followed with the second ballad (Gordon Lightfoot's rendition of "The Wreck of the Edmond Fitzgerald"). From my vantage point in the rear-center of the room, it appears as if each of the thirty students present this Thursday works diligently to record expressions that have a sense value to that individual pupil. The ensuing discussion is lively and fluid. Marc volunteers to point out the numerous images appealing to his sense of sound—the water rushing and splashing, the ship's bell clanging, the church bell ringing, etc. Tara comments on the line about a "musty odor" and its appeal to her sense of smell. Sharon adds: "There's the smell of the prairie rose and the shooting of the gun—the lead smell." Other students cite additional sense stimulating images. Nearly every single individual contributes. Students are obviously at home with the medium of popular musical ballads.

Mark participates in the activity. He is attentive and responsive. Chris and Marc, both of whom are academically-inclined and not especially comfortable with a student-centered activity-based curriculum, add much to the class discussion. The forty-two minute period again cuts short the activity, and as a result, Fran does not have the opportunity to relate its content to the rewriting of Greg's "10" students will do in class tomorrow.

Friday's class proceeds as described earlier in this chapter. The rewrite of Greg's "10" takes place only after the class has spent the previous four days of the week participating in activities designed to
help the student isolate and generate sensory detail. Actually, prepara-
tion for the rewrite extends all the way back to Monday, October 29th,
when the class watched a film, "The Boarded Window," and then under Fran's
direction analyzed setting, flashback, foreshadowing, visual detail, dia-
logue, climax, and theme. In analyzing the film, Fran makes analogies to
story writing. She tells students: "This film today is an attempt to
look at what makes a story suspenseful and/or holding of our interest."
Other activities during the week of the 29th include sensory writing, a
textbook exercise on what Fran calls "dressing up bald nouns," and the
reading of "The Legend of Walhalla Drive," which in fine descriptive
fashion tells the tale of a local haunted house.

Student rewrites of Greg's "10" vary considerably. As noted, differ-
ent students use different strategies in reworking the story. Fran reads
the rewrites over the weekend, reacting to the substance of the individual
stories but also for the first time in the semester marking mechanical
errors. Patterns of mechanical errors are recorded on 3X5 cards, each
writer having his or her own card to which the student will refer in the
future when Fran asks students to complete exercises relating to individual
problems with error. On the stories themselves, Fran has avoided using
symbols (e.g., "frag," "awk," "Sp," and so on) in favor of comments cast
in the form of sentences or questions. She appends an end comment to
nearly every paper, suggesting a general rewrite strategy to the student:
"You flip between telling and showing. Show the entire story step-by-step
as it happened. Describe the ice, the accident. Put actual dialogue into
this." Another end comment reads: "Interesting ending... story is very
very good--just need to show even more and add to climax. Add sounds,
bodies tossing in the car, etc." Ms. Spratley spends "hours!" evaluating the papers.

On Monday, November 12th, instead of directly returning the essays to pupils, Fran reviews selected rewrites on an overhead projector with the entire class. She goes through her comments systematically, explaining line by line why she made the remarks she did. Having shown herself as writer to the students, she now attempts to reveal herself as reader to them. Students are invited to comment on their peers' writing and to make suggestions for improving it. The lesson is an exercise in formative evaluation, designed to cultivate students' story writing competence and not intended to elicit uniform performance from them.

Fran informs students that "for the first time I have marked grammatical, mechanical errors... although these corrections did not count on your score." Up until this point—nine weeks into the eighteen-week semester—Fran has arranged assignments so as to get students to write copiously. She has not concerned herself with correctness; nor have all but a few of the students, those being the most grade conscious individuals. "Now," Fran notes, "it's time that we started becoming aware of these [mechanical mistakes]."

When Fran mentions she has logged in errors on 3x5 cards, Jeff says aloud, "my card's probably filled on both sides." Jeff fears, perhaps hates, having his themes corrected. "I am tired of having spelling mistakes marked all the time," he has told me. Jeff contends that teachers force him to concentrate so intensely on error that "you lose your train of thought. It would be better to keep your idea going." Jeff's experience in Fran's class, however, has been of a different nature: "This is
the first class I can remember getting back a paper not marking my spelling," he has exclaimed early in the term. Fran's explicit valuing of what Jeff produces liberates him to write for fifteen or twenty minutes at a stretch, "no hassle," he says. In the past, Jeff was so obsessed with technically flawless writing that he could not compose for longer than "two to five minutes at a time." Fran has brought Jeff to the point where he is composing somewhat fluidly. She has successfully engaged Jeff with her evaluation, freeing him to experiment with the medium without fear of correction and to discover facets of himself in his writing. Yet the moment Fran introduces a new function into her evaluation, namely, the marking of error, Jeff panics. Whereas he has been reading Fran's comments on his writing with relative interest, Jeff now gives every indication he will resort to his old strategy of simply looking at the grade and then discarding the paper (or in this case, perfunctorily filing his work in his folder. The fact that Fran requires students to keep all their writing in folders does not ensure that individuals will refer to their composition and the teacher commentary on it from one assignment to the next).

Fran hopes Jeff will see her error-flagging as so many sign posts guiding him to a critical understanding of the existing state of his writing knowledge. Fran desires to enhance Jeff's long-term writing competence. But Jeff perceives the error marking as a demand for an immediate (error eradication) performance of which Jeff considers himself incapable. Painful English classroom experience has convinced Jeff there is little point in trying to get good grades or to do exactly what is expected of
him, since he personally never "measures up." From this juncture on, Jeff's attendance in Intermediate Composition declines steadily. Yet he continues to attend his other classes on a regular basis. Once Fran starts marking papers for mistakes, regardless of her intention, Jeff simply loses his motivation to write.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, November 13th, following a review on the overhead projector of two more student themes, Fran returns the rewrites of Greg's "10." Joyce and Craig inquire immediately about the grading system. In Craig's case, the query seems particularly noteworthy, for he unfailingly demonstrates a concern for grades. Craig is easily frustrated by assignments and evaluations which he cannot decode into grade-related matter. He always wants to know what he needs to do in order to complete an assignment and to get a good grade without investing himself in the work. Fran's dislike of grades and emphasis on process conflicts with Craig's product-based, grade-saturated school writing experience.

Three students—Phil, Sherri, and Trent—talk to Fran individually about their compositions. Here again student behavior is not random or purposeless. Sherri, for example, relies heavily on Fran for feedback, but not so much to apply that feedback to her writing as to secure Fran's approval. Repeatedly throughout the term, Sherri dominates Fran's in-class time with questions functioning to elicit teacher reinforcement: "Yes, Sherri, that's right," we often hear Fran remarking to Sherri.

Marc, Tara, Laura, Sharon, and Geri carefully read Fran's comments appearing on their papers. Several students by comparison pay no attention to teacher commentary, putting their essays aside without so much
as a glance at them. Perhaps these students are nervous about Fran's markings or want to impress upon their friends in the class that they are indifferent to teacher appraisal. Possibly some students want to see if Fran will take note of their neglect. In any case, the result is the same: certain students do not read Fran's commentary.

Brian looks casually at his essay. It is marked quite liberally, even moreso than usual due to Fran's marking of mechanical error. (See Illustration 2) Brian checks the grade he has received, and quickly files the paper in his folder. (The grading system for this set of papers is 1=excellent, 2=fair, 3=poor. Brian has received a 2+.) Although Brian has changed Greg's "10" considerably, stimulating Fran to comment extensively on Brian's rewrite, he does not in turn respond at this moment to her effort with commensurate care and attention.

Brian's essay is more explicit, detailed, and complete than Greg's original. In doing the rewrite, Brian has seen fit, just as Fran has directed, to "dress up some of the bald nouns" (e.g., "fierce storms," "irregular manners," "emmense steel bars"). Brian at this stage reflects back to Fran what he anticipates she expects to read. He has endeavored to show rather than tell his story: for example, "Coming up he hit the curb with such a jolt the front end jumped ten feet high in the air." Fran of course believes the story can be improved further, as indicated in her end comment on Brian's paper. In fact Fran is so persuaded in reading these first rewrites that students have the potential to compose exceptional narratives that she decides she will require students to revise their rewrites into final copy form. Fran's decision is a conscious
Illustration 2

Brian's Essay

When he pulled in the driveway I knew what was going to go on tonight. Coming up the driveway he hit the curb with such a jolt the front end jumped two feet high in the air. I grabbed my coat and ran out to the car. When I got out there and opened the door he had already begun to pull out.

The sound of a horn came across our ears and brought us back to reality. We realized that the fierce storms we'd been having would be a problem in his driving ability. He didn't have his license. The car passed and we went on. The car began to move in irregular manners because of the icy conditions. We were cruisin wildly around the streets when we noticed a parking lot. It was too good to pass up. We pulled into the empty lot and started doing doughnuts. Doing donuts is a great feeling. It's like spinning into nowhere. You've lost total control of the car, and you just hold on for your precious life.

Losing control was our problem. My friend began to panic because he was doing doughnuts in his parents' V.W. The car's velocity began to slow down, but we were headed for trouble. Two immense bars were in front of us. We tried to control the spin, but fate caught up with us. We ended up totaling the front end. It looked like we ran head on into a brick wall.

We were only going 30 mph. We forgot the mangled car for a moment and made sure we both were still in one piece. We were, but not for long. We had to face the wrath of his parents.
one. Fran does not act based on habit, unreflective hunches, or conditioned response to curriculum manual directives. She instead deliberates on the value of rewriting activity with reference to her knowledge of interactionist theory and her understanding of students' present levels of composition skill mastery. She seeks to give students the opportunity to work with their own texts and to perpetuate the classroom routine of continuously expanding, modifying, and reformulating an idea as it is worked through in the writing process. Idea modification is one of the mainstays of the interactionist approach.

Wednesday to Friday, November 14th-17th, are devoted to additional exercises on narrative writing skills. Students practice substituting synonyms for the "humdrum" verbs in their stories and experiment with dialogue writing. On Thursday, Fran presents a "cram lesson" to the class on dialogue. She explains what dialogue is, why to include it in a narrative, and how to punctuate it. The lecture is confusing because of the density of the material and also due to the fact that Fran acknowledges exceptions to every dialogue punctuation rule she conveys to the class. Students fidget at their desks, screw their faces up in puzzled looks, or rest their heads on folded arms. After class, obviously frustrated by what she herself labels a "lousy lesson," Fran says that "students need to speak dialogue to each other and write it down in order to really learn its conventions." Together, Fran and I reason out the interactive theory base for such an activity: "actual dialogue transcribed provides a good opportunity for students to see the relationship between written material and its oral counterpart." The activity is thus an attempt to overcome the typical fragmentation in the English curriculum. Fran wants to link
writing to speaking and to encourage pupils to use their own everyday language as a source for their essay material.

Fran brings to Friday's class a handout outlining nine conversation scenarios from which pairs of students are to select one scenario for the purpose of role playing it, recording their dialogue as each pair of students constructs it. Brian and Larry choose scenario #5, "a student explaining to his teacher why he wants to drop out of school." The pair writes up two full pages of technically flawless (if somewhat far-fetched) dialogue. Their involvement in the activity is intense and sustained, typifying what transpires with other pairs of students during this noisy, productive Friday session.

Before the period ends, Fran reminds students that the final draft of their descriptive narrative is due at the close of Monday's class. Papers will once again be scored 1, 2, 3 based on these evaluative criteria (which Fran places on the board):

1. Showing with increased sense of detail using imagery (appeal to the 5 senses).
2. Inclusion of accurate, realistic dialogue properly punctuated.
3. Inclusion of active, varied verbs which intensify and clarify story's message/mood.
4. Clean up of mechanical errors.

Fran requests students to copy the criteria so that they will be certain on what basis they will be graded.

Monday, November 19th, marks Thanksgiving week. Conversation everywhere in Counts High—in the unusually spacious, L-shaped teachers' lunch room, in the school halls, and certainly in Fran's eighth period English class—centers on holiday plans. Brian comes to class having not worked
at all on the rewriting assignment. He is kept busy over the weekends working at a local discount store, where he unloads freight and waits on customers. Brian likes to fish and listen to music. Both diversions take up a lot of his weekend time. He also works on cars a bit, a natural for Brian in that he is pursuing a program in diesel mechanics at one of the city's exceptionally well-equipped vocational centers.

To date, half-way through the term, Brian's performance in Fran's class has been unspectacular but steady. He regularly attends Intermediate Composition, does all required assignments, and generally participates in whole class and small group discussion. Fran sometimes gauges the response she is getting to a lesson or activity by monitoring Brian's reaction to the instruction and then by carefully reading the writing Brian subsequently produces. Brian is a reliable source of information; at least Fran perceives him this way.

In one of Brian's early journal entries, he writes: "English [with Ms. Spratley] is fine, English last year was really a drag. We went through grammar, punctuation, etc. Those subjects right there I hate to study. They are so boring. The teacher just talks and you don't know what your doing. The teacher, I think, plays an important role in how the class will be. You need more than the subject. You need a teacher who can get the point across and make it interesting." While this paragraph itself reveals that Brian perhaps needs practice in the very skills he condemns having to study, the passage nonetheless makes it clear that Brian simply does not take an interest when usage and mechanics are made the central content of an English course, when they become the ends rather
than the means of demonstrating writing fluency, that is. He also suggests that pedagogical style and teacher personality influence his performance.

Time and time again throughout the semester students report that Fran's genuine concern for them as individuals and her "fun" activities stimulate their interest. Geri expresses the feeling like this: "I thought the course jammed! It was nice not to have... a bitchy teacher to worry about. Good to be able to move around, express ideas and get comments on the idea, not the way you presented it."

Meanwhile, Brian invariably knows what is expected of him, and on this Monday attends to the assigned task immediately. He pulls out his first rewrite of Greg's "10," reads it over briefly, and begins to compose a second rewrite. Although Fran has given instructions to the entire class at the beginning of the period, several students do not know what they are supposed to be doing. A few individuals balk at the assignment. "Why do we have to write this again?" Rick moans. Several pupils congregate around Fran and implore her to explain once again what the assignment requires of them. Fran answers the questions posed and then begins to circulate around the room, aiding individual writers while they compose. Sherri commands a lot of Fran's attention. This in-process feedback is a prominent feature of Fran's instruction. She often will not assign homework in order to have students write in class and thereby be able to formatively appraise their papers as well as mentally profile for herself individuals' respective composing styles.
Other students besides Brian work directly from earlier drafts. Marc in particular seems to sustain his movement back and forth between the paper he is writing and his first revision of Greg's "10." I interrupt Marc toward the end of the period to confirm my observation. Marc says that he does indeed read each of Fran's comments and, when a comment is posed in the form of a question, tries to incorporate the information called for in his rewrite. He even on occasion uses Fran's own words in his paper if she has suggested a phrase that he thinks "fits with what I am trying to say." On the surface of things, we might see Marc to operate from a to get or to be perspective. He is of his own admission extremely grade conscious. Furthermore, in defining writing excellence, Marc tends to talk in terms of surface (i.e., non-rhetorical) features: "handwriting, good grammar, and good punctuation have always been important to my other English teachers." Yet Marc realizes Fran values detail and fully developed ideas. His two months in this Intermediate Composition class, and especially the comments Fran has made on Marc's journal entries, have taught him to try to make "a strong statement of theme in my writing." The emphasis makes sense to Marc; he claims it will help him in "all my formal writing." Marc appears to be moving in the direction of using teacher evaluation as a means to help him master and internalize rhetorical strategies that will make him a more competent writer and confident communicator in general.

Robyn, like Marc, is another individual who takes Fran's commentary literally. In this instance, she is concerned about using active verbs, reacting to a few comments on her first rewrite which direct her to "Show
Robyn vows, "I could make the whole thing [essay] active if I had the time." Robyn is one of several pupils who seem to convert teacher-written recommendations into an absolute and fixed directive for their writing practice. These students do not typically generate their own writing knowledge but instead wait for the teacher to reveal such knowledge to them. Teacher-written evaluation is strictly interpreted for the apparent purpose of evoking teacher approval. At any rate, Robyn composes five double-spaced handwritten pages of narrative before the period comes to an end.

Laura rewrites her final draft without the benefit of her first revision, which she has left at home. Many students in the room who do have their first revision available to them choose not to refer to their essay but concentrate instead on producing the final copy due at the end of this Monday class period.

Brian's rewrite shows he has taken to heart some of Fran's lessons. The two-page story is correctly paragraphed. It contains extensive realistic dialogue and a host of action verbs. By comparison, Brian's first revision of Greg's "10" was composed as one long paragraph without any dialogue whatsoever. And while Fran elaborately marked the first revision, not one single remark referred to the use of dialogue. Brian has employed the skills he exercised in classroom activities to shape his discourse. A significant part of his response to teacher evaluation is based primarily not on his reaction to teacher-written comments appearing on his paper but rather on his decision to incorporate into his writing ideas and narrative forms acquired from classroom activities. Brian's decision is a logical
one given the grading criteria—"Inclusion of accurate, realistic dialogue ...," etc.—Fran has specified. His performance in its entirety shows him to have taken advantage of a number of different learning sources in developing his writing competence. He has used Fran's evaluation and her interactionist instruction to do better writing. Brian's untitled paper reads as follows:

When he sped into the driveway in his folk's VW, I knew what kind of night it was going to be. He hit the curb with such a jolt, the front end leaped two feet high in the air. He rolled down his window and yelled, "Come on we don't have all night."

"Hold on, I have to find my coat," I blurted.

I found my coat and started for the door. While I opened the door and took my first step out I found myself lying on the porch. "Shit," I said and started to pull myself up by the railing. I could hear Joe in the background laughing about my frigid predicament. I finally made it out to the car and leaped in.

"Where are we goin' tonight Joe,"

"Well we'll just be out cruisin around I guess."

"Just be careful man, the roads are slick as hell."

"I know, I know" said Joe in a reassuringly way.

The roads were as slick and as smooth as glass. We had been having furious storms and high, bitterly cold winds for about a week but tonight it was calm but brisk.

We were driving around for about an hour and Joe was beginning to get bored with it all. Then he noticed where we were. We were only a few blocks away from our enemies home base. We were moving in on Beechcroft High School. They are not really our enemies but we have a fierce rivalry with them.

"Lets take this Bug (VW) and do some doughnuts in their parking lot," barked Joe.

"What ever you want to do, it's your car, I mean your parents car."

"Don't worry, I know what I'm doing."

Joe proceeded up the road and make his way into the parking lot. About half way up the drive he punched the gas pedal to the floor and began his doughnuts. The doughnuts he did were fast and furious. He was whipping the VW around so much I could hear the baby start to shake. Joe slowed
down the car and finally came to a complete stop.
Joe let out a yell that would curl your hair.
"Don't you just love it," Joe said.
He started up again with such speed I could imagine what was going to happen. After a few spins he lost total control of the car. For once you could see panic in his eyes. He tried to keep the car straight and he also tried to reduce the speed. All of a sudden the sound of crinkling came across are ears. The back end smacked into a utility pole. That impact sent us spinning into nowhere. We came to a halt, but only by demolishing the front end of the vehicle on that utility pole. The impact sent Joe crashing into the windshield, but I was only thrown into the dash and then back into the seat. Are night on the town was over. The only thing left to do was to call for help.

In class on Tuesday, November 20th, Fran puts students in groups and asks them to evaluate their classmates' compositions. Monday evening Fran has read through the essays and found that students made substantial, meaningful change from their first to second drafts. While not specifying precisely what this change entails, Fran praises learners in a general way for dramatically altering their first drafts to improve the content, adding: "You obviously realize that writing is more than correcting mistakes." Fran does not look for convergence on a single model of good writing. She suggests to the class that she intends her written commentary on students' papers to trigger but not control their efforts at revision.

For the group work, students are supposed to assess papers in relation to the four grading criteria they have been operating with all along in writing their narrative. Fran writes these criteria on the board. She tells students to mark each paper 1, 2, or 3. Student group grading provides a framework which Fran hopes promotes the concept of writing for audiences other than the teacher. (Fran told students at the outset that
they would grade each others' papers. Although Fran grades each paper, she more frequently changes her grade to match the one assigned by the pupil group than vice versa.) Additionally, because much of the group grading activity has students comparing one draft of a paper to its next draft, students see ideas change and grow and assume different form. Fran believes that if students observe this transformation of substance and form themselves they will possibly come to understand writing as a complex process.

Brian's paper is well received by Eric and Mike, whom I have joined in the group grading activity. Eric has picked up some of Fran's grading habits. He writes "Did it break?" in the column next to the sentence, "The impact sent Joe crashing into the windshield... ." Mike and Eric agree that the composition is "funny" and "good." They do not, however, carefully or consistently apply the stipulated grading criteria. They say they are satisfied that Brian's essay tells "a good story" and so assign it a grade of 1-. I ask Eric and Mike if they would consider giving Brian a 1 since it appears to me on first glance that the writer has produced a quality composition which fulfills all of the grading criteria (a judgment I later alter). Mike seems ready to accept my assessment but finally joins Eric in resisting the grade change for no other apparent reason than that they feel uncomfortable attributing to one of their peers the highest grade achievable. Similar to most students in Fran's Intermediate Composition class, Eric and Mike are in fact reluctant to ascribe excellence to a peer's writing. They are unaccustomed to reading and evaluating their classmates' work and unprepared to consider themselves capable of
recognizing student writing excellence when they see it. Students whose prevailing motivation in composing is to earn the teacher's favor express displeasure with the activity.

This descriptive narrative writing assignment, then, has consumed a full twenty days of classroom activity, or nearly one-fourth of the first semester schedule. The assignment as we have seen has been carried out in this manner: the main text for the writing unit is a student-produced ten-minute writing on a frightening experience which Fran distributes to the class for rewrite purposes only after having lead them through two weeks of activities designed to help pupils improve their narrative writing skills. Students do their rewrites in class, enabling Fran to monitor individuals' composing habits. Several of the student revisions are then shown to the class on an overhead projector and commented upon by Fran. She has marked mechanical errors for the first time the entire semester (noting errors both on the students' essays and on individual 3x5 cards) but also commented liberally on the stories' content. A set of activities follows, including sense imagery and dialogue writing and student-performed pantomime and improvisation. Individuals next rework their initial rewrites of Greg's "10" into final form. Fran asks students to group grade their class members' papers based on four evaluative criteria. Papers are graded 1 (excellent), 2 (fair), or 3 (poor). (Both Fran and students mark the compositions.) Fran returns the papers to the class without extensive verbal comment. Questions students might have on Fran's marking of their papers are handled in individual grade conferences which take place the week immediately after the last narrative writing assignment is complete.
(the week after Thanksgiving holiday, in other words). During these grading conferences, students work from the textbook, *English Language Arts*, selecting exercises correlating to skill areas noted on the 3x5 cards Fran has filled out when marking students' first rewrite of Greg's "10".

Throughout the four weeks' work on descriptive narrative writing and during the follow-up week when students complete exercises in *English Language Arts*, individual pupils compose and react to teacher evaluation in a variety of personalized ways. Both earlier and later in the semester this pattern will hold true: different individuals react in different ways to teacher-written evaluation as evidenced by what they do in class, changes they will make in their writing from one draft to the next, and how they themselves explain the use of Fran's evaluation.

**Interlude: Students Comment on Their Uses of Teacher Evaluation**

On Tuesday, November 6th, in the midst of the descriptive narrative writing unit, I distribute to students a handout containing these three questions:

1. Do you use Ms. Spratley's written comments on your writing (journal and otherwise) to help you decide what to say and how to say if from one assignment to the next?
2. Specifically, how have teacher comments helped you improve your writing?
3. What is different about this class and teacher evaluation--good or bad (as compared to your experiences in other English classes?).

In eight full weeks of participant-observation in Fran's eighth-period Intermediate Composition class, I have compiled over fifty pages of notes
on day-to-day occurrences, possible patterns of events, and some rough, tentative theoretical statements about how I understand students to perceive Fran's written evaluation. A good deal of what I have recorded is etic information: it notes what students and teacher have done from my perspective on events. The handout is an attempt to get students to present in their own terms what they see themselves doing with teacher commentary on their writing, to elicit, in other words, an emic account of student experience of teacher commentary on pupils' written work.

Student responses to the handout questions vary dramatically. In answer to the first question, Phil, who is still bristling over Monday's confrontation with Fran described earlier in this chapter, writes, "Of course not!!" Phil's remark is interesting from the standpoint of showing that his use of Fran's written commentary is probably to some degree contingent on the status of his interpersonal relationship with her. Throughout the semester, other emotionally volatile students--Jennifer, Sherri, and Sharon, for example--seem to attend to Fran's evaluative remarks in proportion to the individual student's propensity for Fran at that exact given moment in time. For many learners--and not only the excitable ones--it appears as if a good interpersonal relationship with Fran enhances their willingness to read and act on her evaluation.

Val claims in response to question one: "Yes I do [use Ms. Spratley's written comments to help me decide what to say and how to say it] and I also read every comment she writes." So Val sees herself as consciously using Fran's evaluation to guide the content and arrangement of her papers. She does so because Fran's commentary helps her to "solve my problems..."
through my writing." Fran's evaluation serves several purposes for Val.

Tami is one of the Intermediate Composition students who is clearly preoccupied with correctness. She writes: "I try to take the comments and see what I did wrong and make sure to do it right on the next assignment." She adds: "Writing is so hard for me. I'm no good at it."

Tami construes good writing as technically unblemished discourse. Her in-class comments and questions consistently evidence a concern for matters of form and teacher sanction. She wants to know how many pages each assignment is supposed to be, how many journal entries she should make and on what days she should make them, whether she should use pen or pencil when she writes, and so on. Tami wants to do exactly what she believes Fran expects of her, desiring teacher approval and perhaps anticipating good grades as a by-product. This motivation, combined with Tami's poor image of herself as writer and preoccupation with correctness, make it highly unlikely that Tami will use Fran's evaluation to develop her own rhetorical skills. Unfortunately, Fran possibly deprives Tami of the one source of evaluation on which she could act by downplaying spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc. in her assessments of student writing. Greg is also concerned about correctness: he reads Fran's remarks in order to be able "to correct what I do wrong." But correctness for Greg has a broad meaning. Like Val, he follows Fran's suggestions closely: "...when I write the next time I try to follow what the comments tell me to do."

Correctness for Greg implies "improving my writing structure." Furthermore, correctness has something to do with learning how to "keep the reader more interested." Greg suggests there is more to good writing than eliminating errors: "In my other English classes they really didn't teach us
how to write creatively, just correctly." Greg reads Fran's comments carefully in hopes of finding clues empowering him to do more original, creative, competent writing.

By contrast, Mark acknowledges he does not pay much attention to Fran's written comments. However, he does believe that "...the classroom activities are helpful, especially in writing." This is a very telling statement coming from Mark. He is able to relax and enjoy Fran's classroom activities whereas in other classrooms "there isn't any freedom... I have a lot more fun in this class." Generally, school upsets and confines Mark, as the content of his journal writing--at which we will look in a moment--shows. He is suspicious of teachers and not inclined to take his work seriously. He is disaffected (and in fact will be suspended from school during second semester for selling drugs right in the middle of a history classroom exercise). But Fran's class is different, representing to Mark a place where "I can behave naturally." Mark is nonetheless not so engaged that he will attend in any systematic way to reading teacher comment on his writing. Asked specifically, How have teacher comments helped you improve your writing?, Mark answers, "It [the commentary] really hasn't helped me any." Yet he adds this sentence: "I feel more free to write things down." Mark responds primarily to the class routine and complement of activities assigned to students which together convey to Mark a basic valuing—as opposed to judgmental--component in the way Fran relates to her students, or at least to Mark as an individual.
Fran's valuing of what students say and write is most immediately expressed to Mark in the way Fran reacts to the journal writing students have been doing since the second week of school. Fran's September 11th handout on "Journal Keeping" informs students that

...a journal is generally more introspective than a diary. A journal should help one to come to know oneself better, to be more comfortable with that "new" person one discovers. Therefore a journal is a process of self-discovery and self-recreation. And, best of all, journals can be enormously fun as well as therapeutic.

Journal writing is a central part of Fran's curriculum. Here writing as a generative act Fran hopes will find its most powerful, natural expression. The journal format as she employs it allows students to "write about everything and anything" without having to "get hung up on technique." "Journals are not graded for grammar, punctuation, structure, etc." The handout encourages students to "just concentrate on letting one thought flow naturally into another."

Members in the class are absolutely incredulous upon reading the "Journal Keeping" ditto. "Can I write on anything, on topics I wouldn't normally discuss?" one student queries. Fran is quick to respond: "You can write on absolutely anything." "Furthermore," Fran reiterates, "you will never be marked for grammar or spelling in your journal writing--unless you specifically request it, of course." Students around me are excited--and nervous--about the journal writing prospects. Several of the boys smirk and boast to one another that they will write about sex and drugs and other topics which they imagine will shock Fran. The room buzzes
with anticipation. Fran explains that she will "comment rather extensively on journals" but will not read entries students feel are too personal. Such entries are to be marked "DO NOT READ" by the individual pupil. Students may, if they like, comment on Fran's commentary, so that a running dialogue is created between Fran and the students. This correspondence, Fran proposes, ideally "...helps the serious writer become a much more fluent, articulate, thoughtful writer... ."

Fran now shares one of her journal entries with the class. (The next day she will go over an entire Journal notebook of hers with students.) Fran desires to show herself as writer to the class. The journal writing requirement also gives her a chance to demonstrate to students that she intends to use evaluation formatively and hopes to maximize opportunity for students to initiate writing on their own terms. One of the major functions of the class is to provide learners both the chance and incentive to experience writing as an action useful for solving certain problems individual students themselves pose. Journal writing is a place for students to explore and target topics they might want to pursue further in their formal papers.

Mark is one of several individuals in the class who within just a matter of a few days fills many pages of his journal. His writing is intensely personal: he writes of loneliness, love, misunderstanding between him and the adult world, drug use, and so on. At first, there are a few passages Mark prohibits Fran from reading by marking them "DO NOT READ." But Fran quickly gains Mark's confidence. As promised, she does not correct mechanical errors. She comments extensively on what she sees
to be the meaning of the entry and reacts to it based on the effect it has on her. Consider this entry (written the fourth day of school) and Fran's commentary on it: (See Illustration 3)

Fran's commentary on this piece typifies her overall style of commenting on students' journal entries. She does not mark mechanics, although there is ample opportunity to do so. She calls for clarification and additional detail in the writing. She makes it apparent to the writer that she has tried to grasp the essence of the intended message, responding in a personal way while visibly interacting with the content. She also relates the writer's concerns to significant others who might be affected by the action or thought implied in the passage. Fran communicates in no uncertain terms that writing and the ideas it embodies have consequences in the everyday world. She seizes this occasion as she does others to portray the Intermediate Composition class as a social unit, the well-being of which depends on the participation and open-mindedness of its individual members. She uses her evaluation to try to make connections with the student. Fran takes the individual learner and his or her writing seriously.

Mark soon permits Fran to read everything, even when he writes of "getting drunk as a skunk." Whenever his journal is returned to him, Mark patiently reads over Fran's comments, sometimes stopping to ponder a particular remark. Mark has indicated to me that in the past he did not find teacher comments important to him; and even in Fran's class, where he does review what the teacher writes on his papers, on occasion appearing to almost study Fran's comments, he seldom makes an overt effort to use the
Illustration 3

We Finally made it to hump day. Friday seems so long, but I can wait. The party Friday night is going to be fun. The week seems to be taking too long. I wish I wasn't back in school. I'd rather be out water skiing or out cruising. I dread going through another school year. I hate school. Why?

You reveal a lot in a short space. It appears to me you find it important to let me know how you feel about school. Of course, many others share your feelings, but you can do us both a favor. When it's obvious that a student in a class hates school (or the class) it has a way of spreading to the entire room which isn't really fair to the group. If you do your part and try to keep an open mind in this class, (and not be dead set against liking anything we do before we even begin), I'll do my part and try to do interesting exercises, etc. Maybe we can get into some class discussions about why school is hated or liked. At any rate, you have some 170 odd days left, and your effort in making them pleasant for yourself would help you and everyone else. Try.
comments from one paper to the next— or so Mark claims. What happens with Mark is that through Fran's evaluation he establishes a relationship with her grounded in trust, enabling him to write "freely," to write, he says, "what was on my mind." In the course evaluation form Mark completes at the end of the first semester, he expresses agreement with all three of these statements:

- The environment of this classroom helped me to write better.
- Ms. Spratley tried, through her comments on papers and journals and her one-to-one help in class, to develop a good relationship with me.
- Ms. Spratley's personal relationship with me helped me to actually improve the quality of my writing: my ability to clearly communicate an idea.

As researcher, I did not measure improvement in the quality of students' writing, and thus have no way of validating Mark's last claim. In the context of this study, however, it is more important to note that Mark himself perceives his writing to have improved. He says in so many words that evaluation administered by English teachers has meant to him an impersonal demand for obedience to norms and standards. In Fran's interactionist class, Mark learns to appreciate teacher commentary as a personal form of communication enabling him to write honestly about matters of importance to him, a situation he feels develops his communication competence.

Mark discloses some very private thoughts and feelings in his writing. At the beginning of the school year, Fran strives to establish a classroom environment supportive of self-disclosure. Let us turn our attention now to the initial month of teacher-student encounters in this eleventh-grade
Intermediate Composition class.

Journal Writing

Fran devotes the first four weeks of her instruction to developing and maintaining a classroom routine. She involves students in activities that help them to get to know one another and assigns abundant free writing and journal writing. Counts High is in its initial year of court-ordered desegregation, and one of Fran's chief concerns is to defuse any tension by helping students to overcome racial fear and hatred. Her strategy is to employ writing as the primary medium through which learners can express their expectations and anxieties. By allowing students virtually total freedom to choose their topics and by responding to their writing exclusively in terms of what it says to her as opposed to evaluating its technical excellence, Fran hopes to demonstrate to the Intermediate Composition class that writing can "be something you personally consider well worth doing in a real way, and not just jotting down some words to get by and please the teacher."

The very first day of class twenty-six students appear in room 214. The room itself is arranged conventionally: two large aqua-colored chalkboards dominate the front of the room (its west wall). Eight rows of movable, assorted-sized desks face the 3x5 foot teacher's desk. A rectangular table is pushed up against the south wall. The table is flanked on either side by grey filing cabinets. A bulletin board, which will be populated throughout the semester by various posters replete with memorable quotes from literature's great works (on which students never comment), rests above the table. On the opposite wall, two rectangular windows look
north out onto the Counts High parking lot. On its east wall, floor to ceiling collapsible dividers separate 214 from the adjacent classroom. A bookcase full of Webster's dictionaries and Walsh's Plain English Handbook stands in the corner against the back wall. Three bands of fluorescent lights are fixed overhead, reflecting weakly off a scuffed, white-flecked, grey linoleum floor. Immediately to the right of the entry in the southwest corner of the room, a familiar black and white school clock keeps time. The clock is mounted on a grey metallic panel just above the intercom. Beneath it is an anemic green-colored telephone. Save for the sunlight streaming in through the two windows, the room has an utterly drab, institutional appearance.

Fran has not had an opportunity to dress-up or rearrange 214. In the confusion created by the desegregation mandate, numerous faculty city-wide receive last minute job assignments. Fran finds out about her placement at Counts just two days before the opening of school. One of the consequences of joining the staff at such a late date means that she will not have a classroom of her own but rather must move around to three different rooms during the day. Thus, even given the time to decorate and arrange rooms to her taste, Fran might not have done so, feeling that she would like to develop a solid rapport with her fellow English Department members before asking individual teachers whose rooms she uses on a part time basis if she can modify their classroom environments.

Fran does desire to personalize her classrooms. She reacts strongly to the aesthetics of her environment. Her work area (in the teachers' lounge, which doubles as lunch room and office space for staff lacking
seniority) displays a giant "scandecor" poster of Marilyn Monroe and a
melange of color photographs on family and friends. Flowers or some
bit of nature seems always to grace her desk. In room 214 there is no
sign of Fran's personal touch.

Meanwhile, students this first day of class enter the room in batches.
They are reserved. There is little sign of students knowing one another
from previous years' classes. Black and white students sit in groups in
different sections of the room. The range of attire is dazzling. Several
individuals are dressed in blue jeans, t-shirts, and tennis shoes while
others wear varying combinations of double knit pants, satin-looking
blouses, platform shoes, and short-collared shirts with thin ties. A
few students sport uniforms: Tara wears a cosmetologist's outfit of
white pants and a short-sleeved white top while both Kim and Phil are clad
in their Law Enforcement police blue complete with polished black shoes
and shiny night sticks strapped to their sides. The splashy color of the
students' dress contrasts vividly with the room's pallid look.

Fran waits for students to get settled in their seats, then calls
roll, and immediately thereafter invites students to raise questions they
might have about the course or any related issue. Tami, Jim, and others
ask in unison, "How hard will the course be?". Fran says: "I can't
answer that fairly yet. I will tell you that because this is a composition
course, you will write a lot. I firmly believe that all written communica-
tion is important."

Fran asks students to think for a minute about their associations with
the word "house." She points out after a moment's pause that most indivi-
duals in the class probably did not think of "igloo or dog house" in this
context. The word "composition" usually elicits certain structured responses, Fran explains, and is most commonly associated by students with spelling tests, punctuation and usage exercises, and theme writing. But "composition" does not have to conform to this model just as the word "house" need not necessarily conjure up the structured image of a conventional two-story, A-frame American home. Fran discusses composition as an organic thing, a process involving exploration, risk-taking, and discovery. Her comments this first day of class will be reflected back to students a week and a-half later in the Intermediate Composition guidelines which Fran distributes. The statement of Philosophy on this ditto reads

For me writing is a living thing—as alive as (s)he who writes. As a teacher, I'm supposed to show you how to compose clear, interesting paragraphs and papers, and I'll certainly try to do so, but I'll also try to get across what I believe to be a very, very important preliminary step to "formal" writing. And that is emphasis on the creative process involved in composition. While the end product (a finished paragraph) is important to learn to organize, it is equally (if not more) important to realize that writing is organic—it starts in your head as a seed, continues to grow in your imagination and is born on paper. As I said, it is a process. A process we need to explore, develop and begin to understand how to manipulate in our favor. Process involves more emphasis on rough drafts, rewrites, scribbles, droodles—anything and everything that stimulates the creativity that lies in every human heart and mind. Discipline has its place in writing as well as experimenting with ideas. Like refining a relationship between a man and a woman, working on your writing will require determined effort on your part.

Writing must also be something you personally consider well worth doing in a real way, and not just jotting down some words to get by and please
the teacher. That's "playing School" and it doesn't contribute to real improvement in creativity or writing skills. To make writing worthwhile, then, we need to examine carefully the reasons why writing is important and KEEP those perspectives in mind as we progress.

Finally, we need to personalize our writing/learning more. That means I give you as much individualized attention as I can; that means you get to know each other as a class, and HELP each other learn. Share your thoughts, concerns, hopes, dreams, fears, ambitions, etc. through your writing and speech.

We can all learn a great deal about writing; we can all learn a great deal about ..........us!!!!!!

The unit of discourse which Fran here requires students to master—the "finished paragraph"—conforms to the city curriculum manual's prescription (see Chapter One). In other respects, however, Fran seems to diverge. She does not make hard and fast distinctions between descriptive, narrative, and expository writing whereas the curriculum manual does. Neither does she mention the current-traditional items of topic sentences, sentence structure, and transitional devices. The document emphasizes the process of composing over the composed product. Fran depicts writing to be a personal, meaning-making, process-based activity involving a host of interrelated behaviors, among them, imagining, "droodling," drafting, writing, and rewriting. Fran's role as she defines it for herself is to provide maximum attention to individual students and to help establish a classroom community within which students talk freely and share each others' work. Fran's statement of philosophy, while not wholly interactionist in content, is far more interactionist than what the system-wide current-traditional policy statement represents.
Fran focuses on personalized, expressive writing the entire first month of the school year. Students complete several in-class ten-minute free writing assignments, comment on one another's "10s", brainstorm ideas for their journals, write in their journals, view a film on creativity and discuss what creativity means to them, and, finally, engage in several creativity activities. Fran wants to "free up" students. She makes no comment on mechanics in individuals' writing "because it's not important yet. I want to get to know them as individuals. I want them to have confidence in their writing. Right now I'm very interested in their having the freedom to express what they feel and know."

One of the ways in which Fran attempts to show students "how much awareness you [the students] have built into you" is to pair students and to ask each individual partner to write down a series of words describing or representing the person with whom the student is paired. Fran intentionally pairs students male/female and/or Black/white. Partners exchange papers and select a word from the descriptions listed. That single work is circled and then becomes the seed idea for a paragraph which each partner composes about one another. Fran does not collect student paragraphs, instructing students to share their writing with their partner and to then file the paragraphs in their folders. In this manner, Fran hopes to reinforce the idea that students can compose for audiences other than the teacher.

This activity, conducted on the Monday of the third full week of school, points up some of the difficulty Fran will encounter throughout the semester. Because she does not collect student papers, Fran has no
way of knowing whether all pupils carry out the assignment to its conclusion. In fact, several pairs of learners sitting around me do not write paragraphs, but only comment in a sentence or two on the circled word. While the activity has other purposes than just getting students to compose a paragraph—for example, Fran's conscious pairing of particular students is intended to facilitate dialogue between students across race and sex boundaries—without some systematic assessment, it seems Fran cannot verify the degree to which the activity succeeds in helping pupils "to use writing as a communication tool."

Fran's interactionist approach is new to students. The first few days of class they repeatedly ask questions about grades, text books, and the number of homework assignments Fran will make. Jim asks Fran in the midst of Intermediate Composition's fourth class meeting: "Are you sure this is your first year [at Counts High]... cause I heard some bad things about you this morning." Fran inquires, "What things did you hear, Jim?" "Just that you were hard," Jim responds. She reassures Jim and the class that she is not "tough," but that it might be difficult for some students to adjust to her instruction due to her rather unorthodox composition curriculum. Student experience and student writing, she reminds the class, will be the primary texts for Intermediate Composition. Fran exhorts pupils to keep all their papers in manilla folders she has distributed. "Rough drafts and scratches—the process of writing—are important," she explains. In terms of the journal, it is a place for individuals to uncover through writing "the reasons for what you do and how you think."
Jim, like Mark, writes profusely in his journal the first few weeks of school. On Tuesday, September 18th, just seven days after the beginning of the school year, Jim voluntarily submits his journal for Fran to review. Jim informs me: "I just wanted her to look at it to see if I'm doing it right." When the journal is returned to Jim the following afternoon, he reads through it immediately, exclaiming: "Wow! She says it's pretty good!" At the end of this class period, Jim asks Fran to interpret for him her comment stating, "I hope you can turn me off as audience as you write." Fran tells Jim that journals are for the individual, a place where the student can, if s/he chooses, just forget about the teacher and write for oneself or for other, specialized audiences. At the conclusion of his conversation with Fran, Jim turns to Jeff and informs him: "Wow! I guess I'm doing pretty good."

Tall and lanky, with straight dishwater blonde hair falling down over his eyes, and dressed daily in jeans, a print shirt, and running shoes, Jim is one of the more vocal members in the class. He sits in the back of the room in the middle of a group of boys including Rick, Jeff, Greg, and occasionally Craig. Talk among them centers on cars, rock music, concerts, and girls. Jim is always anxious to solicit Fran's approval. He never seems quite sure of himself and wants to know exactly what it is he needs or can do in order to meet Fran's expectations, as evidenced by his early submission of his journal and the comments he makes upon having it returned to him. Jim finds journal writing to his liking: "It has already changed my attitude of writing," he tells me only two weeks into the school year, "from bad to good." Jim normally thinks of English as a
subject devoted mainly to tests and grammar exercises and "stuff like that." He responds favorably to the chance to write expressively in part because of the novelty of the assignment and the freedom it confers but also, we might conjecture, on account of the fact that journal writing provides Jim a forum for easily securing teacher reinforcement.

Robyn also associates English with examinations and grammar drill. Like many of the Black students who have been bused into Counts High, Robyn comes from a school where the so-called "basics"—"grammar, vocabulary and spelling also"—have been heavily emphasized. "In other English classes," she writes, "you take tests and vocabulary words etc. You do individual work, you don't work in groups." Many of the Black students inform me that their past English classes consisted almost exclusively of textbook drill in usage and mechanics. Bryan remarks: "Most of 'em grade on how you spell the word, punctuation, and if your sentence structure is right." Journal writing is entirely new to these students, and for Robyn a "bad" activity, at least at the outset.

Enrolled in computer programming at one of the city's handsomely appointed vocational centers, Robyn desires to learn practical job-seeking skills. Writing is important to her because she believes in earnest it will help her secure gainful employment. Initially, she does not see a purpose to journal writing, regarding it to be an impractical activity. Yet with apparent determination and industry, Robyn applies herself to the assigned tasks and eventually comes to appreciate Fran's interactive instructional format—with its expressive writing base, group work, peer evaluation, and writing as process orientation. "I enjoyed the group
exercises and commenting on other papers," Robyn notes. She also agrees with the statement I put to her which says, "I find rewriting my papers helps me to more clearly get my message across." At the end of the semester, Robyn records her reactions to the class in a short paper I ask her to write for me, acknowledging in it that one of the unusual aspects of Fran's class is that unlike other English classes it required of her considerable writing:

In all my past English classes we did things differently. In my 10th grade class. My English teacher Mrs. Williams was concerned about our futures. She showed us how to write a Resume. What to do and not to do at the job interview. What to wear and what questions to ask...

This year, English is much different. There's no spelling words, vocabulary, etc. It's mostly writing. I think it's a very good (fun) class but we should have done grammar first, instead of last. Because if she [Ms. Spratley] would have done grammar first, we would have learned how to correct our mistakes before we made them. Ms. Spratley's comments are helpful but what we should have done more of was when we wrote something and she would comment. Then we improved our writings.

Despite the repeated training Robyn has had in writing mechanics, she is still plagued by error. Robyn separates the study of grammar from writing, offering the opinion that doing grammar exercises in advance of actually writing somehow prepares the individual to compose error-free discourse. Good writing, Robyn has apparently been taught, is nothing more than correct writing.

Fran's practice of having students compose several drafts of a paper and sharing those drafts for comment with her and with classmates finds Robyn composing this story for her Final Exam in Intermediate Composition:
Ran Crazy

It was a warm summer afternoon. Me and my friend Debra Wright decided to, run a couple of times around Linden McKinley High School track. When we got there we noticed that Billy Jefferson was sitting there with his dog.

"Is that your dog."
"Yes, I have two dog I have this one and a German Shephard."
"Is this a girl dog or a boy dog," said Debbie.
"It's a girl dog."

The dog he had was a big black doberman pincher. She is two years old, not that big but big enough. Billy starts telling us about how his dog went through k-9 training. Which is a business that train's dogs to attack people. But his dog wasn't in there long enough to get full training. But me and Debbie didn't believe him and he got mad. That's when he told his dog to bite us.

"Sik 'em," Billy said.
So me and Debbie jumped on the fence.
"Roof, Roof," the dog was barking at us. I climbed over the fence while Debbie was trying to squeeze through the fence. Finally Debbie got through. We ran through the field to the fence on the other side. But Billy and his dog was waiting for us. We ran down the alley. Debbie turned down Ontario, while I ran around a truck. My heart was beating real fast (thump, thump) I couldn't catch my breath. I call myself being slick and go the other way Billy was coming but the dog came the way I was coming.

"Roof, roof" my heart almost stopped. Billy started laughen'.
"Debbie ran down Ontario," I told Billy. So he ran down Ontario. I was going to run with him but I was to tired.
"Debbie! He coming to get you" I said. Debbie was running in people's yard. He finally caught Debbie in the street.

"I'm tired," Debbie said. I was coming down the street. And he started chasing me with the dog again. I ran by the lady.
She said, "You should be chásen them girls with that dog. If that dog bites someone your family can get sued."

"That's right," I said. While he was walking down the street listening to that lady me and
Debbie turned down the alley. We get to 25th, then Billy was running after us with his dog again. But we ran into Frager's. And he couldn't bring a dog into a store. He left and went home.

Fran's instruction and her policy of requiring extensive writing supplemented with concomitant amounts of interaction between writer and audience helps Robyn to construct a properly structured, rhetorically acceptable narrative. Mechanically, the writing is flawed—problems with homonyms, fragments, punctuation, and dialect interference (e.g., "two dog" and "He coming to get you!")—and would undoubtedly benefit from careful editing.

It seems almost every pupil in Intermediate Composition lacks editorial skill. Fran never deals directly with this important final stage of the composing process. Only a tiny fraction of her evaluation on students' written work registers mechanical error. Most learners do not regard mechanics in the context of Fran's class to be a significant problem. Many individuals think their skill in the mechanics of writing improves over the course of the semester. Robyn, for example, assents to this sentence appearing on Fran's end of the semester evaluation form: "I think my writing has improved mechanically, meaning I now understand better how to use punctuation, elements of grammar, usage and spelling." Yet there have been few occasions for Robyn to work systematically on her writing mechanics, and my impression is that she shows no improvement of the sort she describes. But Robyn's avowed improvement is not surprising if we understand that she perceives improvement in writing mechanics to correlate to her chances for getting the job of her choice. To say that
she has not bettered her writing mechanics would for Robyn be tantamount to admitting that the semester was a waste of effort. Her impulse is to think positively and to picture herself accomplishing her career objectives at the expense, perhaps, of assessing her academic achievements in realistic terms.

Laura also thinks the instruction and evaluation she has received have helped her to improve the mechanics of her writing: "I've learned a lot this semester about capitalization, punctuation and just plain looking over mistakes and correcting them." Laura is one of many Intermediate Composition students who expresses appreciation for Fran's evaluation style: "She grades quite fairly. I think that she actually tries to read what we have written not just giving us a quick grade and then make comments," Laura writes.

Early in the term, Laura composes a ten-minute writing on abortion in which she states: "...I wish it [abortion] wasn't legalized, because girls die from illegal abortions and legal ones and they bleed to death." In her commentary on the piece, Fran challenges Laura on her position: (See Illustration 4)

A dialogue in writing ensues, as Laura reacts to Fran's comment in a subsequent ten-minute writing in attempt to clarify her point of view on the abortion issue. (See Illustration 5)

By responding to students' work in this manner, Fran conveys to her class that she cares personally for individual's thoughts and feelings. According to Laura, Fran is consistently "thinking about students' welfare." Fran's extensive commentary on students' writing convinces Laura that unlike
Illustration 4

...I mean who would be selfish enough to take a life that has a chance to be loved by someone who wants a child but can't because there is a shortage on adoptable children. Their problem may be that they would be embarrassed to be seen pregnant and usually can be prevented. Oh well, I wish it wasn't legalized because girls die from illegal abortions and legal ones and they bleed to death. It makes me sick.

and you want their deaths?
Ms. Spratley, Your comment on my 10 min. writing confuses me. I was giving my point of view on abortion and said something that you might have misinterpreted. This was my comment, "I wish it (abortion) wasn't legalized because girls die from abortion and legal ones and they even bleed to death." I don't understand your comment when you said "and you want their death?" I thought I made myself clear in my statements. What did you misunderstand? Please comment on this so that I make myself clear next time! thanks

If abortion weren't legalized (#1)- then (#2) more would die from bleeding. Your statement sounded contradictory. I don't think you meant it this way. Thanks for communicating.
most other English teachers, who "don't have time for their students," Fran by contrast "...tries to make time for you." Laura echoes a theme that Mark, Robyn, and others have advanced, namely, that the easy-going, fun (and for Laura, "well organized") nature of Fran's instruction positively influences learners' performance. Moreover, Laura notices Fran's enthusiasm. When I ask her to evaluate for me her experience in Intermediate Composition, Laura quickly drafts a statement which reads in part:

> Alot of teachers don't like to teach. I have had alot that don't like teaching. Ms. Spratley really does, she laughs with us and doesn't get mad real easy (though she should some times) and she explains until we all understand.

Joni, too, reacts favorably to Intermediate Composition. She writes in one of her journal entries: "English it's a good class. I Like it it's Better then my History Class that for sure History's Boring. English is Different almost fun." Joni seizes the opportunity to use journal writing as a vehicle for expressing some of her private thoughts: "I really kinda Like the Idea of keeping a journal. It Lets me talk about the things that I wouldn't be able to talk about to others." Joni also perceives the journal to be a place for her to uncover her own writing style: "...I will allways try to find the kind of writting that suits me Best. I don't know what it is yet But I'm Looking."

Fran could give Joni some immediate assistance in identifying and mastering elements of style, but does not do so, at least not in the context of her commentary on Joni's journal writing. The content of Joni's opening entries are so compelling in nature that Fran immerses herself in
a series of written exchanges with Joni in an effort to help Joni work through her feelings on busing in particular and race in general. In the first paragraph of her initial journal entry, Joni writes the following: (See Illustration 6)

As we can see, Fran believes it "crucial" for Joni to examine the causes of what Fran unflinchingly labels "racism." Later, Fran will comment: "...it's important for you to examine your racism. Why is it there? I mean, the real reasons. It's important because being a racist can narrow your life more than you could ever imagine--make its daily living full of unnecessary hate & fear--both evil for the health of anyone's spirit." Joni responds immediately to this last remark with this entry:

I don't think I told you everything very clearly. I don't Like Black because I grew up in a Black neighborhood and the Black kids used to pick on me and Sisters all the time and now we have segregation [Joni means integration] and they are picking on my Little Brother over at Woodward Park. it really pisses me off why they do that and we're not even Bothering them. So that is why I say they shouldn't Have Been sent free back then during the Civil War... [The rest of the entry is about Joni's boyfriend, Bill].

Fran's commentary on the passage reads

In sharp contrast, I have a black woman friend. I've been in the neighborhood a lot, and have never had a problem--never been hassled. I guess it's hard for me to believe that an emotional scrapper like yourself NEVER (Miss Innocent?) did ANYTHING to instigate a problem? Also, what could be a part of a Black person's history or heritage that causes them to strike out--right or wrong. Maybe you could try to imagine what slavery is really like. ... .
General Lee,
I named my Journal this because I think he fought for the Right Cause. That is trying to keep Blacks slaves. I Don't Know Why I feel that way towards them. Maybe because every class I have has about 100 of them in their and some are so dumb they really make the class rotten. They make noises and I can't study, And I like him because He represents the South.

Crucial - even.
Joni and Fran return to the race issue intermittently throughout the semester. We can infer that Joni is willing to write on the topic in part because she trusts she will get an honest reaction from Fran, knows that what she says will not be graded, and has someone to explore the issue with in the first place. Fran, on the other hand, continues to prod Joni to scrutinize her racism because she wants students to see their own lived experiences as subjects worth writing about. She hopes in Joni's particular case that continual exploration will lead to diminished prejudice. For Fran, evaluation in this exchange is serving one of its major functions—to elicit additional writing while advancing the writer's thought.

In December, Joni puts in her last word on the race topic with this entry:

If you'll Look on the inside part of the cover of my Journal you will find the Law I use in writing my Journal. [The "Law" to which Joni refers is this: "Respond in your Journal to comments on '10's. Rethink what I (meaning Ms. Spratley) said or explain how I misinterpreted what you said.] I try and think or rethink out Questions or try and answer them if I can. It really helps me in finding out how I feel about certain things. Like Blacks, parents, school, friends, selfishness. These thinks I really wish I didn't even have to worry about But I Live with it every day so I do. Blacks & selfishness are the worst of all of them. Calling a group of people By a color is wrong I know But when they do wrong (whites do to) it makes me mad even with Whites.

I Think people should Learn to share what they have and Live together in Happiness. My dream is just the same as Martin Luther King Jrs. That one day people will not be called Blacks or Whites But people, and be able to give a
community what they have to offer.
I would like to tell you a few good
Books.
Nigger and Up from Nigger.
I forgot who wrote them but they are
very good.

Compared to the first entry in her journal, this writing displays
Joni making significant strides toward coming to terms with profoundly
important attitudes and feelings. Journal writing has been instrumental
in promoting this awareness, as Joni herself recognizes. For her part,
Fran has engaged this student in a direct and open way via extensive
comment on her journal entries. Even though Joni's writing is spotted
with several identifiable patterns of error, Fran has resisted commenting
on mechanics and grammar, arguing that such marking is inappropriate to
the composing stage which the writing represents—a kind of seed idea stage
of writing where students' first responsibility is to give form to thought
and to identify and contextualize issues of concern to them. Fran con-
tends that her role in responding to journal writing is to provide com-
mentary on what the particular piece means to her as an interested reader
and not to assess the quality of the writing set against some textbook
standard of excellence. This approach to evaluation works successfully
with Joni, who diligently reads Fran's commentary and often uses it to
help her guide the thinking and writing that goes into her journal work.
Fran's remarks stimulate Joni to write a lot: during the first semester,
she produces about fifty-five pages of journal entries.

Many individuals enjoy the same kind of experience with journal
writing as does Joni. Val, for example, looks forward to receiving Fran's
Val writes copiously in her journal, discussing family, friends, school achievement, and the inevitable tangled relationships with various boyfriends. Val "didn't know the purpose or meaning to writing" until Fran showed her that writing could be used as a means of self-discovery.

Tara, like Val, finds Fran's journal evaluation gives her incentive to write: "It [Ms. Spratley's commentary] helps me to do the kind of writing I like to do...poetry or writing down thoughts when I'm depressed. I can be honest, and this enables me to be clear. I'm not afraid of what the teacher thinks." Says Joyce: "Before writing was a chore. I like to write now."

Fran's extensive journal and free writing activity, complemented by evaluation based on the response this writing evokes in her as a sympathetic reader, motivates most eighth-period Intermediate Composition students to read and even subsequently react in writing to Fran's commentary. By devoting a full month at the beginning of the year to expressive writing and by implementing an attendant evaluation policy stressing reaction to content without any marking whatsoever of technical error, Fran offers instruction that is different from what learners are accustomed to in their past English classes. The instruction is engaging. Most students write much more than what they customarily do. Jeff, Val, Joyce, Jim, Mark, and Tara, all of whom used to not write unless it was demanded of them, now voluntarily produce numerous pages of writing each week. By early October, pupils who profess they previously had no interest in writing begin to see a purpose to it and are drawn into an involvement with the curriculum.
Up to this juncture, Fran has concentrated on assigning and evaluating students' writing in an effort to assist individuals to become more thoughtful, autonomous persons. She has yet to assign a letter grade to any piece of student writing. She has focused consistently on the content of students' work. Fran has endeavored to create a classroom environment based not on competition and selection but on unconditional support for the writer. Some students are more comfortable than others with this approach. In a parallel fashion, some learners react more positively than others when Fran shifts from personal, expressive writing to transactional composition. Ultimately, this transition to transactional writing adds another dimension to Fran's evaluation and influences the way individuals use and interpret her written commentary.

**Transactional Writing**

Fran's interactionist approach to the teaching of writing is based in part on the assumption that the changes in distance from writer to audience and writer to subject can be designed to correlate to the student's social and intellectual development. Expressive writing, that is, writing where the language of everyday conversation is employed, forms the bedrock of all other written communication. Technically speaking, Fran knows that eleventh-graders should be at a point in their writing development where they can write transactional discourse—composition for audiences (both known and unknown) other than the individual writer which successfully informs, persuades, or instructs. In realistic terms, however, Fran believes as a result of her seven years of service in the school system
that students have so little actual practice in constructing whole pieces of discourse, so relatively few opportunities to compose expressively, and such negative, "get it right" associations with transactional type writing that student writers are not likely to be competent in the transactional domain. Fran's expectations with regard to student performance and the design of her writing assignments are carved out of this first-hand knowledge of student experience with school-sponsored writing. "A large part of the incentive for the writer lies in sharing: the value we covet for him, and that he will increasingly covet for himself as he grows older, lies in shaping." In early October, having brought the majority of her students to the point where they willingly exchange their journals with one another to read, Fran informs students they will compose a "work portrait," which as we will see is an assignment requiring students to do considerable shaping of their writing in the transactional mode of discourse.

The "work portrait" unit officially begins when Fran conducts a "mock interview" with Phil while the rest of the class observes and takes notes on the interview session. Students have been given interview questions in advance. Fran solicited the questions from a local Personnel Manager in a prestigious company; thus the interview is both realistic and practical. Students are to record [what Phil says] in as much detail as possible using quotations wherever possible. After the interview is completed everyone will write up a portrait. ...The portrait should accurately reflect what the person [being interviewed] said about him/herself. The portrait will be scored by the interviewee on a scale of 1 to 3. ...Time will be given in class to write up the portrait and help will be provided
by myself and other class members. Several rough drafts will be done before the final paper is due.

The following class day (Friday, October 5th, to be exact), Fran directs students to complete their first draft of the work portrait. Fran distributes a "leisure life" portrait written by one of her former students as an example of the sort of essay she expects. It is not, however, apparent to Intermediate Composition students in what way(s) their essays should parallel the leisure life sample. Craig, Trent, and Phillip voice their confusion. They do not know how the model essay applies. Greg, Jeff, Jim, Mark, Larry, and Tami do not attend to the assignment. Fran circulates around the room to work with individual students. She stops to assist Robyn and spends a long period of time reviewing Robyn's notes with her and then showing Robyn how to use quotation marks. There obviously are some standards which Fran wants students to master.

Robyn and others who deliberately use this in-class assistance and evaluation frequently receive high grades on their papers. As we have seen, the evidence suggests that there are those whose to do/to become learning orientation drives them to develop the required competence and a second collection of learners motivated by to get/to be objectives who happen to come forth with a timely performance. Included in the latter group are Robyn, Kim, Sherri, Sharon, Jim, Mark, Phillip, and others. Of this type student, John Warnock writes

The concept of good writing that they have developed (though it is probably not so much a concept as a defense against one) is not a platform for liberated action, but a cage. We may anticipate such a result whenever a student is forced to adopt a pseudo-concept
of what ultimately constitutes good writing (on spelling or grammar errors, clear transitions, introduction-body-conclusion) in place of a true concept.\textsuperscript{12}

While Fran helps individual students, several other pupils confer with Phil to verify the accuracy and completeness of their interview notes. Phil will be responsible for reading all the papers and for assigning them grades (marked 1, 2, or 3). Fran will also read, comment on, and, if she disputes Phil's assessments, help to grade the essays.

In their journals and "10s," students have written informally about themselves by and large for themselves (and for Fran as a trusted adult audience). Now Fran requires students to use language to fulfill a transactional function, writing about someone else for a known audience (primarily Phil, but also Fran in the role of a professional English teacher). Anticipating that students might encounter difficulty making the transition to a new writing form— from personal, informal journal writing to report writing demanding a more detached perspective and formal presentation—Fran consciously adopts the interview assignment. She senses this activity will not place excessive demand on learners to confront a vast array of facts beyond their immediate experience. Phil, after all, is one of their Intermediate Composition classmates, and his availability to students as consultant/editor allows them to validate their information with the original source of that information. Yet students have trouble with the assignment, despite the fact that Fran has them compose two drafts of the work profile. Some pupils take few notes on the mock interview and then fail to check with Phil on the informational adequacy of their notes. Phil
does not always give students sufficient feedback. Still other pupils simply list facts about Phil without lending coherence or style to either copy of their essay, revealing an inability or lack of desire to respond to Fran's evaluation.

The "work portrait" form seems to elude most learners from the very beginning. Fran never really explicates the form for students. She only obliquely suggests what she wants in this respect. Witness Fran's remarks on Sherri's paper, itself indicative of the overall quality of this set of student essays: (See Illustration 7)

Lack of success with this assignment impels Fran to retrace her steps and to return to students' more immediate experience (real or fantasized) with the descriptive narrative unit, discussed at length earlier in this chapter. As we saw in the four week series of activities constituting the story writing unit, Fran spent a number of classes acquainting students with narrative form. Furthermore, although all pupils used Greg's "10" as the basis for their stories, Fran encouraged substantial modification and elaboration of Greg's theme. So although the form might have been new to students, the facts they were dealing with were essentially their own; this simplified the writing task, eventuating in better composition than what characterized the work profile papers. Fran evaluates both sets of essays in a similar fashion, commenting extensively on the detail in students' writing and directing them to be more specific, concrete, and illustrative. She rarely uses symbols to mark papers, preferring full sentence (or short question) comment.
Illustration 7

Interview with Phil

Phil goes to Counts Senior High School and goes to Northwest Career Center. Phil goes to Northwest for law enforcement one & two. Law enforcement one was very exciting; he said "You learn many skills for instance how to use a club, the radio & etc. At Northwest Phil joined a club called V.I.C.A. (Vocational Industrial Club of America). The Vocational is a good organization because it gets you prepared for the job you're training for. Phil worked at Vets Memorial as lead usher or lead guard, he took tickets and had the permission (power) to put people out of the theatre. Phil also worked at the Imperial Security Company. I guess before all of this he went to Ohio State for three years for law enforcement. Phil says "People learn for their mistakes" Phil says he plans to become a cop in a higher level or lawyer. Phil's willing to adapt to new environments. Phil's hobbies are track & field and gun shooting. Phil seems like he's willing to do the job & do the job right & get it done.
Fran's commentary on journals is that of an empathetic and inquisitive reader. Remarks such as "good," "also good detail here," and "why?" appearing on Sherri's work portrait above often show up in Fran's journal evaluation. Another type of comment found on Sherri's essay—"Need to open w/ who he is...," "no--law," and "out of order here"—does not question or empathize with the writer but corrects her. When assessing non-journal writing, Fran does in fact use her commentary to correct and overtly redirect student writing. However, in correcting mistakes, Fran does not name errors of transcription (e.g., "comma fault," "sp," "cap," etc.) but instead cites misrepresented matters of fact, inconsistent statements, and disorganization in students' prose. This kind of comment Fran sees to be appropriate to all stages of composing when students are involved in a formal essay writing unit.

When Fran corrects these features in students' composition, a significant change in her relationship to learners results: Fran becomes editor and grader as opposed to the friend and confidant role she plays when reading journals. While not all students react adversely to correction, correction does require them to take a detached view of their writing and to envision it as an object to be manipulated and shaped. Certain pupils attain this distance more easily than others. On an emotional level, even though Fran rejects letter grading in favor of a 1/2/3 marking system, the very fact that she grades the writing at all reminds some students of their former English teachers' evaluation which students avow "just runs you down." Reflecting back on the semester, Fran says: "...even though my class really emphasized different kinds of evaluation other than A,B,C,
D, they [students] are no fools; they know they are still going to get A, B, C, D on their grade cards and can be hyper about it... ."

Students do read emotional meaning into grading symbols, be they numbers or letters. For the unaccomplished learner,

It is quite possible that poor grades, year after year, on the English compositions of such children are responsible for much of the general disinterest in English as a course and in writing as a form of self-expression; the untalented become discouraged and quit trying.¹³

Indeed, as soon as Fran adds correcting and grading to her evaluation repertoire, certain students in the room—Jeff, as we have observed, for example—begin to react defensively to teacher-written comments. For some individuals in this Intermediate Composition class, it seems the trust Fran has so assiduously cultivated the first month of her instruction is jeopardized or even poisoned the moment the teacher does any fault finding whatsoever.

**Writing Labs, a "How To" Paper, and the Final Examination**

Besides the journal writing (which is a semester-long activity), work profile, and descriptive narrative, students in Fran's Intermediate Composition class complete two other major assignments: a process paper and final examination. Additionally, during the final week of each of the first two grading periods, students work on individualized writing labs while Fran conducts private grade conferences. The labs are designed chiefly to help pupils improve their transcription and grammar skills, yet are largely unsuccessful because of the inappropriate textbook material
on which the lab exercises are based. "The exercises in the lab books
did not help me one bit," Robyn says bluntly.

Tami's experience with the labs demonstrates their ineffectiveness.
During the second lab session (that is, during the twelfth full week of
school, which is the end of the second marking period), Tami works on
her sentence variety. The best available textbook is English Language
Arts. A representative sentence variety exercise in the book directs stu-
dents to rewrite sentences according to particular grammatical prescrip-
tions—to change italicized phrases into "gerunds," "infinitives," "ap-
positives" and the like. Tami is incapable of completing this exercise
given her ignorance of the terms employed. Even if she was familiar with
the (classroom) grammar terminology in use, this exercise and others like
it do not fit with Fran's interactionist approach and her understanding of
composing skill development. Fran agrees in theory with James Moffet, who
says on this point that

For the learner, basics are not the small-focus
technical things but broad things like meaning
and motivation, purpose and point, which are
precisely what are missing from exercises. An
exercise, by my definition, is any piece of writing
practiced only in schools—that is, an assignment
that stipulates arbitrary limits that leave the
writer with no real relationships between him and
a subject and an audience. I would not ask a stu-
dent to write anything other than an authentic
discourse, because the learning process proceeds from
intent and content down to the contemplation of tech-
nical points, not the other way.¹⁴

In actual practice, Fran feels pressured by both the school's and
general public's expectation that composition students should be working
primarily—if not exclusively—on error eradication. Fran claims this pressure makes her "feel guilty" that she does not deal more with grammar and mechanics. Her aim at the beginning of the year was to offer grammatical assistance whenever the individual pupil happened to request it, citing William Dusel, who writes: "Repair work is undertaken whenever the writer has been convinced, by the growing satisfaction he receives from being understood and appreciated, that accurate writing is worth the trouble." A second strategy Fran meant to implement was to identify common errors in student writing and to work on these mistakes as a whole class. "I didn't do that enough," Fran says in retrospect when discussing the research project with a group of teacher educators. Fran explains to this group that "what ended up happening at the end of the course is that we had a three week mini cram course on major problems I saw students were having—which shouldn't have been done. I mean this instruction should have been interspersed throughout the course." Fran attributes her failure to poor planning and time fragmentation: the forty-two minute periods, six week grading terms (as opposed to nine week sessions, to which the school system will shift in 1980-1981), and repeated abbreviation of class time due to scheduling changes "make it tough to get through all the essential components of a quality writing program."

From the outset, it has been Fran's intention to have students actively manipulate and exploit their own language resources. For Fran, learning to write is not primarily a matter of memorizing vocabulary lists, taking spelling tests, and completing grammar exercises. Rather, she believes writing development most likely occurs when learners attempt to
create unified, whole texts of discourse and thereby acquire first-hand experience with the range of strategies available to the writer in his or her effort to construct a comprehensible piece of communication. Moreover, whenever possible, Fran desires to embed writing assignments in an activity-based context, where pupils converse with their classmates or watch one another perform or participate in sensory awareness activities. Fran supports Mary Beaven's statement that "...writing improvement does not occur in isolation. Merely assigning themes and arranging for some sort of evaluation prove insufficient because writing is related to speaking, listening, and all other awareness of communication available for processing information."  

The process paper Fran assigns students derives from this interactionist philosophy. The assignment is a fairly popular one and is often found in the current-traditional curriculum. Students are directed to compose a paper explaining a task or activity they enjoy carrying out so that a reader unfamiliar with the process being described could perform it easily. While the assignment itself is traditional, the set of lessons preceding it are not, for both Fran and Joni actually demonstrate a process to the class before individuals write up their own "how to" papers.

Joni shows that class (it is now Friday, December 14th) how to repot a plant. Students take notes on the presentation and on Monday work them into a step-by-step description of repotting a plant. (Pupils will thus actually write two process papers—one on Joni's demonstration and another on an activity of their own choosing.) Some students question why they
have to write a composition on Joni's skill display. Fran informs the entire class that "by having to explain something you don't necessarily know much about, you will need to be explicit and to use extensive detail, which is something you might overlook when writing about a skill you yourself have already mastered."

Geri, who takes morning classes in horticulture at vocational school, possibly unlike other students in the room possesses an intrinsic interest in the assignment. She composes her paper directly from her notes on Joni's demonstration, writing quickly without bothering to consult Fran or Joni, both of whom are circulating around the room this Monday as "writing consultants." This is what Geri produces:

How to Repot a Plant

After putting newspaper down on a flat surface (table, floor), tip the pot over, holding your hand, spread out, over the top of the pot to catch the plant. Tap the bottom of the pot to loosen soil; the plant will slide out easily. Gently shake the plant to remove the loose soil around the roots—you are now ready to transplant. Choose a pot that is at least one size bigger. Fill it about one-fourth full of Potting Soil (contains one-third sand, one-third peat moss, one-third of magamp and lime). Place the plant in the middle of the pot and fill in loosely with potting soil to the top. Firm this soil down but don't pack it. Too much pressure will damage the roots. Refill soil and firm down one more time, then refill again until the soil is about one-half inch from the top of the pot. Never pot or transplant without watering in—give the plant a good watering.

Of course Geri knows a lot about this topic. But more often than not, when formal opportunities exist for Geri to get feedback on her writing as it evolves in process, she opts not to seek reaction. Geri is an
excellent student, one of only thirteen Counts High juniors who re­ceived straight A's the first academic term. In her English classes, Geri enjoys great success because she has internalized the rules, stan­dards, and strategies enabling her to move fluidly through the composing process all the while trusting the validity of her own personal response to what she composes.

Geri notes that even though Fran's commentary is functional for her--it "trains" Geri to add detail to her writing--she nonetheless often reads the remarks only, as we have seen, to then fall back on her own intuition and resources when revising her composition. We recall that Geri revises by "sensing what's expected of me." While Geri believes writing helps one to secure a job, she also expresses the opinion that writing is im­portant to her as a means to achieve "self-enlightenment." It appears as if Geri has struck a balance in her writing performance between satisfying teacher expectations on the one hand and on the other writing to express her own feelings and to develop her compositional style.

Geri's experience with most English teachers leads her to conclude that they want all students to write essentially the same: "other teachers [beside Ms. Spratley] expect you to write it [the assigned essay] the same way everybody else does." In this situation, Geri has resigned herself to receiving evaluation enumerating her errors. The commentary tells her only "if the grammar and literary techniques are right; they [English teachers] don't really pay attention to the content." What Geri would like to know from her reader is if her essay communicates what she intends it to, if the piece is interesting and persuasive, and, finally, whether
or not the reader values what Geri has composed.

Whatever criticism is offered ought to be done so in the spirit of support, avers Geri. "Error can be instructive," she says. In actual practice, geared as she is to use teacher evaluation and writing opportunities in general to help her become a more creative, fulfilled individual, Geri does not attend closely to the few patterns of error Fran marks on Geri's papers. Fran could more strictly monitor Geri's performance in this regard. With a little supervised work in careful editing, Geri would probably eliminate most of the mistakes from her writing. But in the last analysis, Fran's bias toward assigning writing and commenting on student papers primarily for the purpose of furthering pupil self-awareness directs Fran herself away from sustained notation and follow-up of transcription errors. (Again, Fran also argues that a ninety day period for teaching writing does not allow her sufficient time to treat editing seriously. She identifies editing to be the last stage in the developmentally-based composing process. We might suggest, however, that in a totally individualized curriculum Geri could begin to study her editing problems fairly early in the ninety day term.)

The style and tenor of Fran's commentary reinforces Geri's desire to experience her writing achievements and failures not as rewards and punishments but as information. Geri uses this information selectively. It is enough for Fran that Geri, like Fran herself, treats writing as a way of knowing.

The test of Geri's and other students' success at using sufficient detail in describing Joni's process demonstration comes on Tuesday,
December 18th, the final school day before Christmas vacation. Groups of students evaluate one another's papers. Joni is available to her classmates as a "grading consultant." Here once again Fran makes an effort to implant in students' minds the idea of writing for audiences other than the teacher. Peer assessment is designed by Fran to increase students' powers to read critically and aimed ultimately to encourage pupils to assume major responsibility for providing their own feedback.

The group in which I participate shows little ability or motivation to evaluate their classmates' writing. Derrick, Tami, and Greg silently pass back and forth among them the papers of Kim, Gregg, and Geri. They are ready to assign the papers a grade without discussing ways in which the respective essays succeed or fail. At my request, we analyze each paper's strengths and weaknesses, focusing upon the criterion, "Is the paper composed in such a way that somebody who had absolutely no experience with the process being described (repotting a plant) could successfully carry out that process?". Following Fran's directive, all technical errors—spelling and punctuation mistakes, improper capitalization, and so on—are counted against the writer only if those errors interfere with the essay's meaning, impairing the reader's ability to perform the transplanting task. This analysis hopefully will enhance students' skill at writing a "how to" paper on a topic of their own choosing, which is precisely the writing Fran will ask her Intermediate Composition students to do when they return from their Christmas vacation.

For a week upon their return to class, students work on their process papers. Topics selected include giving a hair permanent, conditioning
oneself for football, washing a car, and making apple butter. The pro-
cedure is a familiar one by now: students do a ten-minute writing on
their respective subjects and then compose a first draft, sharing the
latter with their peers and Fran. Fran collects the essays, comments on
them, and passes them back to students. Next, students compose their
final draft in class where Fran can assist individual writers. Fran
then gathers the papers once more, reads them without marking them, and
redistributes the papers for student group grading. The papers are
collected yet a third time, commented upon by Fran, and returned to their
authors. The significant mechanical shortcomings in this set of essays
as a whole is what prompts Fran to institute the unsuccessful three-week
"mini cram course" on grammar and usage alluded to earlier in this chapter.

Fran concludes the semester with a final examination requiring stu-
dents to write either a personal narrative or a process paper. Fran sets
aside class time for pupils to confer with her about their writing. Joni
wants to know if she can revise one of her earlier essays addressing the
assigned topics. Fran answers affirmatively, telling the class: "I want
to encourage as much rewriting as possible." Some students see this as
an opportunity to get an easy grade and say essentially just that to me
and to their friends in the class. Other individuals with a different
purpose in mind work diligently to create an original composition or to
expand, modify, and otherwise reformulate a previous composition.

The final examination format does not require students to regurgitate
a codified body of information transmitted by the teacher sometime earlier
in the semester. Fran has in fact structured the assignment so that
Individuals can practice and refine written communication strategies and also discover new information. While Fran recognizes that any writing done for an examiner audience most probably contains some element of constriction in it, she tries to mitigate the stifling testing effect by allowing for self-initiated writing. Thus even in the sole examination given the entire term, Fran's interactionist pedagogy is crafted "...to enable students to imagine the kind of relation between themselves and their world that allows them to turn their experience into 'subject matter' and to define a relationship with that subject that makes creative thinking possible."\textsuperscript{17} In this way, Fran hopes her Intermediate Composition students will truly come to relate to writing as a way of knowing.
CHAPTER FOUR

NOTES

1. To protect students' identities, only first names will be used. Different spellings of the same sounding name—Brian and Bryan, Greg and Gregg, and Mark and Marc—and also name variations such as Phil and Phillip indicate different people.


3. When citing participants' talk, the use of single quotation marks in this chapter indicates a paraphrase as opposed to a verbatim transcript of teacher or student comment.

4. Throughout the dissertation, I attempt to represent as precisely as possible all features of students' original handwritten manuscripts, preserving misspellings, punctuation errors, improper paragraphing, etc. Student writer idiosyncrasies, such as the use of all capital letters, have been left intact.


6. Rowntree, p. 32.

7. The framework proposed here does not represent a theoretical construct meant to explain in full why students reacted to Fran's commentary as they did and to predict the basis on which other pupils in other types of writing classes will utilize teacher evaluation. Rather, the framework should be construed as a theme which aids in describing, structuring, and interpreting events that occurred in this one particular Intermediate Composition class.
The to get/to be/to do/to become scheme was strongly suggested by students in their discussion of their feelings about writing and their description of their uses of teacher evaluation. Pupils composing activity and the written work they produced reinforced the theme. Moreover, the scheme fit with Fran's understanding of the teaching of writing and student writing performance. When I first presented the framework to Fran to test its viability, she immediately remarked: "Jim is a prime example of a 'to be' student while Geri definitely uses my evaluation and related to writing in the 'to become' mode." I myself had already identified Jim and Geri to operate in precisely this manner.

Lasker and deWindt developed a scheme of this sort to explain "apparent stage related differences about new knowledge and learning are conceived, about educational motives, about teacher and learner roles, and about institutional function" (p. 55). The four modes of operating signify increasingly advanced stages of ego development. See Harry M. Lasker and James F. Moore, Current Stages of Adult Development: Implications for Education (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University, 1979).

I am not postulating that student use of teacher-written commentary is necessarily developmental in this way, although I am not dismissing the possibility, either. The analogy seems to falter when we consider that some students preferring a loosely structured learning exchange (and thus, by definition, at an advanced stage of ego development) produce inferior writing as compared to that composed by individuals favoring a tightly-structured learning exchange (and hence who are at a lower stage of ego development).

John Warnock, in discussing evaluation and its bearing on writing growth, comments: "The student who wants to write, not just for food pellet or gold star, but for the sake of writing well is well on the way to maturity. He must be able to see, however, that writing does give competence, and that he is capable of achieving that competence." John Warnock, "New Rhetoric and the Grammar of Pedagogy," in Freshmen English News 5 (Fall 1976): 16.


9. Britton et al. write of expressive language: "It appears to be the means by which the new is tentatively explored, thoughts are half uttered, attitudes half expressed, the rest being left to be picked up by the listener, or reader, who is willing to take the unexpressed on trust" (p. 11). The authors also note "...that until a child does write expressively he is failing to feed into the writing process the fullness of his linguistic resources..." (p. 8). See James Britton et al., The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18) (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1975).

10. See Britton et al., especially pp. 93-105 and 175-190.


15. Dusel, p. 396.


CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Summary of the Study

The general research question for this study was: How does teacher evaluation of students' writing function for individual learners?. I conducted an eighteen week participant-observation study of one eleventh-grade Intermediate Composition class in a desegregated Columbus city high school. The teacher of this class, Fran Spratley, agreed to collaborate with me on the inquiry. Collaboration entailed Fran's helping me to gather and interpret evidence and my aiding her in turn to design, implement, and reflect on her instruction.

I sought to investigate a particular kind of writing class, namely, one that was interactionist in nature. The interactionist composition teacher conceptualizes writing to be a dynamic, recursive process developed best when students work with their own writing texts. Considerable opportunity to compose personal, reflexive discourse precedes or at least accompanies practice in extensive (transactional) writing. Students share their work with one another, composing several drafts of assigned papers
on which both classmates and the instructor comment. The teacher evaluates descriptively, withholding judgmental criticism (and grades) until reading students' final drafts. Not all finished copies are graded, but when they are, often times students evaluate their peers' composition. The teacher uses evaluation in an effort to enter into sustained dialogue with pupils. The dialogue itself functions as one means by which the teacher cultivates interpersonal relationships with students. Co-learning ideally characterizes the majority of teacher-student interaction.

Interactionist instruction "...allows students to experience the possibilities for conceptualizing a given writing situation on their own terms...[so that they] initiate and participate in the process by which they and their subjects are transformed."¹ The interactionist thus does not prescribe standardized writing rules for all students to commit to memory. Nor does the teacher with an interactionist orientation equate drill in error elimination with the teaching of writing. Error is important to the interactionist because it is an essential part of the composing process--students learn from their mistakes. But knowing how to avoid error and when to apply rules does not necessarily engender the process out of which good writing emerges.

Fran was familiar with the interactionist approach to teaching writing and expressed a deep commitment to it. She appeared dedicated to creating for students a curriculum within which they could explore writing as a complex, knowledge-generating, self-realizing activity.

Together, Fran and I selected an afternoon Intermediate Composition class of thirty-one students to examine. Many of the students attended
vocational classes in the morning, arriving mid-day at Counts High to take their academic complement of courses. The group was heterogeneous in race and gender. As the semester unfolded, students displayed a wide range of scholastic and personal interests and an equally impressive array of writing aptitudes.

The Columbus city school curriculum manual defines Intermediate Composition as a one-semester course in the basics of expository writing, featuring study of

...sentence structure and variety, development of topic sentences, logical paragraph development and transitional devices... Students will begin with a review of the paragraph... and end the course joining two, three, and more paragraphs together into coherent themes.2

Fran's notion of Intermediate Composition deviated from this description. My own experience both as a high school English teacher and observer of secondary school English classes lead me to believe that the approach to writing Fran articulated, if implemented, might present many of her pupils with a novel curricular experience.3

Broadly sketched, then, this was the situation I encountered in researching the matter of how teacher-written commentary in the interactionist classroom functions for individual students. Five working questions guided my inquiry:

1. In what ways do students use teacher commentary on their writing?
2. What are the effects of teacher assessment on students' perceptions of their writing progress?
3. How do teacher-learner relationships influence individuals' performance in composition?
4. Descriptively speaking, of what does teacher-written evaluation consist?
5. How might we explain why this particular teacher evaluates as she does?

Findings related to each of these five questions will now be reviewed.

Findings
Student Use of Teacher Commentary

Students in Fran's Intermediate Composition class put her written commentary to a variety of uses. It appears that pupils' response to teacher evaluation may be in some measure a function of learners' writing motivation. The motivation itself has often been shaped by students' previous experience with school-sponsored writing.

A significant majority of Fran's students express powerfully negative feelings toward their past English classes. Students protest that English composition invariably amounts to a game requiring them to produce exactly what the teacher expects to read, both in terms of form and content. Kim says of her English teachers: "They know it all and so you write what they know [as best you can]." More often than not in this situation, writing is a losing proposition for pupils. Laura acknowledges that she feels at a "disadvantage" because the teacher inevitably knows more about the assigned subject than she. Clearly, writing in this type of instruction is not designed to foster knowledge creation and self discovery. School writing in fact usually has very little to do with idea generation, students note. They report consistently that good writing has meant for their previous English teachers "correct" writing, i.e., proper grammar,
correct spelling, accurate punctuation, and standard usage. The primary purpose in composing is "to get it right."

It is hardly surprising to find, then, that a number of students in Fran's class exhibit this inclination, despite Fran's demonstrated reluctance to value a specific content or to grade mechanics. Of course many of these students, probably not only by habit but by desire, are motivated to secure extrinsic rewards—a good grade or the teacher's approval—and so try to use Fran's written commentary to this end. Fran, however, is less concerned with the product than the process; she is less interested in the short term and instrumental (a good, mechanically clean copy of a paper showing little substantive revision) than the long term and developmental (a composition evincing creative reworking). Fran thus generally does not reinforce students who read her commentary primarily for the purpose of finding clues enabling them to get a good grade or to be a model student.

There are other students in the class who use Fran's evaluation as a problem-solving aid. The evaluation works on two distinct levels here. On one level, Fran's written comments help a student overcome a particular rhetorical weakness in that individual's composition. On another level, Fran's remarks provide the student advice helping him or her to sort out personal problems. In the latter instance, student use of teacher commentary is not writing related. Fran supports this response to her evaluation because she is interested in promoting writing as a means of development. Writing can actually change the individual by organizing
...more clearly for the writer himself whatever perceptions he has about the world he lives in and his own relation to it. ... [Writing] enables him to select and hold for closer contemplation aspects of his own experience which can be scanned for particular features—sorted into logical or chronological order, rearranged for his own satisfaction, invested with particular feelings and so on. This process of personal selection, contemplation and differentiation is very important, because it changes the writer; he is a different person when he has done it, because now he has articulated a feeling or a thought or an attitude more clearly, or seen how a bit of his experience fits into the pattern which he is gradually building up for himself; in other words, he is more conscious than he was.4

Students referring to Fran's evaluation in order to do more competent writing overall or to become "more conscious" individuals report that they find many valuable suggestions in Fran's commentary. These internally motivated students appear to interpret teacher remarks as information to be used in developing not only their writing but their personal and social competence as well. By contrast, learners who are more dependent on approval from external sources of authority, that is, whose motivation is extrinsic, seem to read Fran's evaluation as an absolute judgment on the worth of their performance. Teacher evaluation becomes a matter of punishment or reward.

It is critical to note that we should not expect any individual to be motivated solely by intrinsic interests. Nor is it likely that the student who relies heavily on grades and teacher approval will be motivated by extrinsic reward alone. A more realistic image of learners' writing incentive pictures individuals as acting on a combination of...
intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Geri is a prime example of a writer who operates with a number of purposes. Geri acknowledges that writing proficiency can help a person "get a good job." Because she wants productive employment, Geri tries to write effectively, interpreting teacher commentary as a means to help her meet standards. But Geri does not seem overly concerned about the grade any of her papers will receive. She believes writing can develop her creativity and sense of self, and often looks to Fran's evaluation to catalyze this growth. Given Geri's overall performance, we can conclude she responds to Fran's commentary primarily in what has been labeled a to become mode. But secondary motivations are apparent.

Geri's written work invariably earns high marks and teacher praise. Perhaps Geri does not worry about feedback of this sort because she has passed through a to get/to be motivational stage. Repeated success on the performance level possibly frees her to concentrate on deeper level competencies. It is conceivable that mastery over basic transcription skills and the mechanics of composition (which in and of themselves, according to Geri, typically elicit good grades from English teachers) is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the learner to bring a to do/to become orientation to the composing process. In any case, it is obvious that Geri does not "literalize" Fran's instruction. Geri resists converting Fran's commentary into rigid writing rules. She uses Fran's evaluation to help her develop the sense of what she is trying to say in a manner congenial to her personal style of expression.
Geri and a few other pupils in the class appear capable of what Sondra Perl and Arthur Egendorf call "retrospective and projective structuring," which "refer to the alternating postures writers assume in composing, and from which they creatively discover what they want to say... ." Retrospective structuring is a writer-based phenomenon: "It is the feature of the composing process that builds on the writer's sense of what needs to be said in order for the text to make sense to the reader." Projective structuring is a reader-based activity; it presupposes some capacity to edit—to judge discourse objectively and apply formal rules. To structure projectively, the writer must anticipate the reader's needs. Projective structuring "relies on the cultivation of aesthetic distance, on the ability to view one's writing as an artifact and to assess its formal characteristics."

Many students in Fran's Intermediate Composition class do not possess these structuring skills. Jeff is a striking example. Jeff's total preoccupation with grammar and spelling render him incapable of composing for more than two to five minutes at a stretch. Perl and Egendorf offer a penetrating analysis of the problem afflicting students such as Jeff:

What seems particularly unskilled about the way these students write is that they apply prematurely a set of rigid and critical rules for editing to their written products. As a consequence they frequently lose track of what they mean by becoming caught up in correcting details on grammatical or logical grounds before they have clearly sensed and expressed in some form what they mean to say. To state the problem differently, these writers act as if they believed that the form of what arises through creative discovery must immediately conform to a priori specifications for acceptable
products. The premature application of such rigid rules thwarts the very process through which these students might eventually produce more refined products. The result is a fragmented, disjointed text.9

Most unaccomplished writers in Fran's class seem to want to get good grades or to be model pupils. For these students, writing is a body of knowledge residing in a teacher or course textbook. Jim and Tami, Kim and Phil, Sherri and Sharon, Rick and Craig—these pupils and others try to find in Fran's evaluation pat prescriptions leading to "correct" expression. When they cannot locate this information in Fran's remarks on their papers, they seek it from her in face-to-face conversation. This group of students has been taught that good writing means "correct" writing. Writing for them is not a creative act, a complex skill to be nurtured, but a mechanical, instrumental behavior. They look to Fran's evaluation to provide ready-made solutions to their writing problems.

Unfortunately, the writing problems of unskilled writers defy simple remedy. Basic writers typically need to engage in sustained practice externalizing ideas by putting words down on paper until thought on a topic is exhausted. Simultaneously, these writers must develop sensitivity to the process which made their writing happen. All this takes place on the level of retrospective structuring. But in addition, unskilled writers need to recognize "that one does not 'polish' a text by a more or less mechanical application of rules so much as by carrying forward, clarifying and differentiating what one means to say through the operations of projective structuring."10 A student such as Tami, however, who reads Fran's comments "...to see what I did wrong and [to] make sure I do it
right the next assignment," is a long way from utilizing Fran's evaluation to facilitate projective structuring.

Varying learner motivations and understandings of the composing process help account for the fact that students refer to different sources of teacher evaluation. Pupils desiring good grades and relating to composition as a mechanical act often respond to the most immediate, visible features of Fran's evaluation. From one assignment to the next, they key in on Fran's most literal, directive comments appearing on their papers. This group of students might also turn to Fran's assignment directions or her own writing samples to see them through the required writing task. Other pupils in the class base much of their writing on learnings they acquire from Fran's classroom instruction. Still other students appear to act in independent ways, rarely referring to any facet of Fran's instruction that could conceivably contain some evaluative content. There is a twofold conclusion to make: students selectively attend to Fran's commentary on their writing, and students use different teacher information to help them generate and edit composition. Students' writing motivations seem to play a part in this selective attention to teacher-written commentary and differential use of teacher information. Changes Fran's students make in their writing are far more complex a matter than direct, automatic response to teacher's written evaluation stimulus.
Teacher Evaluation and Its Effects on Student Perception of Their Writing Progress

For at least the first two months of the school year, Fran uses her evaluation in large part to induce students to write copiously. Her commentary on student papers includes emoting, suggesting, and questioning. On occasion, she challenges what students write. Fran actually grades very little of what she reads. When she does grade students' writing, she chooses an alternative to the conventional letter grading system and invites pupils to share grading responsibility with her. She makes every effort to personalize evaluation, and by involving students in the process, attempts to "reveal evaluation for what it is: an important personal and social act that helps us [students and teachers alike] plan for the future."

Most learners are unfamiliar with this approach to evaluation. Peer grading is new to them. The great majority of Fran's Intermediate Composition pupils have come to expect correction to be the dominant type of teacher-written commentary appearing on their papers. This correction in students' eyes typically pertains to how they have presented their information and not to what they have written. Students explain that they are accustomed to having almost all of their writing graded. Trent, a normally soft-spoken student in Fran's class, impugns traditional school evaluation:

All my other teachers (English especially) have never Let me write what I want to write because they always say this can't be right because Its not exactly the way they expect it To be. They say No you don't want To say that! or This should be changed! Bullshit!! I know what I write and if I write It its right. Now corrections in spelling, Grammar, sentence structure, etc. ... Cool These are Things That need
To be corrected. But seriously, I have Teachers
Totally change everything in a Paper. I mean
Totally put in their words and Then say "Now this
is the right way it should be." That's one thing
that has always pissed me off is being Told I'm
wrong when By every means I know I'm Right.

When teacher comment simply corrects (or indicates via symbols)
student writers' mistakes, students measure their progress—if they do
so at all—by tallying the number of marks on a paper and comparing that
figure to the total number of errors cited on their previous essay. A
more direct way to judge progress, say students, is to compare grades
from one assignment to the next. The idea of progress in this set-up
is purely quantitative: fewer marks or higher grades mean better writing.
Freedom from error becomes the sole principle for gauging writing growth.
Insofar as grades are concerned, students content grading occurs relative
to classmates' performance. Hence the image of progress students derive
from plotting grades does not measure writing development in individual
terms.

Fran aims to promote writing progress by encouraging students to
focus on their own writing development. She is oriented toward appraising
individual progress as opposed to progress in relation to others. Students
do not appear to accept Fran's evaluation emphasis entirely. Throughout
the semester, pupils compare graded papers, even though Fran has advised
the class that little information if any about individual achievement and
progress can be culled from such comparison.

Other than marking a couple of free writing assignments ✓+, ✓, ✓−
(equivalent to excellent, fair, poor, respectively), Fran does not give
any grades the first six weeks of the term. Students are asked to do no formal, transactional writing during this period. They concentrate on journal work and other forms of expressive writing. This curriculum allows Fran to focus on the individual writer—to note the range of ideas conveyed in a student's journal entries, the depth to which ideas are explored, the frequency with which the student composes, and so on.

Fran does not hesitate to acknowledge student writing excellence when she sees it. Yet she plays up each individual's ability to compose quality discourse. When Joni in one of her journal entries praises Geri's writing, Fran comments in this way: (See Illustration 8)

The bulk of Fran's commentary on writing done early in the year and throughout the semester stresses individual achievement and potential. Her commentary also maps strategies writers can adopt to improve the efficacy of their written communication. Students appreciate this evaluation. Val lauds Fran's approach:

I really feel I have improved in my English this year... and only because you were concerned and you were always willing to comment on student papers. Marking a paper wrong is one thing but telling a person where they went wrong and how to go about doing the right way is a whole different story. You've really made my English a success this year and I really appreciate it.

The individualized, personalized nature of Fran's evaluation influences students such as Val to regard their writing progress in terms of new strategies they feel they have learned to apply to the composing task. There are many other distinct measures of writing progress to which students refer, including
Geri writes so good. I Love to read what she writes. She Has a folder at home that she keeps her writing in. She Let me read once. It's great. She's so talented. I wish I could do what she does on paper. But it never comes out quite right—it just doesn't flow the way her does. mine Has Lots of Bumps in it. I'll never be able to write Like her. But I will allways try to find the kind of writting that suits me Best. I Don't know what it is yet But I'm Looking. good

She's also very experienced. There's nothing like doing something to become good at it. Not much magic, but a lot of writing. Practice! Practice! Belief in self!
• the enhanced composing fluency they have acquired (Jeff is exemplary in this respect);

• the sheer increase in the volume of writing they find themselves producing (witness Mike, who comments: "The class helped me a lot in writing more");

• their improved attitude toward the medium (Joyce exults: "Before writing was a chore. I like to write now");

• students' new-found ability to convey their feelings in writing (Joni states: "I learned more this year about expressing my feelings on paper. Before if I wrote something it never came out the way I wanted it to. It was always sort of not clear. Something that if I had to read, wouldn't find it interesting. Now it's getting better");

• their increased effectiveness at dealing with their problems on their own grounds (explained by Kim as follows: "...Ms. Spratley let me write out my frustrations and problems and let me use the language I wanted. As a result, I feel I have progressed and done better in this class than any English class I have ever had");

• pupils' growing sense of competency resulting from a budding awareness of the composing process (Christy writes: "In the past years it has been hard for me to write my thoughts on paper. Your [Ms. Spratley's] comments on my journal really help me out. I really do think that this course helps me in what and how to write my thoughts on a piece of paper").

While much of the student writing quoted throughout this dissertation suggests that Fran's Intermediate Composition class would definitely benefit from additional intensive writing instruction, students themselves are generally pleased with their progress. In some instances it appears as if students confuse an improved attitude toward writing with tangible
improvement in the products they craft. My impression is that most of Fran's pupils overestimate their progress in this regard. (Fran, it should be noted, never really provides students with a well-articulated approach for measuring writing growth.) Nonetheless, it is critical to recognize that all of the psychological factors which students discuss in commenting on their development as writers, e.g., expressing feelings, getting thoughts down on paper, and feeling more positive about writing, are in interactionist theory essential elements for writers to control. Even if students do not immediately realize they are analyzing their composing processes, getting learners to talk about writing progress in these terms is significant. The style and substance of Fran's evaluation has communicated to students that although mechanical correctness in writing is important and rules for editing at some point indispensable, the "rules for judging products must not be confused with the guidelines for producing such products." ¹²

Teacher-Student Relationship and Its Influence on Student Writing Performance

There are numerous events throughout the semester demonstrating that a quality interpersonal relationship between Fran and an individual pupil will inspire that student to do more (and often, from the student's point of view, better) writing. Val highlights the importance of teacher-student relationship as an influence on pupil performance when she says that she feels she improved her composition "...only because you [Ms. Spratley] were concerned... ." (underlining mine) Mark writes regularly for the first
time ever in his English classes because he believes he can write "what's really on my mind." Geri is relieved not "to have to worry about a bitchy teacher" who stifles free expression. Derrick reacts positively to the respect Fran shows him and to the fact that "the teacher didn't run everything." Fran's interest in Jim and the reinforcement she gives him prompts Jim to "change my opinion of writing from bad to good." "It was a good course," he writes. "It didn't seem like a prison. That makes a better learning environment." The consensus among students is that a teacher who shows authentic care for their writing genuinely cares for students as individual human beings. Such caring "helps you to feel positive about your writing," Tara remarks emphatically.

While Phil generally liked the course, noting he relished not being "...taught like elementary kids," any dispute Phil has with Fran during the semester causes him to reject her instruction for an indefinite period of time. Larry expresses great dissatisfaction with Fran's teaching methods: "Journals were stupid. Students grading papers is ridiculous." Larry resists participating in class activities and shuns Fran's commentary on his work. The relationship between Fran and Larry is so poor in fact that the two agree on a class transfer for Larry at the conclusion of the term. Just as a good relationship between teacher and student fosters favorable writing conditions, so does a poor relationship contaminate the writing environment.

Frank Whitehead asserts that

The real problem that the teacher of English has to face is not how to supply his pupils with 'matter' to write about; it is rather
how to develop within the classroom a climate of personal relationships within which it becomes possible for them to write about the concerns which already matter to them intensely.\textsuperscript{13}

Fran believes her course content, pedagogical method, and evaluation all contribute to classroom environment. She consciously decides to use student writing as the course text(s) and to adapt a facilitative instructional role. She works very hard to build a climate of trust, reassuring her Intermediate Composition students that they do indeed have something meaningful to say in writing. Her evaluation displays respect for student language, experience, opinion, and their right to compose for audiences other than a teacher. Many Intermediate Composition students are comfortable in this ambiance and enter into positive interpersonal relationships with Fran and an active involvement with the course activities. But some pupils do not value what Fran attempts to do and react negatively toward her and her curriculum. Students such as Larry who do not relate well to Fran's instruction or to her personally miss class frequently, make the minimum number of required entries in their journals, are often seen to file papers in their folders without even glancing at Fran's commentary, and generally just do not invest themselves in the Intermediate Composition course.

A Description of Teacher Commentary on Student Writing

We have seen how Fran reluctantly corrects students' writing. She never marks error in student journals and waits two full months into the
academic term before noting mistakes on pupils' compositions. Correcting for Fran means indicating that the form a student writer has used is wrong. Fran either underlines the incorrect form and inscribes a suggested alternative over it or crosses out the form, inserting one she deems preferable.

The first time Fran corrects student themes she also records a few significant patterns of individual writers' error on 3×5 cards, one card per pupil. Students subsequently use their card to direct two separate weeks of individualized laboratory work, practicing everything from sentence structure to spelling. Fran does not herself refer to the cards on a regular basis.

Correction constitutes a small portion of Fran's commentary on students' written work. Major elements of her evaluation include emoting, questioning, and suggesting.14

In emoting to what students write, Fran shows herself as a reader with genuine human interests, concerns, and biases (a stark contrast, students acknowledge, to the dispassionate, ostensibly value-free English teacher for whom they are used to writing). Emoting entails

- reinforcing what the student writes, occurring when Fran indicates with a "Yes" or "Great!" or "I too love Christmas" that she agrees with the author's statement;

- sharing an experience or feeling Fran has had coincident with or perhaps in contrast to the one the author has described--for example, Fran taking exception to Joni's generalizations about Blacks and telling her about her own friendship with a Black woman.
Emoting is a teacher-based activity in the sense that the teacher generates commentary without requiring written response from students. When Fran functions in a questioning or suggesting evaluative mode, however, she shifts the burden of work to learners, who she expects will revise their writing in light of the specific question or suggestion Fran poses to the individual writer.

Questions Fran raises invariably ask students for more information beyond that which they have provided initially in their compositions. These questions can be direct, one-word queries, almost rhetorical in nature—"Who?," "When?," "Where?"—calling for addition of limited, discrete bits of information. Other questions embodied in Fran's commentary invite a student to reconsider an entire passage or line of thought manifest in the writing.

Suggesting is another type of remark evident in Fran's commentary. Sometimes her suggestions are directive and appear to become almost a blueprint for students' writing. On a rare occasion, a comment Fran makes in this mode literally assigns the writer to follow-up on a point of fact. For example, when Sherri writes in her work profile of Phil, "I guess before all of this he went to Ohio State for three years of law enforcement," Fran remarks on Sherri's paper, "Find out for sure." In most instances, however, Fran's comments in the suggestion mode seem to provide students with practical composing strategies without dictating the exact shape or content of their written products. She tells Brian on his descriptive narrative to "Make the reader know there is another car coming at you" and encourages Joyce on one of her free writing selections to "add detail... ."
Much here could refer to sense of touch and sound." Fran's suggestions are generally of the type professional editors make to their client-writers.

Fran mixes emoting, questioning, and suggesting in a major consolidated comment she typically includes at the end of students' papers. When remarking on journals and ten-minute writings, Fran's end comments are predominantly emotive. Questioning and suggesting prevail in her end comments on students' work profile, narrative, and process papers.

Insofar as grades are concerned, Fran grades only final drafts of formal, non-journal writing assignments. She uses numbers (1=excellent, 2=fair, 3=poor) in place of conventional letter grades. Fran specifies the success criteria for each assignment. Students share the grading responsibility with Fran. Phil grades his classmates' work profile papers. Joni evaluates students' essays on "Repotting a Plant." On other occasions, students group-grade each others' writing. Fran reviews the marks students affix to their peers' work. Although it appears learners do not always abide by the stipulated grading criteria, Fran usually leaves the student-assigned grades intact.

Fran contends she grades in terms of individual and not relative progress. It is difficult to imagine that she never in her own mind compares students' work. But Fran's commentary on student papers is consistently individualized. Her comments discuss writers' performance in reference to personal achievement and progress (or lack of it); she never directly compares students' writing.

In total, Fran's written evaluation on students' writing is designed first to give students information about how their messages affect Fran
as reader and secondly to expand writers' options by supplying or di-
recting them to new knowledge—knowledge about language forms, composing
strategies, or how to interpret one's lived experience. Neither Fran's
style of commenting on students' writing nor her system of grading appear
to encourage competition among pupils. (This lack of competition is
healthy for some, but not all eighth-period Intermediate Composition
students.) Students are nearly unanimous in their claim that Fran's
evaluation differs significantly from all other evaluation they have re-
ceived in their previous English coursework.

Why Fran Evaluates As She Does

Fran's classroom practice is informed by an interactionist theory of
writing and its instruction. An interactionist approach to the teaching of
writing suggests a course content (writers' texts), sequence of assignments
(from the personal, immediate, and concrete to the impersonal, distant, and
abstract), evaluation format (dialogical, formative, individualized, and,
ideally, non-graded), and pattern of teacher-student relationship (non-
authoritarian; collegial, where possible).

Fran is herself a writer. She understands composing to be a dynamic
activity fruitfully subject to personalized work routines and strategies.
Most fundamentally for Fran, writing is a creative process. It is also
"a way of organizing the world by becoming aware of how our minds perceive
it." Fran cherishes writing for its developmental power: it offers
"a way of fashioning a network of associations and increasing our potential
Fran is aware that many competing philosophies of composition exist. Richard Fulkerson has delineated four such philosophies: expressive, rhetorical, mimetic, and formalist. Each philosophy implies a set of criteria for judging writing. An expressive philosophy emphasizes the writer, and in appraising composition, values above all else "an interesting, credible, honest and personal [writer's] voice." Journals are a mainstay in the expressivist's curriculum. Rhetorical philosophy stresses reader effect. Good writing is that which is adapted expertly to the needs of its audience. A verbal artifact directed to two different audiences must be evaluated on two different standards. Mimetic philosophy emphasizes verisimilitude. Writing is evaluated based on its correspondence to the "real world." A mimetic approach teaches logic and reasoning, for it wants the writer to avoid misrepresentation of the world and to know that "a fallacy is fallacious because it contradicts what we accept as truth." Finally, formalist (also called "objectivist") philosophy judges writing essentially on its form. More important than the writer, reader, or reality which a piece of writing reflects is the composition's internal consistency. Writing can be evaluated on its own terms. A common type of formalist philosophy promotes the idea that good writing is "correct" writing.

Fran recognizes that these philosophies are abstractions and are rarely applied to the high school composition class in pure form. Fran typically looks for a fresh, lively author's voice when evaluating writing and yet in her descriptive narrative assignment seems to value equally
mimesis, that is, the degree to which students' stories reflect reality. Knowing that these different composition philosophies exist enables Fran to avoid what Fulkerson calls "modal confusion," which occurs when a teacher judges a writing assignment from any of the philosophically-based evaluative perspectives not implied in the assignment itself.  

For each of her assignments, Fran delineates evaluation criteria. In any event, Fran's interactionist framework does not lead to a rigidly codified body of evaluative criteria. She modifies her assessment standards according to the nature of the writing assignment, admitting that she hopes to see all student writing suffused with a sense of authorial voice.

To cultivate writers' voices and natural language powers, Fran asks students to do a great deal of expressive writing. In this mode, learners use the language of their everyday conversation. Fran believes that success in transactional and poetic writing depends on acquiring a prior competence in the expressive mode. Fran desires to enhance students' abilities to conceive their own experience as subjects worth writing about and thus encourages them to focus on personal thoughts, feelings, opinions, recollection of events, etc. She then does not correct slang, colloquialisms, or common mechanical errors appearing in students' expressive (journal and ten-minute) writing because she wants to support unconditionally students' effort to exploit their own language resources. In this manner, Fran expects to build the individual writer's confidence.

Mina Shaughnessy notes that writing

...is, above all, an act of confidence, an assertion of the importance of what has gone
on inside the writer, an exhibition of his thoughts or experiences. The student who mistrusts his thoughts or cannot locate them is hardly in a position to write about them.22

Fran is of an identical persuasion, which explains in large measure why she assigns so much expressive writing at the beginning of the term and why she does not grade or even correct this writing.

One of the evaluation principles to which Fran adheres is to match her evaluation to the composing stage the piece of writing under consideration represents. This, too, helps to explain why Fran resists grading or correcting the expressive writing she assigns at the beginning of the year. Journal and free writing present opportunities for students to flesh out ideas, test thoughts, experiment with new language forms, and so on. Polished essays ready for public consumption do not get produced in the expressive mode, which is a kind of drafting stage of composing. Fran reasons that her role as evaluator of students' expressive discourse is to provide commentary developing students' verbal fluency and not their editorial skill.

Overall, Fran feels that as evaluator she must first value what student writers are attempting to say and only then appraise the total effectiveness of the discourse. Fran emotes as much as she does on students' work for just this reason—to show writers she understands and appreciates their communication, even if it violates some of the conventions of edited American English. In this regard, Fran invokes Louise Phelps, who writes

One value I am afraid we do not consistently transfer to student drafts is our scrupulous respect for the literary text and the author's
purpose... . We attribute to the writer rationality, purpose, even a kind of esthetic morality or good will. In reading student texts, we should offer the same degree of time, effort, and respect, though for a different reason: not because the drafts exhibit all these qualities or deserve such attention necessarily, but because the potential they express is worthy of it. Such respect leads us to treat problems in thinking and writing as the result of specific gaps in knowledge or skills, inexpertise, maybe immaturity—but not irrationality, random and unmotivated actions, and immoral laziness as many comments written on student papers imply.

Fran openly admits that, like Phelps, she finds the traditional concepts of composition and their attendant evaluation devices are "...pitifully limited and... actually inhibit good reading. ...thesis, thesis-statement, topic sentence, and the labels for methods of paragraph development, have become cliches which close off thought and lead us to deliver prepackaged judgments or prescriptive lectures instead of responding with sensitivity to a text." One element of this sensitivity entails individualizing evaluation. Fran believes that marking student composition primarily for error does not enable her to speak to the writer in terms of his or her individual learning potential. Fran thus reserves correction for final drafts and even at that marks only a few errors per composition. She feels that by offering liberal commentary on writers' communication as such she can individualize her evaluation and thereby promote students' development.

Not all students capitalize on evaluation aimed to develop them as writers. Many Intermediate Composition pupils are interested in short-term
objectives: good grades and/or teacher approval. Their commitment is to performance—manufacturing good products to meet the task demands of the moment—and not competence—becoming good writers over the long run. Although Fran senses that different individuals most probably respond to different types and amounts of teacher commentary, she does not ultimately tailor her evaluation in proportion to individuals' ability to use it.

Writing development as Fran views it is a slow, gradual process characterized by spurts of growth. She pictures writing development to proceed along several paths: from one mode of discourse (the expressive) to others (the transactional and poetic), from working with concrete data to managing abstractions successfully, from handling relatively simple concepts to dealing with more intricate, complex ones. Broadly speaking, the writer experiencing growth evolves, via "social and inter-individual experience," from an egocentric stage to one of decenteredness, progressively differentiating events in the world. Fran argues that in any case the eighty-seven days allotted to students for this course may not be sufficient time for them to develop as writers.

Fran feels truly constrained by the one semester time frame within which she must operate. She believes that school routine in general impinges on her instruction. Short class periods punctuated by frequent interruptions (such as public address announcements and messages from the principal's office), inflated teacher-pupil ratios (Fran teaches thirty-one students in eighth-period Intermediate Composition and 166 pupils overall), the fact that students are required to take up to six different classes per day, pupil evaluation which students say stresses error
elimination and conformity, the necessity to grade student progress and
the pressure to separate "good" pupils from "average" and "poor" ones—all these facets of school culture from Fran's perspective make it dif-
ficult for her to provide the kind of instruction she seeks to offer.
Evidence points to the possibility that part of the reason why Fran
hesitates grading writing, minimizes attention to error, asks students
for sustained work on a few topics rather than requiring them to complete
a constant stream of exercises, etc. is that she is reacting against
the fragmentation and test-saturated nature of school life.

Implications for Practice

Fran's instruction is shaped by her burgeoning interest in and commit-
ment to interactionist theory. Her approach to teaching writing repre-
sents only one of a multitude of pedagogies presently in use in the field.
The implications for practice reviewed in this section pertain to Fran
specifically and to other secondary school teachers of writing who see
themselves to be involved in the development of interactionist programs
of instruction. Teachers who do not advocate an interactionist approach
to the teaching of writing may not find the ensuing discussion relevant
to their classroom concerns. Similarly, those dealing with professional
writers or teaching in non-academic environments could confront such an
entirely different set of problems and constraints that the following
discussion might not be germane to their situations. I am advising only
that the suggestions I put forth not be read out of context.
First, then, giving students ample opportunity to compose in the expressive mode appears to be a sound, educational writing practice, even if the class is one in expository writing. Britton has mapped out a persuasive case for expressive writing on theoretical grounds. In actual practice, it does seem that journal and free writing can help students become more fluent, confident, reflective writers. Fran's Intermediate Composition students certainly respond favorably to expressive writing activities.

In expressive discourse, students ponder their "felt sense" of things. Perl and Egendorf advise that "...referring students to their felt sense of something is not to be confused with either sanctioning mindless emoting or violating the sanctity of private sentiments." Directing students to their "felt sense" is simply a way to help them capture their real feelings and probe into those sensations. The fundamentally non-threatening nature of expressive discourse--it is, after all, writing for the self--sets up conditions whereby students can uncover the heuristic power of the medium. They can learn that "writing is what makes discovery possible by creating the possibilities for discovery." Writing expressively, students can realize writing as a way of knowing. They might arrive at the understanding that, as poet William Stafford puts it, "a writer is not so much someone who has something to say as he is someone who has found a process that will bring about new things he could not have thought of if he had not started to say them."

The process of composing is of primary importance in an interactionist classroom. Emphasis is on helping students to find reliable ways to
express their thoughts as opposed to getting them to produce comparable products. Knowledge of the composing process itself may help to make writing happen. Nancy Sommers' research reveals, for example, that writers' control over the revision process correlates to their ability to articulate a theory of revision. David Bartholomae has had success improving the composition of basic college writers by asking them to describe their perspectives on such issues as: "What was writing like?," "How did you do it?," and "Who do you become by writing that?" A.K. Markova, in a newly-published text, has outlined a detailed language arts program including provisions for student reflection on their communication processes.

Fran's students do demonstrate some knowledge of the elements of the composing process when they talk about their writing improvement in relation to their ability to get started more easily, to write for sustained periods of time, and to bring their personal language resources to bear on problems of importance to them. But these same students do not seem aware of the fact that they are describing key variables in the composing process. Conscious reflection on a complex psychological function such as writing we know from Lev Vygotsky does not occur until the function has been practiced spontaneously and with regularity. Nevertheless, Markova has found that pupils in grades four through eight could benefit from such reflection. By the middle of the semester, Fran's Intermediate Composition students have done sufficient writing to begin talking together about what they experience when they write. Both Markova and Bartholomae provide questions useful for this kind of discussion, which they believe to be essential in an interactionist curriculum. Bartholomae
writes

So if it is true that a writer's performance is limited by his ability to imagine how writers behave, then the process of objectifying a composing style and measuring it against the styles of other writers, and against models of the composing process offered by the instructor, is one way of improving that performance.35

Markova has researched classes she helped create in which students reflect systematically on their communication. These classes stress cooperation between students in the form of such group activity as peer grading. Teacher marking gives way to peer evaluation as soon as students learn the means by which to comment on each others' work. Teacher grading is minimized because it undercuts "reflection...self-improvement, and...the cultivation of one's own personality."36

Markova describes teacher-student relationship in her experimental classrooms in terms of "cooperation and partnership between teacher and student... ."37 "Voluntariness" and self-initiated learning leading to "...expansion and enrichment of social historical experience by the individual's own contribution to it" are featured.38 Fran, too, seeks to enter into learning partnerships with her students. She hopes to foster voluntary action and knowledge creation. The fact that she must grade students' writing, however, undermines her effort. The roles of partner/developer and critic/grader are not compatible. Fran's relationships with students are finally less collegial than she would like.

School routine leads students to conclude that grading is teachers' responsibility, not students'. Seemingly nowhere in their school careers
have Fran's Intermediate Composition students encountered the idea that writing is not a "gradable" commodity. Most pupils reason that if errors can be counted and items in a textbook exercise marked right or wrong, then a grade can be assigned to their writing.

Fran's eighth-period students acknowledge they have done precious little authentic authoring of whole pieces of discourse. School writing for the large majority of these pupils has served mainly to test their recall of assigned reading material. The school day's short class periods, the amount of courses students take per day, the number of pupils with whom they compete for the teacher's attention in each class, the overriding emphasis on preparation for standardized tests, and, in this particular group of students, the pervasive bias for vocational study—all these factors make it difficult for Fran's students to experience the composing process in the ways people writing in the world outside school experience it.

James Moffett posits that the real authoring which the interactionist seeks to have students do implies "...radical changes in student [and teacher] role, classroom management and methods, parents' and administrators' heads, evaluation, and the whole atmosphere of schooling."Interactionist instruction does indeed amount to a reconceptualization of how and under what circumstances writing gets taught.

One interactionist-like program worth pursuing is the writing across the curriculum approach, where the English composition class as we know it is abandoned in favor of ongoing writing conferences and workshops. In this model, writing teachers act as full-time consultants. They
coach students—individually and in small groups—on the writing they have to do for other courses. Simultaneously, writing teacher-consultants advise the faculty, helping them to design assignments, improve evaluation techniques, and create school-wide a more hospitable environment for writing. Writing teachers working under this arrangement are compelled to focus on individual student texts and on the processes giving rise to those texts.

A second alternative deserving consideration is to experiment with innovative, carefully articulated courses such as the Markova or Moffett and Wagner curricula cited previously. These courses might best be implemented, replete with all the changes in institutional procedure they require, under action or collaborative research conditions. It is clear in any case that existing school routines cannot comfortably accommodate interactionist pedagogy. For Fran, in fact, the limitations of the Counts High system were confining enough to compel her to seek reassignment to a high school offering an alternative program of education.

Research Recommendations

A host of questions and recommendations on different issues of writing research emerge from this study. Recommendations I will make, several of which Fran helped to formulate, will include suggestions on research perspective, context, method, problem, and type.

A major finding of this study is that in Fran's interactionist composition course student use of teacher-written commentary on students' writing is not a simple matter of automatic response to written
evaluation stimulus. Many changes students make in their writing originate in sources other than reaction to teacher remarks appearing on students' papers. In Fran's class, student use of teacher-written evaluation is 1) a complex activity, 2) related to the whole of instruction, and 3) seemingly influenced by students' previous experience with school-sponsored writing. This three-part conclusion on student use of teacher commentary in the interactionist classroom gives rise to many of the ensuing research recommendations.

Fran's interactionist approach to the teaching of writing contrasts dramatically with the school writing instruction her students explain they are accustomed to receiving. In cases where students have not been exposed to interactionist pedagogy, we can anticipate an interactionist approach will introduce students to a radically new concept of writing and involve them in a novel classroom composition experience.

Student experience with the high school composition curriculum, be it interactionist or current-traditional in character, has not been detailed by researchers. The literature offers very little in the way of research into learners' viewpoints on school writing instruction. It is recommended that researchers carry out inquiry on student perspective in the hopes of constructing a realistic picture of insiders' experience. This research report would enlighten prospective teachers and enable established educators to make more informed decisions about the academic programs provided to students.

If from student writers' perspectives evaluation operates dynamically --as results from this study seem to indicate--then researchers must be
very cautious in concluding that a discrete intervention or treatment
in and of itself causes students to make a certain set of writing changes.
Without a fairly detailed description of context, it is difficult to
know exactly what combination of factors prompts students to alter their
writing. It is therefore recommended that inquiry into a specific in­
tervention's effect on students' uses of teacher commentary include a
precise description of the research context.

Beyond this recommendation for supplemental description in conven­
tional research reports, it is also suggested that researchers conduct
naturalistic, in-depth, qualitative study of students' uses of teacher-
written evaluation. While essays on "the composing process" abound in
contemporary composing theory literature, only a handful of studies over
the last decade have actually examined writers engaged in the writing
process. Most of this research confines writers to clinical settings or
requires them to compose aloud. Results are thus not applicable to
school writing situations, although readers are occasionally led to think
otherwise. Researchers are urged to study writers in contexts closely
approximating those to which findings will be applied.

Research into everyday classroom life will help us understand the
complexity of both composing processes and school writing evaluation dyna­
mics. Extant qualitative studies demonstrate that much of what happens in
the composing process is not amenable to quantification. The same holds
ture for describing and interpreting students' response to teacher-
written commentary. Qualitative research promises to increase the scope
of information available to us.
To carry out in-depth classroom studies of student uses of teacher commentary, we might ask such questions as: What teacher comments consistently attract students' attention? How could we classify such comments and explain their influence on students? What difference does the form, mode, and context in which comments are rendered make? Are conferences viable substitutes for teacher marking? Can peer commenting serve students equally as well as teacher marking? What kind of peer commenting systems are useful? Other important, global questions worth investigating are

What does their [students'] experience of writing seem to be teaching them about how one writes in school, what one writes for in school, and what happens to school writing when it is 'finished'? Is there any evidence to suggest that any of these pupils will like writing enough to become 'life-long' writers?  

A related recommendation to researchers examining student response to teacher evaluation calls for more extensive use of student writing. The preponderance of existing research derives its conclusions from analyses of one or two writing samples per research subject. This seems an insufficient amount of material on which to judge writing progress given any kind of developmental notion of composing whatsoever.

Research into writers' growth in the process skills of composing, e.g., increased ability to put thoughts down on paper, to sustain writing for longer periods of time, and to feel comfortable phrasing ideas in one's own personal style of expression, is in order. As students in Fran's class progressed in these areas, they gained writing confidence. We might
speculate that students' written products will ultimately reflect their growing confidence in handling the composing process. If we are going to present writing as a process to students, we need to identify elements of that process for them and to begin to research the effects of rewarding students for making gains in these process sub-skills.

Regarding student use of teacher commentary specifically, evidence in this study suggests there may be a developmental pattern to the phenomenon. Bechtel has discovered that differences in writing performance can be traced to differences in motivation (and testable verbal skill). Ego development researchers posit that different learning motivations reflect varying stages of personal development. We might design research that gets at the progressive use to which students put teacher-written commentary and appraise that use in relation to such variables as learning motivation, writing competence, and attitude toward schooling.

Overall development in writing does not necessarily happen in an academic quarter, semester, or year. Improvement research conducted within these time frames often fails to uncover significant results possibly due to the fact that writers did not have adequate time to develop. Long-range studies can be difficult to design and manage, but they are recommended—especially to researchers studying performance gains— because of their compatibility with the sporadic nature of most writing growth.

A.K. Markova's work involved multi-year, "evolutionary" research into language arts skill development of middle school youth. Evolutionary research is longitudinal and assesses the impact of theory on people when translated into practice. Evolutionary researchers create (with instructors'
assistance) the experimental classroom conditions they want to investigate; their inquiry approach is both a method and an "apparatus" that "...may be used as the foundation for a new curriculum to be widely used and tested in practice in the schools."^42

I have already mentioned that, in Markova's research project, students continuously reflected and reported on their language arts progress. This self-scrutiny could be a valuable aid to composition students. We have seen that Bartholomae believes it is important for students to analyze their experience of writing. Psychologists have long relied on the self-report as a tool to promote understanding and personal growth.^43 Student writers who report systematically on what they do when they compose could perhaps increase their insight into and eventual control over the composing process. Markova provides us with an excellent model for researching this hypothesis. Markova's approach in general (which actually dates back to the experimental study of Vygotsky) is highly recommended to researchers studying how new courses affect learners.

Collaborative research, it seems to me, is a functional strategy to use in conjunction with the Markova evolutionary approach because collaboration usually gives teachers significant decision-making power as to how theory will be adapted to their respective individual classrooms. The potential practical benefits accruing to teachers and students in collaborative research make it an attractive approach. Furthermore, good collaborative arrangements allow teachers to really challenge researchers' hypotheses. Methodologically speaking, collaborative study is recommended
to both researchers and practicing classroom teachers.

Finally, at some point in time, the relative effectiveness of all the various approaches to the teaching of writing should be assessed. It is recommended that comparison studies of the type Yatvin has conducted on elementary school writing programs be extended to the study of composition curricula in secondary schools and higher institutions of learning.

Some Personal Reflections on the Research Project

The collaborative classroom research Fran and I conducted is an entirely different type of enterprise from the experimental inquiry composition researchers typically perform. This project was also unusual from the standpoint of its being an implementation and investigation of a writing curriculum by all indications rarely found in high school composition programs. I offer some personal reflections here to highlight how I resolved problems encountered and to clarify for readers my sense of the potential value of this type of research project.

The chief concern the educational community at-large has with interpretive field study is its apparent lack of objectivity. Interpretation found in this dissertation does indeed contain elements of subjectivity, as is proper, given that we understand interpretation to be both an objective and subjective activity. The real problem with objectivity in any kind of field research comes when investigators presume to be value free and uninvolved. I made no such presumptions in this inquiry, heeding George Spindler, who writes

Attempts are frequently made, by experienced as well as inexperienced field workers, to be dispassionate observers. To be truly dispassionate
in a human community would be inhuman—a profound bias that does not enhance objectivity. A great stride toward objectivity is taken when personal involvement is acknowledged, for once acknowledged it can be recognized, to some extent controlled, and even utilized as a source of valuable data and insight. Ultimately we may understand the use of human perception, feeling, and experience as scientific instrumentation appropriate to the study of human life.46

I faced another possible objectivity problem this one being intrinsic to collaborative study. Particularly in cases where a close relationship between the researcher and collaborating teacher exists—as was the situation with Fran and me—reluctance to report negative evidence may result in biased inquiry. In this project, I believe our awareness of this potential problem helped Fran and me to overcome it. We looked carefully at unfavorable evidence and alternative interpretations. Fran's tolerance for close observation and her extraordinary desire to put interactionist theory to the test of practice enabled me to be unabashedly critical. A less resilient, less committed collaborator I do not believe could have accommodated the scrutiny to which I subjected Fran.

Fran gave unselfishly of her time to this study for nearly a year, granting me endless interviews, reading student papers with me, allowing me to join her for team planning of lessons, helping me to formulate hypotheses and to designate focal points for observation, and reviewing the research report. There were several occasions when I felt certain that research demands on her time diminished Fran's instructional effectiveness. Yet we both agree there were instances where yet additional meetings between us would have improved the quality of the eighth-period
interactionist curriculum. Both these situations caused some problems, and I can only think that teachers who take on research responsibilities should be given some special dispensation (release time, reduced class load, teacher aid support, financial remuneration) from their home schools.

Institutional *modus operandi* frustrated Fran. While Counts High administrators and English Department chairs cooperated with us, it was obvious that established school routine would not be changed for the sake of the research project. Some of the most basic, taken-for-granted aspects of this routine prevented Fran from implementing the interactionist curriculum as she saw fit. Grading requirements in particular conflicted with the format of Fran's approach.

I see no easy solution to this problem. I believe research collaborators should decide in advance what special policies their project calls for and attempt to persuade school personnel to sanction and support as many of these policies as possible. Without this negotiated agreement, conflict between the established order of a host school and the new ways of an innovative collaborative research curriculum is bound to trouble the collaborating classroom teacher.

A difficulty I encountered personally throughout the study was that of role definition. I never determined with precision the extent to which Fran was to be a coresearcher and I a coteacher. This lack of definition created problems when, for example, I observed Fran failing to provide students with a framework for charting their writing growth but then did not intervene to help her construct such a framework, not knowing if it was my role to do so. In retrospect, I feel if Fran had been slightly
more coinvestigator and I considerably more coteacher the study would have yielded more penetrating, robust findings. But practical considerations (such as availability of time) did limit the number of responsibilities each of us could carry. In any case, the scope and pattern of collaboration will not be identical in all collaborative studies. Collaborative arrangements should be compatible with prevailing contextual circumstance.

As for the ultimate value of collaborative research, McCutcheon and Kyle point out that "...collaborative research provides a way to test theories, to develop theories, and to exemplify how a theory manifests itself in practice." It is important to note also that collaborative inquiry encourages teachers to be their own researchers and theorists; it provides them a means for testing abstract pedagogical dicta. At the same time, collaboration draws researchers into the classroom arena where their expertise can be of immediate use to teachers and students if researchers fit their understandings skillfully to the very real boundaries circumscribing the institutionally-situated classroom. Collaborative research thus possesses considerable potential to enrich the dialogue between practitioners and researchers. Both teacher and researcher perspectives are represented in collaborative research. It is a politically democratic form of inquiry laden with promise of creative, purposeful study.
Final Remarks

I observed that Fran Spratley's interactionist writing curriculum instilled in many students a profoundly enhanced incentive to write. At a time when nearly 70% of the adult American public feels instruction in writing should be a top priority of the schools (along with basic education in reading and arithmetic), and when large masses of students show little inclination to want to do school writing, the interactionist composition curriculum merits continued experimentation.

Sharing as much time with students as I did, talking with them about their writing and watching them interact with one another and with Fran, it became obvious to me that Fran's evaluation was but one strand in an intricately woven tapestry of social relations, the whole of which affected students' writing performance. Student use of Fran's commentary was not arbitrary or irrational. Some pupils it is true did not appear either to pay much attention to or immediately benefit from Fran's carefully considered comments. Yet an appropriate response to this phenomenon should not be to exhort teachers to make as few comments of any type they wish on students' work—as one pair of researchers suggests—but rather to sort out the complex network of relationships explaining students' behavior and to arrange subsequently for more productive forms of teacher evaluation.

Finally, I had the opportunity in this research project to observe a dedicated, highly-skilled teacher of writing implement theory into practice, helping her to carry out the task and wrestling with problems when the theory broke down in translation to school routine. In the future,
I anticipate writing researchers conducting studies even more collaborative in nature than this one, where teachers and students participate in research acts and researchers join educators as full-fledged partners in their daily work. I think it is important both to capitalize on people's commonsense interpretations of their everyday experience and to provide them information and methods enabling them to view that experience from new perspectives. Knowledge generated in collaborative writing research can augment the understanding of all those involved, creating possibilities for enlightened activity in the teaching, learning and researching of writing.
CHAPTER FIVE

NOTES


3. The novelty of Fran's composition curriculum was eventually verified by nearly all of her Intermediate Composition students. Recent research by Hoetker and Brosell lends validity to pupils' claim. Hoetker and Brosell surveyed over 13,000 students, grades eight-twelve, investigating their school English program experience. Student response indicated among other things that 82% of those surveyed "never" or "seldom" had writing conferences in their English classes, 80% "always" or "often" had their papers graded by the teacher, 58% "never" had been asked to keep a journal, and a full 41% had "never" rewritten an English paper. See James Hoetker and Gordon Brosell, "An EJ Readership Survey Report," English Journal 69 (May 1980): 13-19.


6. Perl and Egendorf, in McQuade, p. 126.

7. Perl and Egendorf, in McQuade, p. 126.

8. Perl and Egendorf, in McQuade, p. 126.

9. Perl and Egendorf, in McQuade, p. 127.

10. Perl and Egendorf, in McQuade, p. 127.


12. Perl and Egendorf, in McQuade, p. 127.


14. For a typology of evaluative comments appearing on student papers, see Elaine O. Lees, "Evaluating Student Writing," College Composition and Communication 30 (December 1979): 370-374.

15. Louise Phelps, "What Literature Teachers Know About Teaching Composition That They Don't Know They Know," Freshmen English News 7 (Winter 1979): 18.


17. Irmscher, p. 244.


27. Perl and Egendorf, in McQuade, pp. 128-129.

28. Perl and Egendorf, in McQuade, p. 124.


34. Markova, especially Chapter Four.

35. Bartholomae, p. 92.


40. Parker, in Davis and Parker, p. 211.


42. Markova, p. 48.

43. See, for example, Gordon Allport's work, The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Science (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1942).


47. An untitled editorial Communication Quarterly article discusses four different roles teachers can assume in collaborative research: co-investigator, data collector, model, model/participant. The article does not explicate how collaborators actually go about establishing their respective roles and role responsibilities. Communication Quarterly 1 (Summer 1978): 3.


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