

Fall 2001

Layering literacies: Computers and peer response in the 21st century

Christopher Warren Dean
University of New Hampshire, Durham

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation>

Recommended Citation

Dean, Christopher Warren, "Layering literacies: Computers and peer response in the 21st century" (2001). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 36.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation/36>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

**LAYERING LITERACIES: COMPUTERS AND PEER RESPONSE IN THE
21ST CENTURY**

BY

**CHRISTOPHER W. DEAN
B.A. UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, 1991
M.A. PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY, 1995**

DISSERTATION

**Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of**

Doctor of Philosophy

IN

ENGLISH

SEPTEMBER, 2001

UMI Number: 3022956

Copyright 2001 by
Dean, Christopher Warren

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3022956

Copyright 2001 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

C. 2001

CHRISTOPHER W. DEAN

This dissertation has been examined and approved.

Thomas Newkirk

Dissertation Director

Dr. Thomas N. Newkirk. Professor of English.

Cynthia Gannett

Dr. Cynthia L. Gannett. Associate Professor of
English

Patricia A. Sullivan

Dr. Patricia A. Sullivan. Associate Professor of
English

Lisa C. Miller

Professor Lisa C. Miller. Associate Professor of
English

Paula M. Salvio

Professor Paula M. Salvio. Associate Professor of
Education

June 25, 2001

Date

DEDICATION

For my Parents, Jim and Helen Dean: My first and best teachers

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It's hard to know where to begin. I feel that my dissertation is, and I mean this in the best possible way, not really mine. It is the work of many people—a collaboration between friends, family, students, colleagues, mentors and all the people in my life. Out of this huge stock of people and good will, I do want to take a little time and thank some specific people. If there is anyone who is left out when all is said and done, I beg y'all to forgive my oversight and accept my thanks.

I want to first thank all the members of my dissertation committee. Cinthia Gannett has been, over the course of four years, a wonderful mentor, friend, and colleague, and her careful, kind reading of my work has shaped it in a variety of important ways. I owe Cindy more than I can possibly mention in these brief acknowledgements. Patricia Sullivan has also been an invaluable mentor, friend, and reader of my work. I owe coming to New Hampshire, in a variety of ways, to Pat, and Pat has helped keep me here. Paula Salvio has also been a great help as the "outside" reader for this text. I thank Paula for her coffee, critique and unfailing enthusiasm that helped me push through the dissertation process. Lisa Miller has also been a fine friend, colleague, and reader. Her expertise on issues of computers and writing has helped me refine my prose and thoughts, and her generosity with the resources of the Journalism computer lab have helped me have the resources I have needed to do the work of dissertation.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank my dissertation director, Tom Newkirk. Tom has been instrumental in helping me finish this dissertation. He has helped shape my methodological approach to my work, my rendering of this work, and ultimately the final draft you have in your hands. Tom not only shaped my dissertation, he helped shape me as a professional in the field. Tom taught me about research, academic writing, and, perhaps most importantly, he acknowledged and affirmed the work that I was trying to do in composition—no matter how little it deserved affirmation.

I also want to thank four other college teachers who led me into the field of composition. At Portland State I was lucky enough to work with Sherrie Gradin and Duncan Carter, and these two teachers led me gently into the field that I have grown to love and value. Also, I want to thank Nancy Porter, who taught me more than I have any right to know about the teaching of reading and feminist thought. I also want to thank a mentor who has sadly passed on, Robert J. Connors. Bob was my first composition instructor here at UNH, he was my boss in the Writing Center, and he was, and is, a model for the sort of writing I hope I can some day approach

I also want to thank my fellow graduate students and instructors at UNH and Portland State University. All of you have provided me with a shoulder to cry on, someone to bounce ideas off of, and even with research sites to do my work. Bronwyn Williams, now at the green pastures of Louisville, was my assigned and real mentor here at UNH—he

is the sort of friend and colleague that one dreams of. Amy Zenger and Joyce Rain Anderson came to UNH at the same time, and they were a huge reason that I gutted it out through a year filled with culture shock and a longing for the Pacific Northwest. Another reason I stuck around were my friends outside of my field in composition who provided me with more affection, advice, and camaraderie than I really deserved. Bill Stroup, Scott Massey, Sally Hirsh, the cast of 999 and a host of others who hung out in the hallowed halls of Hamilton Smith.

Also, there were my fellow “comp heads” here at UNH. I want Stephanie Patterson, Kuhio Walters, Dave Edwards, Megan Fulwiller, Kate Tirabassi, and Michelle Cox to know that their kindness and advice meant a great deal to me—personally and professionally. Y’all rock!

Another group of folks also rock: the family at the UNH Writing Center. I use the word family advisedly because Maggie Moore, Tonda Liggett, Rod Kovach, and all of the tutors, work-studies, and clients at the UNH Writing Center were my family at UNH. The fact that you’re reading this dissertation now has much to do with the folks at the center who gave good advice, access to paper and Xeroxing, and, most of all, support.

As for all of the other graduate students and instructors who have lit the way ahead of me, many thanks to you all. I will miss all of you all, and if you ever need a place to crash in New Haven, Connecticut, let me know.

There is one group of folks here at UNH, and at UNHM, who I literally owe everything to: the teachers and students who let me write about their work. Pam Oliver at UNHM and Warren at UNH let me into their classrooms and their lives, and I’m forever grateful for that. For the students that populated those classes, well I hope that you realize that you are the stars of this work, and that “I am nothing without you.” As for my own English 401 students, who were my first research subjects in the spring of 1998, much thanks. Thank you for giving me access to your work, and thank you for being, without a doubt, one of the finest classes I’ve ever taught.

Finally, on a more personal note I want to thank my family. My mother and father, who this text is dedicated to, have supported me throughout my work, both financially and emotionally. However, even more importantly, they were my living breathing models for what good teaching looked like. My sister, and one of my best sounding boards, provided me with fine advice and a knowing shoulder to cry on at critical points, and seeing her receive her Ph.D. in archaeology at Berkeley kept my eye on the prize at a critical moment. To the rest of the Mills, Dean, and Parakh families, much thanks for your support, love, and patience while I worked my way through UNH. I promise you all that I’ll now become a productive member of society again.

The last person who is due thanks is my beloved—Alison Parakh. My wife, out of love and belief, moved across the country with me, hung with me through six years of

graduate school, and even proof-read large chunks of the text you have in your hands. Aside from that she provided the fuel that I needed to finish my work at UNH—love. Thanks for the fuel baby, and I hope that you realize that this is your degree as well as mine.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	xi
ABSTRACT	xii

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. LAYERING LITERACIES: AN INTRODUCTION TO PEER RESPONSE ONLINE AND IN THE CLASSROOM	1
Interchapter: The D.V. Story	1
The Big Picture: Multilayered Research Studies	3
First Steps: Gender, Age, Class And Anonymity in Online Peer Response	5
Stepping Out: Multilayered Literacies and Multifaceted Roles in Computer Peer Response	9
Working Definitions: The Self, Social-Expressivism, Collaboration, Peer Response, Computer Aided Peer Response and CMC Peer Response	11
Contribution of this Study to Composition Studies and the Field of Computers and Writing	18
II. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	21
Interchapter: Coming Together to Talk About Writing	21
An Introduction to the “Web of Meaning”	23
The Long History of Peer Groups in Writing—Prior to the Rise of Composition Studies: 1719-1966	25
The Beginnings of Composition and the Continuation of Peer Response Work: The Work of Peter Elbow and Donald Murray	27
Collaborative Learning Theory and Composition Studies	31
Conventional Peer Response	36

Peer Group Talk.....	51
The Literature on CMC and Computer-Aided Peer Revision.....	54
Literature around the Peer Role and the Performance of Self in Peer Response Work.....	72
III. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY	77
Interchapter: From Jeff Davis to Chris Dean.....	77
Methods and Methodology: An Overview of Three Central Sites	79
The Teacher Researcher Position	83
The Methodological Boundaries, Concerns, and Outlines of My First Research Study	89
The Pilot: A Flight of the Self Into and Through Peer Response.....	95
The Methodological Boundaries, Concerns, and Outlines of Research At UNHM	106
Working At UNHM: CATs, Data, and Multilayered Literate Practices.....	111
A Methodology For Building the Web of Meaning	116
IV. HONESTY, ANONYMITY, GENDER, AGE AND THE INTERNET	119
Interchapter: Through The Looking Glass Darkly	119
Where I Was: An Introduction To Chapter IV	120
What I Saw: Issues of Anonymity and Honesty	124
What I Saw: Gendered Honesty in CMC and Computer-Aided Peer Revision Work.....	130
What I Saw: Subtle Ageism in CMC and Computer-Aided Peer Response	137
When Anonymity Works: Rachel and Dave's Stories	140
Towards a Critical Reading of Gender, Age, And Class in CMC Peer	

Response	145
V. LAYERING LITERACIES.....	148
Interchapter: What Does A Job Description Have To Do With Peer Response?.....	148
An Introduction to Multilayered Peer Response: Central Concerns and Main Points	150
The Context, The Actors, and The Conduct of Class	152
A Human Endeavor: Classwide Patterns and Tendencies of The Performance of the Self In Peer Response.....	159
Face Wants, Affiliation, and Sequencing In Computer-assisted Peer Response	175
Digging Deeper: Mfixx3 and Cassia’s Layering of Literacies.....	185
Talk and Typing: The Inter-relation of Speech and Electronic Discourse in Computer-Aided Peer Response	208
Pedagogical Implications.....	209
VI. PEER RESPONSE IN THE 21ST CENTURY	213
An Introduction To A Conclusion.....	213
Our Histories, Ourselves: An Argument For Thinking Critically About Issues of Age, Race, Gender, and Anonymity	213
An Argument for Viewing Peer Response Through the Lens of Layers of Literacies.....	221
Reconfiguring Literacy: Layers of Literacy—Layers of Politics.....	227
A Glimpse of the Future: The Look and Feel of Multilayered Literate Practice.....	232
LIST OF WORKS CITED	236
APPENDIX A.....	248

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	158
Table 2	160
Table 3	166
Table 4	167
Table 5	172

ABSTRACT

LAYERING LITERACIES: COMPUTERS AND PEER RESPONSE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

by

Christopher W. Dean
University of New Hampshire, June, 2001

Research into peer response work has a long history in the field of composition, and the work of my dissertation is to extend that research into the newer subfield of composition, computers and writing. Specifically I focus on the way students use multiple linguistic competencies (oral, print, and electronic competencies) to perform a variety of selves in peer response. Drawing on the work of Erving Goffman, the extant literature of peer response, work done in ethnomethodology, and research done in three first year composition classrooms, I outline the contours and strategies that students use to engage in peer response while using asynchronous computer technologies and speech.

Ultimately, I argue for a multilayered conception of peer response in which students use electronic texts, printed texts, and talk to negotiate selves on a moment-by-moment basis. I examine the implications that this conception of peer response might have for the teaching of writing—paying particular attention to the role that talk plays in computer-based peer response work.

Chapter I

Layering Literacies: An Introduction to Peer Response Online and In the Classroom

Interchapter: The D.V. Story

The way that I got involved in the field of computers and writing has more to do with kindness and collaboration than it does with a life-long fascination with machines, circuits and code. I was not the child who spent hours playing with a TRS 80, trying to make the little plastic box create games that moved past Pong. I was happy with Pong.

No, the moment that I began to think of writing and teaching with computers came in the first year of my masters program at Portland State University (PSU). After leaving secondary school teaching, I badly needed a job, and the best job I could get at PSU was as a “computer desk technician.” I was the guy hired to help computer lab users with their problems with Microsoft Word, Excel, and other simple programs.

Computer help deskwork is notorious for employing people who like computers and have no inclination to actually help people. My favorite co-worker, D.V., and I were the exceptions. I was a teacher by trade and inclination, and D.V. was one of the most genial and technically sophisticated people I’ve ever met. He had a screaming laptop in the day when a screaming laptop was a new thing, and he was a Webmaster back in the early 90s before everyone became a Webmaster.

One day, D.V. and I were working a slow day when D.V. looked over at me, and in one of the most important non-sequiturs of my life asked, “Chris, do you have a website?”

I laughed and said, “No.” I was under the impression that I was very far removed in terms of ability and experience from the digerati like D.V.

D.V. looked at me, and said, “You want one?”

Prior to this moment, the thought had never occurred to me. But in the microsecond I pondered D.V.’s question, I made a snap decision (and, for once, a good one): I wanted a website. So, I looked at D.V. and said something like, “Sure, why not.”

In the next thirty minutes D.V. made a public_html file on my Unix account and then pasted his code into my index file, and I suddenly had a webpage. The only advice D.V. gave me was that I should just “mess around” with the code, and that I should check out any one of about ten online html tutorials. They would explain what I needed to know, which was, in D.V.’s words, “simple.”

A week later, D.V. was working with me, and I was telling him that it wasn’t simple. The truth was that I really didn’t get html code, with its open and closed carets, its incessant demand for correct syntax and linguistic precision. However, over the course of that two-hour shift, and the next couple, D.V. showed me some of the basic things that I needed to know. He answered my simple questions (“How the hell do you center a picture?”) and my more involved ones (“Why do people like using this frames thingy?”)

At the end of about a month, I had become something I had never thought I would become: a programmer. I began to beg my teachers to let me do virtual portfolios for

classes, help my teachers run web-based classes, and, most importantly, help myself learn not only how to program but why to program.

Slowly I began to wonder if there might be some way that I could make the web, computers, and education coalesce into some sort of worthwhile project. I began to wonder if I could combine a love with teaching with a newly emerging love for programming; in short, I became a member in the computers and composition community without even realizing that I was doing that.

Ultimately, the fact that I'm writing this dissertation has a lot to do with D.V. and his hands on, experiential, socially based teaching style (although I don't know if he thought of himself as teaching). In short my interest in computers and peer response work stems from my own first experience using the computer for something more than a glorified typewriter, and this experience was enmeshed in a social interaction for an audience that mattered to me: my friend D.V.

The Big Picture: Multilayered Research Studies

Years after the fact, it occurs to me that my introduction to computers courtesy of D.V. was a multilayered, embodied experience. What I mean by this is that the literacy/knowledge I learned from D.V. was the result of talk in front of a computer screen—with the print out of the html tutorial I was using right at hand. In other words, David and I were practicing what Cinthia Selfe calls a multilayered literacy—a literacy in which people “function literately within computer-supported communication environments” by layering “conventions of the page and conventions of the screen” (Selfe, “Redefining Literacy” 7-8).

My contention is that when writers work through a situation in which they use computers to facilitate peer response, they almost inevitably layer a set of oral, written, and electronic competencies on top of each other. In my case this means that students in three particular first year composition classes, two located at the University of New Hampshire in Durham (UNH) and one at the University of New Hampshire in Manchester (UNHM), interact with each other through written, spoken, and electronic discourses to do peer response work.

Interestingly enough, the studies that comprise this work are also layered one on top of the other—sort of like textual strata in a larger research formation. The first study (which I discuss in detail in chapter four) I completed in my own first year composition class in the spring of 1998, and my focus was almost solely on how computers, particularly the partial anonymity afforded students by computers, did and didn't affect the work that my students did in peer response. Out of this study arose a series of questions about what "really" happened when students started working with computers during peer response. I began to be particularly interested in the way that multilayered literate strategies might play themselves out in peer response.

Thus in the fall of 2000, I completed a pilot study (which is discussed in the methods and methodology chapter of the dissertation) that explored the way that students negotiated the complexities of computers, peer response work, and the formation of multiple selves. Out of this pilot study came the study that is the topic of chapter five. This study, which I conducted at the University of New Hampshire at Manchester (UNHM), provided many answers to questions I had about the nature of computers, peer response, and the formation of selves during the process of peer response, and I hope that

it will do the same for you. I hope that my multilayered research studies, and the resulting text from these studies, will help you understand something of the particular geography of what I call computer-assisted peer response.

First Steps: Gender, Age, Class And Anonymity in Online Peer Response

In spring semester of 1998, I took my first tentative steps towards the piece you're reading now. For reasons that had a lot to do with personality and inclination, I decided to base some research in my Freshman English class because I had agreed to work with three colleagues at two other institutions in a project aimed at working one on-line peer revision. The gist of this research was that two instructors at Portland State University, one instructor at Ball State University, and myself, were going to have our students form essentially anonymous peer groups. We hoped, and I quote from a conference panel proposal I coauthored,

Through the anonymity and the elimination of time and space that a networked classroom affords, students are enabled (along with teacher modeling) to engage in an honest critique of their peers' work, both in class and on paper; [also, they can] practice lifelong metacognition. (Rice "Teaching Expanded")

The reality was that this didn't happen, nor could it ever really happen. I later realized, after reading David Tyack and Larry Cuban's book *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*, I had bought into a myth that Cuban and Tyack spend over a hundred pages debunking: that technology can cure what ails teaching.

Tied to this was that the reading I had been doing in computers and writing prior to co-authoring the above proposal happened to partake of a spirit that seems to have dominated much discourse about computers and composition through the 1980s: that computer technology is either all-powerful or transparent (Haas 320). What this means is that the bit of literature in computers and writing I had read extolled the liberatory impact

that computers could have on learning. I had bought into the idea that a “virtual classroom,’ a classroom that exists in an electronic environment rather than in a particular place,” could create a democratic space for students to work in together (Spitzer 188).

I bring my optimistic reading of the potential of electronic classrooms because the first study in this dissertation helped me understand not only my research question (which focused on how some students, due to issues of anonymity, gender, age, and pedagogy, found on-line peer revision to be honest, helpful and useful, while others didn’t), but it also gave me a glimpse of how I might be able to more realistically approach the pedagogical potential of electronic classrooms.

The study I’m speaking of was based on a more critical approach towards the promise of computer technology. This study, which ran during the spring semester of 1998, looked at the work that 10 students (9 at UNH and 1 at Ball State University) did on issues around peer response. These ten students gave me permission to read the pieces that they wrote over the course of the semester, and their responses to other students’ pieces as well. Additionally, six out of the nine agreed to engage in a retrospective interview with me about the experience of giving and receiving both online and conventional (pen and paper/oral) peer response. Out of this pool of six, I chose to do case studies of three students: Helen, Dave and Rachel. I chose these three students for a number of reasons, but principally for two: the break down of gender (something my research project was very interested in) was about right in terms of the real numbers in my class (roughly 2/3 of my class was female), and the other reason was that the three students seemed representative of the experience with online peer response work in my class: that it could be wonderfully enabling and freeing, it could be somewhat enabling

and freeing, or it could be disabling. And it was Helen, a non-traditionally aged returning student, who really helped me see the disabling side of semi-anonymous peer response.

In fact, one could say that Helen's experience with peer response shocked me into taking a much more critical view of the promise of a technology. Helen's experience, which was deeply affected by issues of gender, age, and her own personal history with computers, also led me to questioning the nature and educative value of anonymity. Before, leaning on the work of proponents of using computers in composition (Michael Spitzer, Michael Day and Trent Batson, Faigley), I had an idea that anonymity could, almost magically, produce honest discourse. However, Helen's experience was that writing to an anonymous peer was like, "typing into a dark hole to fulfill an assignment" (Helen, "Interview"). It was this overwhelming negative reaction to the use of anonymous peer response that sent me scurrying for someone to describe what Helen felt and I saw, and the theorist who began to help me see things more clearly was Erving Goffman.

In *The Presentation of Self In Everyday Life*, Goffman spends a great deal of time talking about "impression control," which relates to our performance of a particular self in a particular "situation definition"(15). This performance is agreed upon in the moment, and the sorts of selves in play are defined by the degree to which the audience of other selves receives our performance of our self. In this sort of reading of the self, a self-dependent on social context and contact, honesty can be "a mutually agreed-upon type of performance" (Newkirk 7). To this I would add that not only can honesty be a performance of a certain standard peculiar to a discourse community, but that the very idea of anonymity can be one as well. What I mean by this is that anonymous subject

position in online peer response is something that a given student negotiates via a situation definition that she creates with a physically absent peer. Under Helen's tutelage, I began to see the anonymity afforded students via CMC to be provisional and variable—due in large part to students' perceptions of how anonymity did, and should, function. Helen helped me see what happened when a particular performance, that of honest, anonymous peer response, did not meet with complete social agreement: that there could be a disabling quality to the anonymous peer response.

This realization spurred other realizations and other questions—only a few of which I was able to address within the confines of my first study. I began to wonder more particularly about the Goffmanesque selves that students might have to, or want to, take on to do peer response. I began to wonder what the confines and contours of computer mediated peer response (anonymous and otherwise) were, and if they really were so different from the “conversation of mankind” that Kenneth Bruffee talks about (Bruffee “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind,’” 652).

Ultimately these concerns led towards asking an important one-word question: how? I began to wonder exactly how peer response work got done, and I also began to not be as concerned with if my peer groups were “working,” if they were producing “honest” peer response. I had come to realize something that Jonathan Trimbур already knew: that “instead of trying to show whether collaborative learning works, we need to know first of all how it works” (7). It is this how that concerns the second study at the core of this dissertation.

Stepping Out: Multilayered Literacies and Multifaceted Roles in Computer Peer

Response

The question of how students go about doing peer response is something that has occasionally been addressed in the field of composition (Sperling, Gray-Rosendale, Klein), but there has been little if any work done on how issues of student selves might effect peer response work in a computer-mediated environment.

To this end in the fall semester of 2000, I conducted a pilot study to help formulate the specific questions about the selves of peer response and to figure out what types of data I should collect. In this pilot study I ended up collecting the following types of data: student interviews, student writing, student responses to other students' writing, short classroom assessments, and tape-recordings of the oral work that students did. Also, I ended up finding myself in a new role as a researcher in the fall of 2000.

In my first research I was very clearly with Ruth Ray refers to as a "teacher researcher," someone who is immersed in research to try to understand a particular question in a particular class that they teach (Ray). However, in the fall of 2000 I was collecting data in a class in which I was somewhere between a teacher and a participant observer. I was not the "teacher of record," yet I did have moments where I taught. This was a complicated position to be in, and it produced a certain amount of tension on my part, as I was attempting to both teach and research in a class that was both mine and not mine.

Still, this was invaluable experience because it caused me to reflect not only on my role as teacher and researcher, but on the data I collected as well. The distance

afforded me by my bifurcated role was invaluable in thinking of the sort of data I might collect to answer my two central questions:

1. What does the prevailing literature say about student peer response, particularly the unwritten code of student conduct which only permits, as Kenneth Bruffee claims, students two positions: that of a teddy bear or a shark (Bruffee, *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education*, 26)? And what can a discussion of the roles (or more correctly selves) of peer response in a computer mediated environment mean to this literature?
2. How do students co-create the situation definitions of peer response—both computer-aided and traditional? And to what degree are these situation definitions colored by previous experience with computers and peer revision?

To investigate questions I moved to my final site—a first year composition class at UNHM. At UNHM, I collected six types of data during the spring semester of 2001 at UNHM: ink and paper copies of student papers with peer comments on them, electronic copies of student papers and comments, audio tapes of peer response work, coded observation of the oral nature of peer response work—in the computer lab and traditional classroom, audio tapes from one hour interviews with the nine students of my research, and CATs (Classroom Assessment Techniques) which asked the entire class to regularly reflect on the process of peer revision at the end of several peer response sessions.

This data from UNHM gave me a good idea of how peer response operated in a variety of different settings within a single classroom, and it also gave me as detailed a picture as possible of the various roles that students ended up playing as they spoke, wrote, and computed both their mutual situation definitions and mutual, consanguineous selves.

Working Definitions: The Self, Social-Expressivism, Collaboration, Peer Response,
Computer Aided Peer Response and CMC Peer Response

The Self

Up until now I have been using the word “self” rather loosely, and I’d like to take a moment to define this central term of my work. The idea of the “self,” as I use it in this dissertation, has a great deal to do with Goffman’s conception of the self as an agreed upon, socially contextualized performance (Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*). However, tied to this conception of the self as role-player in my mind, is D.W. Winnicott’s idea of the self in which, “each person has a polite or socialized self, and also a personal private self that is not available except in intimacy” (Winnicott 66).

The pairing of Winnicott, a Freudian-influenced psychiatrist, and Goffman, a researcher into the unwritten rules of oral discourse, may seem odd—or even impossible. Goffman’s sense of self seems to reside in the idea of a person being a social performer of a particular self in the presence of others, while Winnicott’s idea of the self is tied in some way to an idea of a healthy self that can “reach towards an identification with society without too great a loss of individual or personal impulse” (Goffman, *The Presentation of Self* 3 and Winnicott 27). Goffman’s conception of the self is almost wholly social, while the social component of Winnicott’s self is tempered by the idea that there is a deeper sense of the individual that needs to feel some agency—some sense of controlling “personal impulse” (Winnicott 27).

How can one then justify using Goffman and Winnicott’s notions of the self? Two conceptions of the self that seem to have different agendas. My argument is that one can use these two conceptions of self because they get at one of the central tensions

in the very conception of the self: that the self is both a social performance and a sense of agency in the world. It seems to me that in an interdisciplinary pursuit like composition, it makes sense to take an interdisciplinary approach to the self, and one that acknowledges, but doesn't dwell, on the tensions between the social and physical dimensions of the self.

That said, I am by and large concerned with the performance of the polite or socialized self, not the "personal private self" of the students in my studies. I am more interested in Goffman's performance of self than in Winnicott's private self. However, I realize that my students are probably very interested in both selves, and that, as a consequence of work around peer response, both selves will always be present. The omnipresence of both selves, particularly the personal self, is part of the reason that I am interested in the affective and subjective side of students responses to working with peer revision—both online and offline.

Social-Expressivism

The presence of private and public selves, as Goffman and Winnicott define them, makes for some interesting pedagogical issues, and a productive way of looking at these issues is through what Sherrie Gradin calls social expressivism. For Gradin the key work of social-expressivism is for students to realize that the

discovery of others and of other worlds is, in reality, a discovery of the ways in which the self positions itself within, and is positioned by material conditions. A social-expressivism, building on the lead of scholars like Elbow and Murray, allows for an understanding of self as subject but also for others as subject. (Gradin 103)

It is this recognition of the social nature of the self, even in the very creation of the self, which is central to my understanding of the self. The self, minus other selves, is a private

self that Winnicott speaks of, and on the whole social expressivism is less interested in the private selves of students. The selves that concern Sherrie Gradin are the selves that are in play during any sort of pedagogical activity, including peer revision work, and the selves that are in play are always deeply dependent on the work that other selves do in helping you maintain or change your self.

For Gradin the play of selves in a classroom is important because selves allow us to think of our students as “whole beings” (118). In other words, to practice a socially expressive pedagogy is to think past your students being “writing students in need of analytic and literacy skills,” and to think about how those analytic and literacy skills are acquired by selves that bring preexisting values, attitudes, and experiences to class (Gradin 118). However, at the same time a teacher influenced by a socially expressive pedagogy values and appreciates her students’ selves, she must be aware that selves are “shapers and the shaped” (118).

In other words, social expressivism attempts to understand not just the selves at play in a given classroom, but the way in which those selves shape the other selves present, and the way that all the selves in any classroom are shaped by issues of race, class, and gender. Principally, the work of a teacher influenced by socially expressive pedagogy is to have her students engage in the dialogic process of expressing the self—while at the same time reflecting on that expression of the self, particularly as that expression relates to selves in a given classroom and the wider world. And the means for doing this sort of work is, not surprisingly, language—both oral and written language.

Thus social expressivism is a large part of the pedagogical lens that I employ to talk about the play of selves in peer response. It is the reason that I use the term “selves” rather than “role” or “identities,” and it is the reason that my pedagogy for teaching peer response both values the idiosyncratic expression of student selves in peer response and the commonalities that those expressions share. Ultimately, I use Gradin’s idea of social expressivist pedagogy to talk about the way that selves in peer response collaborate to create meaning in the act of reading and responding to written texts.

Collaboration

There is a widespread interest in collaborative learning in the field of composition, and the history of collaborative learning in terms of writing and the academy extends back to the 18th Century (*Gere Writing Groups*). However, as Anne DiPardo and Sarah Freeman point out, the interest in collaborative learning for composition really started in the late 1980s (6). The range of what collaborative learning, and writing, can be in Composition is rather broad. It can be Peter Elbow’s “teacherless writing class,” where people meet together to share work that they have, presumably, worked on alone, or it can be Michael Joyce’s idea of having students work together in a hypertextual environment to create a shared text (Elbow, “Writing Without Teachers,” Joyce). For the purposes of my work, the important idea that comes out of collaborative learning is that writing is at some point a social enterprise, and that (and this is from research on collaborative learning) students can benefit as writers, readers, and thinkers from interacting with their peers (Bruffee “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation,’” DiPardo and Freedman).

Conventional Peer Response

The type of peer interaction that holds the deepest interest to me is peer response work—a variety of collaborative learning. For me any sort of work in which peers read papers can be, but not necessarily is, peer response work. Many researchers (Spear, Strickland, Brooke, Mirtz and Evans, Lawrence and Sommers) point out that simply putting students into groups and telling them to “read their papers” isn’t really peer response. This is what Karen Spear might call liver-logic—the idea that students will like and value peer response because it is “good for them” (7). When I speak of peer response I talking about a synthetic form of conversation in which students are led by a teacher who is “willing to make a commitment to group work through careful training, supervision, modeling, and sequencing of classroom activities for an appropriate assignment” (Lawerence 108). In other words, while the work of peer response is often principally the work of students, it is also the work of a teacher who has taught her students how to respond to other students’ works. The teacher needs to not only model peer response, but she also needs to cede some authority to her students so that they can own their response. As Sarah Freedman points out in “Peer Response Groups in Two Ninth Grade Classrooms,” students need to feel that peer response is something more than another assignment handed down by the teacher, and, even more importantly, they need to feel that the role they’re asked to take on is appropriate to their socialized version of themselves (26). What Freedman means by this is that students will at least initially resist being evaluators of each others’ work; they are unwilling to take on a role that they assign to teachers. However, according to Freedman students do not necessarily resist

being critical readers—readers who are willing to say what they see as working or not working for them *as readers*.

Ultimately, the idea of the selves that students enact in peer response—particularly in computer-aided peer response—is at the heart of this dissertation. And to this end I want to make one further division within the larger category of peer response. Throughout this dissertation I will be talking about conventional peer response, and I want to be very clear about this term. Conventional peer response does not refer to the idea of the standard conventions of peer response, but it in fact refers to how peer response has been done in classrooms and communities throughout the United States for the last two hundred plus years—via written and oral comments. As Anne Gere claims in *Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications*, the roots of peer response groups lie in the literary societies that formed at American Universities in the early 18th century, and they have always involved people giving and receiving feedback on writing via spoken or written comments (21). Thus, when I speak of “conventional peer response” I’m making specific reference to the competencies and technology of response as it has been traditionally known: an act of sharing writing with other selves via written and spoken language.

Computer Aided Peer Response and CMC Peer Response

Unlike my textured definition of conventional peer response, my definition of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), and computer mediated peer response, is much broader and purposefully less precise. The acronym CMC is widely used in the field of computers and writing, and it generally refers to how computer networks like

LANs (Local Area Networks) or server-based networks (like the Internet itself) allow people to communicate through time and space (Hawisher 38). Thus most of what students do when using computers for peer response involves the use of CMC. This includes mundane acts like saving files to a common space on the network (a very common practice in computer based education), to working with more involved programs like Daedelus Exchange to “chat” in real-time.

For the purposes of my work I’ll be using the phrase “CMC peer revision” to talk about what is done with peer response and computers when the direct use of a computer network is involved in the peer response itself (for instance, using computers to exchange papers with distant peers). And for work that doesn’t directly involve the use of a computer network (such as when students use a word-processing program to work with physically present peers) I will use the phrase “computer-aided peer response.” I think it’s necessary to make these two distinctions because in large part the field of Computers and Writing makes a similar distinction. At least half of what’s been written on the subject of computers and collaborative writing, as well as computers and peer revision, comes out of experiences with what I call “CMC peer revision” (Day, English, Fey “Reader Response” and “Sharing Writing,” Skubikowski and Elder, Levine, Hewett). The other “half” of the extant literature deals with “computer-aided peer response,” and a good deal of these studies reflect an interest either in word processors’ impact on peer response, or more often revision (Hawisher “The Effects of Word Processing,” Kurth, Owston, Murphy and Wideman, Strickland and Tannacito). It may seem odd to use studies that don’t immediately address peer response work, such as Hawisher’s seminal 1986 work on word processors’ effect on revision strategies; however, much of what my

students have done as peer respondents involves the use of word processing programs. Thus the points that these studies on revision and word processing make (such as the possibility that word process may produce positive attitudes towards revision—but not necessarily better revisions) are germane to the work that Tannacito, Strickland, and myself are trying to do: which is to open a discussion about how word-processing programs can be used effectively as a peer response tool.

The distinction between Computer-aided peer response and CMC peer revision is an important one to make because it not only reflects a technological orientation; it also reflects a social reality. In Computer-aided peer response most of the work happens in a space where students move back and forth between three competencies: spoken, written, and electronic. The focus in CMC peer response is on electronic technology, with written and spoken peer response receiving scant attention. My belief is that peer response is ultimately a textured sort of literacy, what Cinthia Selfe calls a multilayered literacy—a literacy in which people “function literately within computer-supported communication environments” by layering “conventions of the page and conventions of the screen” (Selfe, “Redefining Literacy” 7-8). Thus, I want my research to reflect the reality of peer response communication, which involves students writing and “talking” through a variety of technologies.

Contribution of this Study to Composition Studies and the Field of Computers and Writing

Ultimately, I believe that by focusing on the selves that students enact when they are engaging in “multilayered” literate activities, I can help the field see the shape of peer

response as it is and as it may be. Peer response groups that consciously make use of oral, written, and electronic competencies are modeling the way communication can, and I would argue should, work. Many of the studies on peer response work and computers, whether it's computer mediated or computer aided, underplay or downright ignore the role that handwritten and oral peer comments have on student writers' growth as writers. Also, much of the work on peer response in general has been focused on the social nature of peer response, which makes perfect sense when you consider the "social turn" in composition studies (Hairston). However, there is something lost when you view writing solely as a social, rather than a personal act, and what is lost is the idea of personal growth.

Thus, part of the reason I have focused on the selves a writer can inhabit during peer response is so that I can understand how a student might grow as a peer respondent, in his or her own terms. Also, rather than focusing on whether or not peer response produces "good writing," I want to clearly focus on the way that peer response gets done in a classrooms where peer response is clearly valued. My contention is that when peer response is viewed as a site where multiple competencies interact that it becomes a fruitful place to think about one of the most interesting questions that faces us in Composition: what is the shape of texts to come? Ultimately, I hope that this work can help start a discussion about this question; a question that will certainly require more work than just this dissertation.

However, I think that I can help in weaving a web of meaning about the importance of computer aided peer response to the larger field of composition. A web of meaning

composed of strands of research that have already been done, strands that remain to be done, and my own thin silvery thread.

Chapter II

A Review of the Literature

Interchapter: Coming Together to Talk About Writing

It's hard to say exactly when I began to realize that writing was a social act, but if I had to guess, I would say that the social nature of writing came into focus for me when I combined talk about writing with bean-dip, cheese, crackers, Peter Gabriel, and writing. In other words, the social nature of writing only became clear to me when I joined my first writing group in Portland, Oregon.

This is not to say that I had never shared my writing with other writers, but up until that rainy night in Portland I never really thought about how my writing was, in many important ways, the work of other people.

There were about seven or so of us who gathered, despite the harried lives we led as spouses, friends, lovers, and (principally) dirt-poor graduate students. We had decided that, as one friend put it, we should "practice what we preached:" in other words, we felt we should talk about writing, and actually produce it, since we were teaching it.

To start, one of my friends/colleague, an accomplished poet, outlined how her other writing groups had worked. They had started with a reading by a published writer, and then folks would start reading their work—with response following the reading of a writer’s given piece. This seemed to make sense to me, and it made sense to everyone else.

I think that I started first—the actor in me I guess, needing to take center stage. I think I read a short prose poem while “Red Rain” hummed in the background. It was a piece I had written a couple of months earlier, and, to be quite honest, I felt it was pretty well done. I kind of hoped for bland praise and maybe a couple of small suggestions.

Of course that’s not what happened.

When I had stopped reading, I looked up at my friends and colleagues. There was a small awkward moment of silence. Then two people began to speak. A moment of laughter, then some moves of deference, then comments. I sat there at first scribbling down comments as fast as I could—the comments were amazingly apt. They mentioned the vague nature of my supposedly “embodied” narrator; they also mentioned places that caught their interest, and places that didn’t currently catch their interest. Somewhere amidst these comments, I began to ask questions and simply start talking with my friends, colleagues, and fellow writers.

What strikes me now about my experience reading and commenting that night is that the nature of the feedback I got wasn’t as important as the fact that I actually got some. I had, as Peter Elbow said, sent “words out into the darkness and heard someone

shout back” (“Writing Without Teachers” 130). It was, oddly enough, this social interaction that I valued more than anything else.

Over the course of the next week, I kept hearing my friends’ voices, and I did something I didn’t think that I had time or inclination to do. I went back to my little poem. As I sat in front of my Mac classic and typed, I kept hearing their voices, both critical and positive, and when I finished my rewriting my poem, I realized that my piece was in some important way “our” piece.

An Introduction to the “Web of Meaning”

I now realize that the chorus I heard in my first real writing group are the voices of peer response. And I’ve made that realization through reading the literature in composition that is devoted, directly or indirectly, to peer response. This literature covers pieces about collaborative learning theory and its connection to composition studies, essays and books about conventional and computer-generated peer response, work done in the field of Conversation Analysis, and the ongoing dialogue about the nature of peer tutoring in the Writing Center Community.

In addition to the above sources, there are more general perspectives about the act of reading, writing and speaking that have a bearing on peer response. Specifically I’m thinking of the work that Erving Goffman, John Dewey, and Sherrie Gradin have done around issues of experience and of the self.

All of the above authors are not only central to my current understanding of the role of peer response; they are also the first step in constructing the links that will become my

own version of the web of meaning on peer response. What I will do with this literature review is to not discuss every piece of literature on peer response (which would manage to be both overly-ambitious and deadly boring in the same breath), but to present what might be the “external links” to this page—my dissertation. In other words, I want to use texts that are central to the question of how the self is presented in peer response to create a sort of paper and ink version of a web page. My work in this chapter is a series of annotated links in which I will trace the intellectual lineage of my work, and also try to position my work within that lineage.

My idea of the “web of meaning” is also the model that I want to argue for in relation to further studies of peer response—principally in terms of computer generated peer response (both computer computer-aided and CMC peer response). As many authors point out, the very nature of peer response militates against drawing general conclusions from any sample (Freedman, Gere “Writing Groups,” Herrmann, Leverenz, Burkowski, English, Tannacito). The simple truth is that the success of any sort of peer response, and its validity to the wider world of composition, is contingent on “the interrelationship of multiple factors within the evolving social environment of particular classrooms and groups of students” (Herrmann 1). What this means is that any attempt to create large-scale studies that would allow the field to generalize about peer response is probably nearly impossible. My hope is that my study will be another link in what seems to me to be a wide web of meaning, and I hope (and know) that my link will not be the last link added to this page. It will be one of many particular, even unique links that will help us understand the shape of peer response—if not its absolute meaning. And while we may not be able to draw absolutes out of this web, we will be able to draw lessons and

perhaps patterns; after all, even the most haphazard looking spider's web is the result of some pattern.

The Long History of Peer Groups in Writing—Prior to the Rise of Composition Studies:

1719-1966

Anne Gere in *Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications* claims that the roots of peer response groups lie in the literary societies that formed at American Universities in the early 18th century, such as the Spy Club, which was formed at Harvard in 1719 (21). These literary societies were principally devoted to discussion of political issues, but almost all of them offered critiques of speeches, and a good number actually critiqued writing as well. Interestingly even from the beginning these extra-curricular groups had faculty participating in them—with many faculty acting as advisors or as “critics,” people who critiqued the work of the presenter (Gere 22). Thus, from the beginnings of writing groups, faculty had a role to play in their operation. Over the course of time, faculty began to incorporate their workings of literary societies into the day-to-day conduct of their classrooms.

As near as I can tell, the first evidence of a teacher directly using writing groups in his or her classroom happened in 18th century Scotland. According to Lynée Lewis Gaillett, George Jardine designed a “method of peer review to help prepare his students for full participation in British society” (93). And Jardine’s motivation for creating peer response groups was to deal with educational institutions (in Jardine’s case the University of Glasgow) that were beginning to work with students who had never been seen at the gates of the University, students who “have not enjoyed the benefit of a public

education, but who are desirous to compensate that deficiency by private reading and regular enquiry” (Gaillett 96). What’s remarkable about Jardine is not only his commitment to peer review, but his belief in the need to actually teach peer review to students, and that the ultimate success of peer review was due to both the teacher and the students, working in concert (Gaillett 105). Jardine saw that collaboration had to be modeled and affirmed by a teacher committed to something like a student-centered classroom.

Jardine didn’t remain the only teacher to make direct use of writing groups in the classroom—particularly the composition classroom. Both Fred Newton Scott and John Genung had students share work in their classes, and by 1914 students at Middlebury College participated in a “‘laboratory’ course in which students criticized one another’s writing” (Gere 27). The simple truth is that at least since the time composition became a college course peer response work has been integral part of it.

This pattern of incorporating peer response work into the fabric of composition continued into the 1960s when the field of composition began to develop as a discipline. As Joseph Harris argues in *A Teaching Subject: Composition Since 1966*, the field of Composition as we know it didn’t exist in a recognizable form prior to the mid to late 1960s, and when it started to emerge as a field, it carried on work around writing groups, in general, and peer response groups in particular.

The Beginnings of Composition and the Continuation of Peer Response Work:
The Work of Peter Elbow and Donald Murray

There are two early composition theorists whose names instantly spring to mind with respect to the use of peer response groups in composition classrooms: Donald Murray and Peter Elbow. Both of these compositionists make explicit reference in some of their more influential work to the idea of using peer group response in classrooms, and I want to take a moment to focus on what I see as two of the most important ideas/principles of peer response from Murray and Elbow's work: Murray's idea of the writing workshop and Elbow's idea of the "teacherless writing class" (Murray and Elbow *Writing Without Teachers*).

For Elbow the "Teacherless Writing Class" is a group of 7-12 people who meet once a week and read their own and others' pieces of writing, the goal being "for the writer to come as close as possible to be able to see and experience his own words through seven or more people. That's all" (77). It is this sort of experiencing of the writer's "own words" that I want to focus on for a moment. Elbow believes in the individual writer, in her voice, and in the power and importance of this voice, and he really believes that the sort of response that a writer needs from a peer, or anyone else for that matter, is a sort of subjective response—what Elbow calls a "movie of the mind" (*A Community of Writers* 534). As Elbow describes it, a movie of a peer's mind provides an author with, "an accurate account of what goes on inside readers' heads" as the reader reads the author's work, and Elbow claims that this sort of subjective response is, "the

form of response that really underlies all other forms—the foundation of all feedback” (*A Community of Writers* 534).

I and many other researchers, including Karen Spear, Anne Gere, Sarah Freedman, Anne DiPardo and Kenneth Bruffee, are in agreement with Elbow in that we see value in the sort of social interaction that occurs when writers give each other subjective reader-based response—not critique. In fact, our views match those of our student writers who, “cannot and do not want to play the role of teacher” (Freedman 30). There are many roles that students are willing to, and can, play in peer response, but if asked to be overly critical they will often (provided they are polite) respond as Bartleby the Scrivener did with, “I’d prefer not to.”

For me, this is the clearest strength to Elbow’s understanding of how students will want to respond to each other—as readers who are giving their responses, not their evaluations, to a peers’ work. In my research I lean heavily on Elbow’s conception of the inherent value of personalized, subjective response because it not only helps writers learn to write, it reflects the reality that my students and myself have experienced over the course of my last two years of classroom based research: that the act of giving and receiving peer response is a learned activity that becomes increasingly subjective and increasingly student centered.

Like Elbow, Don Murray in *A Writer Teaches Writing* sees value in subjective response, but he qualifies this very heavily with his insistence on the importance of the author controlling the response that he or she receives. Murray, who talks about peer response in terms of a whole class peer workshop and smaller peer workshops, believes

that a writer must have some control over the process by which his or her paper is responded to; in fact, he demands that the first step of a full-class peer led workshop start with the writer commenting on his or her draft (193). However, what's interesting about this issue of authorial control is that it is in fact Murray who starts out the full group workshop by asking the writer, "How can we help you?" (194).

This may seem ironic at first; after all, how can a writer control his or her conference, have his or her issues addressed, if he or she doesn't even start the conference. However, Murray is simply doing something that Sandra Lawrence and Elizabeth Sommers talk about in "From the Park Bench to the (Writing) Workshop Table: Encouraging Collaboration among Inexperienced Writers": he is actively teaching response to his students, as well as showing that he values it (108). As Lawrence and Sommers state in reviewing their research on peer revision in a Composition 101 class, "students benefited from teachers who were willing to make a commitment to group work through careful training, supervision, modeling, and sequencing of classroom activities for an appropriate assignment" (108). Thus, Murray is making an effort to show students how they might be able to respond to their peers' papers, and he is taking an active role in foregrounding the writer's desires for particular response.

Murray has reasons for recommending that writers set the agenda for a peer conference, and characteristically his reasons are both personal and practical. Personally, Murray reveals that he came upon his model of peer response for group workshops after being "burned" in a writing conference by some of his colleagues, all of whom focused on Murray's errors without letting him state his own worries about the piece (194). This

was, for Murray, a gestalt experience, something that made him see the value in the writer leading the peer workshop—or at least starting it off. And Murray believes that not only does this keep a writer from being discouraged, it also helps her or him learn how to give response; after all, students are (as Murray point out) often more critical and perceptive about their own writing than we as teachers are (194).

Murray further highlights the critical and perceptive nature of student writers in his writing on small-group peer workshops, workshops that also stipulate “The writer speaks first and sets the agenda” (198). Murray believes not only in the sacrosanct nature of the writer’s vision for her or his piece, he also believes that students and teachers have a right and obligation to contribute their understandings of piece, but the writer has to ultimately realize that they need not take their teacher or peers’ comments “too seriously” because they are not commands but suggestions—which can be accepted or denied (199).

This point, that comments are suggestions not demands and that the writer has to ultimately lead the response to his or her piece, are two ideas that have woven themselves into the very fabric of my teaching. In short, I’ve adapted Murray’s ideas about the importance of writers leading peer response on their pieces. My reasons, like Murray’s, are both personal and practical. Like Murray, I’ve had pieces eviscerated by a group of peers (principally in writing workshops in creative writing classes), and my ultimate response was to shelve the pieces or to ignore the “advice” that I got. However, I also believe, like Murray, that there’s a great value to having students learn to do peer response. Peer response is an ongoing process of refining your readings of others’ work, and of refining your presentation of the self in that process. Ultimately, the self who has the most to lose in this social interaction is the writer, who presumably has some sort of

investment in his or her own writing. To put forth your words and concerns and to be ignored can be, at the very least, annoying and, at worst, crushing. Ultimately, peer response work is really about not just writing, but about the writing of the self.

Collaborative Learning Theory and Composition Studies

Of course the self does not exist in isolation, and much of the writing on conventional peer response makes specific reference to this fact—particularly the work that’s been done in composition on the theory and practice of collaborative learning. One of the best places to start an overview of how collaborative learning theory has entered into composition, and into the work done on conventional peer response, is to look at one of the founding fathers of collaborative learning in composition: Kenneth Bruffee.

Bruffee’s work on collaborative writing started in 1972 with the publication of “The Way Out: A Critical Survey of Innovations in College Teaching, With Special Reference to the December 1971 Issue of *College English*.” In this article, after surveying teaching trends from the 1970s, Bruffee argues teachers need to create a classroom environment in which he/she shares power, information and responsibility with his/her students. Later in “Collaborative Learning: Some Practical Models,” Bruffee went on to specifically outline how a teacher might do this, and not surprisingly this involves “collaborative learning.” Specifically this involves a teacher setting up a class structure (Bruffee talks about a discussion structured class and a class that made use of a written “convention”), and then the teacher conducts the class, “by posing problems of increasing generality for each learning group to solve” (642). Ultimately, Bruffee

hopes that both students and teachers will see their roles differently, and that both groups can learn from each other (Bruffee “Collaborative Learning: Some Practical Models”).

In the 1984 article, “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind,’” Bruffee argues even more explicitly for teachers to engage in collaborative learning, which he defines as “a form of indirect teaching in which the teacher sets the problem and organizes the students to work it out collaboratively” (638). Bruffee drew on work of a diverse number of disciplines in his article, principally the work of British medical educators, and all of this work is grounded in the social nature of language and collaboration. Also, Bruffee was concerned with the fact that many students were showing up at the doors of the University, via the open admissions movement of the 1970s, underprepared or unprepared. He believed, as Gayle Burkowski notes, that,

By changing the social context of learning, collaborative learning ‘harnessed the powerful educative force of peer influence that had been—and largely still is—ignored and hence wasted by traditional forms of education.’ (24)

Thus, collaborative learning theory, and its practice, is in large part concerned with making peer influence a direct part of the curriculum so that students can learn to be better writers, readers and people.

Of course not everyone agrees with Bruffee’s assessment of collaborative writing, particularly with his insistence on the positive aspects of consensus. In *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*, Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford repeat Greg Myers’ critique of Bruffee:

‘While Bruffee shows that reality can be seen as a social construct, he does not give us any way to criticize this construct. Having discovered the role of consensus in

the production of knowledge, he takes this consensus as something that just is, rather than as something that might be good or bad' (115)

This is an important point to consider about collaborative writing: at what point can collaboration, and the community that encompasses it, be something that constrains or even represses students? Is it possible that collaborative writing work, the kind that Bruffee believes very deeply in, could become “co-opting?” Or that it could simply perpetuate unequal power relationships that already exist among peers?

I, and the literature on the use of collaborative learning theory in writing classrooms, do not have a definitive answer to that question; however, I think that some of the work done around the idea of “peerness,” which I discuss later in this chapter addresses this issue. For the moment I just want to point out that a great deal of literature in the Writing Center Community, points out that unequal power relationships can, and do, exist within “peer relationships,” and that it is possible for peers to co-opt other peers’ work (Healy, Suffredini, Bokser, and Gillam, Callaway, and Wikoff).

However, most of the literature on collaborative learning is overwhelming in favor of the work which Edwin Mason, the coiner of the term “collaborative learning” viewed as “a radical restructuring” of the educational system (Ede and Lunsford 111). A restructuring that would lead to an educational system in his native Britain that would emphasize “interdisciplinary study, small group work, collaboration, and dialogue—largely in the spirit of John Dewey” (Ede and Lunsford 112).

This attitude, that collaborative learning can lead to a restructuring of a larger system, is at the heart of some work in composition (Ede and Lunsford, Shor and Bleich),

but there is also much work in collaborative learning that focuses not on changing the educational system, but on the benefits of collaboration for students.

A number of studies explore the benefits of collaborative learning, via some form of writing, for peer response. While it's not within the purview of this dissertation to talk at length about the many studies that make use of collaborative writing, I just want to mention two important points that are germane to peer response work—both conventional and computer-based work.

One is a point that Joan Rothstein-Vandergriff and Joan Tedrow make at the end of a paper they co-presented at the 1988 Conference on College Composition and Communication:

That the collaborative groups [in their study] become the source of good friendships. Our university is a large, urban commuter campus, and students frequently don't get the opportunity to make friends, to participate in a network of students, to create the kind of emotion and intellectual support a person needs to get through college. . . All of our students—racial minorities, handicapped students, and basic writers, the people who often feel lost and anonymous in the traditional lecture-style classroom—all of these people grow to feel more a part of the university. (12)

When I first read this passage, it seemed like Rothstein-Vandergriff and Gilson were talking about a nice ancillary benefit. However, after a little bit of thought, I began to doubt my first assumption. Research into retention rates at universities has shown that making friends, and finding like minded peers with whom to work, is a pretty good predictor of student success in college—more specifically, in them staying in college (Thayer, Johnson and Romanoff, St. John). In fact, in recent years there has been a move to set up learning communities so that students can collectively engage in “shared

learning' and 'connected learning'" via shared living space and shared classroom experiences (Thayer 5).

Thus, by fostering deeper connections between students in class, collaborative learning can not only help students as writers, but as people struggling to make their way into the academy. This is an affective piece of collaborative writing that interest me, particularly in terms of how students might define themselves relative to other selves in the act of peer revision. Ultimately, the relationships that students form with their peers in their response groups can affect the success or failure of these groups academically, and this is an important realization that I've gleaned from collaborative learning.

The last aspect of collaborative writing I want to address, at least for the moment, is a distinction that Jane Lightcap Brown makes while referring to the work of Tomol Pennisi and Patrick Lawler about the ends of collaboration. Brown writes:

Pennisi and Lawler categorize collaborative writing activities as 'group writing on the micro level (where students provide inspiration to one another concerning language) and group writing on the macro level (where students not only participate in the language of the group, but also influence larger aspects of structure, themes, issues). (37).

This distinction, about the sort of response students can get from collaborative writing group members, is important. Obviously, I and the teachers I've worked with would like students to start to work together on macro level writing issues, but we realize, as Brown, Pennisi and Lawler point out, that doing this is not an easy thing (37). Thus, from this point in the literature of collaborative learning, I extract an important caveat: you need to teach students not only to engage in peer response, but to engage in peer response that works with issues at the macro level.

Conventional Peer Response

The work that students do in micro and macro collaborative learning is a social interaction through language, and this attitude is consonant with much of the work around the nature of conventional peer response. As Joseph Harris points out, the social nature of writing wasn't much discussed prior to the mid 1980s, but that changed pretty rapidly following the publication of a number of articles influenced by Thomas Kuhn's idea of "paradigm shift." Kenneth Bruffee, Patricia Bizzell, and Maxine Hariston all argued that a paradigm shift had occurred in Composition Studies—a shift that moved discussion of writing away from talk about "the writing process" towards a discussion of the social nature of writing.

This move towards the social also involved a pragmatic concern that Kenneth Bruffee expresses when he writes,

The social constructionist alternative identifies knowledge and language and regards them as inseparable. Placing language at the center of our understanding of knowledge and of the authority of knowledge, it thereby places reading and writing unequivocally where (in my professional self-interested opinion) it belongs, *at the center of the liberal arts curriculum and the whole educational process*. (235, "Social Construction, Language and the Authority of Knowledge")

My italics at the end of the paragraph are intended to emphasize what Bruffee honestly refers to as his "self-interested opinion" in terms of the utility to composition of a social turn: that composition, the longtime guardian of academic reading and writing at the University, might be moved to "the center" of the liberal arts. In short, Bruffee wants composition to receive a place at the table where literature studies and philosophy already sit; he wants composition, which has been seen as a site of service and drudgery to the

wider University since the Harvard Composition program was started in 1885, to be afforded full status as a liberal art (Connors, *Composition Rhetoric*, 185).

This attempt to move Composition towards a philosophical position that other liberal arts shared, principally philosophy and literature, is responsible for much of the extant writing on peer group response work, or, to be more accurate, it is the theory that shows through the moment you scratch the surface of much of the literature on conventional peer response.

However, this concern for the social nature of conventional peer response has two focuses: a concern with the process of conventional peer response and a concern with students' experiences with peer response. By this I mean that many studies of conventional peer response (Freedman, Herrman, Leverenz, De Guerrero and Villamil) emphasize the "what" of conventional peer response (i.e. the social nature of dialogue, the importance of classroom environment, issues of culture) while other studies (Newkirk "Direction and Misdirection," Nystrand and Brandt, Russell, Lawrence and Sommers) seem more concerned with the "who" of conventional peer response—more specifically how individual students make use, either effectively or ineffectively, of peer response. Of course these two categories are not absolute categories; what I'm talking about is a difference of degree, not kind.

An important study that clearly is concerned with the "what" of conventional peer response is Sarah Freedman's study "Peer Response Groups in Two Ninth-Grade Classrooms." This technical report from the Center for the Study of Writing, attempts to understand how peer response can be affected by the classroom culture in which it is

situated. The clear importance that Freedman sees in the classroom environment for peer response (one group had few opportunities to respond to texts and the other considerably more) is reflected in the conclusions that she reaches at the end of her study (29-30). At the end of her work, Freedman writes that:

In this study I have shown as much what goes wrong as what goes right when response groups are used in two ninth-grade classrooms. On the positive side, these ninth-grade students show how groups help them respond to their own work, as they sense the needs of the present audience. Self-response is stimulated by the groups. Students also use groups to discuss the content of their writing, even when they are not directed to do so. When they initiate talk about content, they encourage and question one another and show evidence that they own their writing. (30)

Clearly Freedman finds much to recommend the work that goes on in peer response groups—particularly when the groups exist in a classroom setting that values and encourages peer response. However, and this is maybe the most important thing about Freedman’s work, there are limits to what students are willing and able to do in peer response groups. If students feel that they are forced to play the “role of teacher” and evaluate fellow students’ writing, they will blanch, and if they feel that they are doing peer response work simply to fill out a peer review sheet—then the peer response will suffer (Freedman 30).

This is a terribly important point to consider about any sort of peer response: students reading of the motives behind peer response and their subsequent commitment to the work of peer response. Freedman’s work is part of the reason that I decided to use Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) to assess student attitudes towards peer response and the roles that they play while giving and receiving peer response (Angelo and Cross). My contention, explored more deeply in chapters four and five, is that student attitudes towards peer response often are critical to the “success” or “failure” of

peer response work, and I believe that these attitudes, while often tied to student experience, gender, and class, are often contingent on the way that the process of peer response is taught and used in a particular class.

In an important review of the extant work on peer response groups and revision as of 1989, Andrea Herrman writes of how

Teachers have turned their classrooms into communities of learners, as the focus on writing pedagogy shifts from written products to writing as a process, and as ways of making knowledge—including writing—are viewed from a collaborative or social perspective. (2)

Herrman sees this pedagogical effort in terms of conventional peer response groups reflected in a large range of scholars from James Moffett to Lester Faigley; however, she also feels that “‘peer conferencing’ or ‘peer collaboration,’ have become a pedagogical tool in a wide-range of teaching/learning contexts” (2).

Herrman, goes on to report some preliminary findings which indicate that young students often seemed to benefit as writers from peer response, and that “under certain conditions, computers as writing tools appear to promote a collaborative environment, both in learning to write and in learning to use the technology” (3). However, what’s interesting about Herrman’s claim, which she supported by some of the early work on computers and peer revision, is that she doesn’t spend much time speaking to the “certain conditions” in a computerized classroom, which would aid peer response work. The exact nature of these conditions is something that my research explores, factoring in, as Herrman suggests we should, “that the effects of peer comments on revision is not a simple cause and effect matter, but rather a complex one, dependent upon the

interrelationship of multiple factors within the evolving social environment of particular classrooms and groups of students” (3).

This concern with the particular nature of conventional peer response, its process/es, is reflected in a wide range of literature. Specifically one can see it in the fields of ESL (De Guerrero and Villamil) and Cultural Studies (Leverenz). The De Guerrero and Vilamill article focuses on how L2 learners can learn in Vygotsky’s “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) through the use of scaffolding procedures, which the authors describe as “those supportive behaviors by which an expert can help a novice learner achieve higher levels of regulation” (51). What is interesting about this work is that it hints at the importance of the social nature of learning, via Vygotsky’s idea of ZPD, and, more importantly for my purposes, that it speaks specifically to both teacher and peer intervention in the peer response process. Specifically it makes reference to techniques that I use frequently make use of in teaching students: modeling and the use of minilessons (64).

Of course the use of modeling and minilessons does not guarantee that students will be able to effectively “do” peer response. The ability to “do” peer response involves many factors, and, as Carrie Leverenz points out in “Peer Response in the Multicultural Composition Classroom: Dissensus—A Dream (Deferred),” one of the factors in the ultimate success of group response work are the power relations among the “peers” of a peer response group. What is so important about Leverenz’s work (and the work that I’ll reference a little later from the Writing Center Community) is that it explodes the idea that all students in a class are co-equal peers. Leverenez makes it very clear that issues of race and class are not overcome by having students engage in peer response.

At the beginning of her article, Leverenz introduces us to:

Beth, a white woman who was a senior majoring in English; Carol, an African American woman and sophomore honors student; Patricia, a Korean American woman and senior history major; and Robert, an African American man who was a well-known college athlete majoring in business. (171)

After explaining that Robert didn't attend the peer response session that is the focus of her article, Leverenz begins to show how Beth dominated her response group—insisting that the group adopt her ideas about “the correct way to write about texts” (173). Unlike Patricia and Carol who often wrote pieces in which their evidence for their arguments was experiential, Beth drew her authority from texts—which she claimed was the “right” way to create a paper (172). Over the course of the peer response group work under discussion, it becomes clear that Beth has difficulty understanding the lived experience of Carol and Patricia, and its validity as evidence. The end result of this is two-fold: one, that Beth responds to Carol and Patricia according to her own idea of good, textually based writing, and that Carol and Patricia have nothing to say to Beth about her own writing. Ultimately, Leverenz argues that Beth in some way silences Carol and Patricia and that the group of Carol, Patricia and Beth “was not made up of knowledgeable peers who share the same paradigms and the same set of values but, instead, replicated an uneven distribution of power” (184).

This point, about the variable nature of peer power and experience, is a point that I will elaborate on in my work in chapters four and five. Peer respondents are not simply co-equals; they are raced, classed and gendered beings who can't help, to some degree, replicating and being affected by the power relations of the wider society around them. A group of students in a particular classroom have a variety of experiences (be them with technology, peer response, or with the wider culture), and all of these experiences are

sure to effect the way that they go about being a “peer.” My contention is that to be a “peer” is to perform a variety of selves in the presence of other selves, and that if this orientation is forgotten (that raced, classed, and gendered selves are at work in peer response), then it is nearly impossible to understand the workings of peer response work—both conventional and computer-based peer response.

It is also nearly impossible to understand the workings of peer response groups without thinking about the “who” of conventional peer response—how individual students make use, either effectively or ineffectively, of peer response. One researcher who asked “who” is Thomas Newkirk. In his article, “Direction an Misdirection in Peer Response” Newkirk seriously questions whether students and teachers use the same criteria to read student writing in composition classes (309). As Newkirk points, out there is something a bit fishy in asking students to “write for their peers,” because it assumes two things:

That the teacher is fully aware of the criteria that the peer audience applies to students’ writing, and that those criteria are consistent with the aims of an introductory writing course at the college level (309).

As Newkirk points out, too often student and teacher are not reading the same piece of work because they do not share the same expectations about writing. The students’ peers do not necessarily share the teacher’s ideas of what makes writing good, and this, combined with Freedman’s point about students unwillingness to be cast in the “teacher’s role,” makes peer response a complicated matter of communicating across discourse community boundaries (Freedman 30).

It's terribly important to keep Newkirk's conclusions in mind as one prepares to use peer response groups in class. One needs to make sure that ideas about good writing are shared by teachers and students, and that the teacher must actually teach students what sort of peer response they might give their peers. Thus, in the research studies that make up the bulk of my dissertation, I made very certain that I taught students what sort of peer response I expected, or at least hoped for, from them, and that to accomplish this we shared peer response tasks (via shared texts we critiqued); peer response techniques (such as Peter Elbow's "movies of the mind"); and expectations about what peer response could accomplish (a reading of a text—but not "the reading" of a text).

Along with this lesson about some of the gaps in expectation of peer response, I also took another lesson from Newkirk's work—that when my readings of student texts differed from the readings of their peers it was not necessarily the result of students' "misreadings" of other students' texts (311). As Newkirk says,

When I began collecting student responses, I tended to view those that differed from my own as 'misreadings.' Like one of Plato's advantaged souls, I assumed that I soared higher and had a clearer view of The Good than my lower-altitude students . . . But as I reread the student comments, I began to see their plausibility, their coherence. They no longer appeared erratic; rather they seemed to arise from reasonable assumptions about writing . . . As a result I try to listen longer and better when a student explains a judgment, always assuming it makes sense. Previously I would have rushed in, eager to change what I had not tried to understand. (311)

This lesson, that there is another and important perspective to be found in students readings of texts, is something that I have come to believe in very deeply. Students will often see many of the same things I see as weaknesses and strengths in texts, and they often have a perspective, or a relationship, that makes students more likely to listen to them.

Let me give you a quick example.

In a study I conducted two years ago on CMC peer revision, a student, named Rachel¹, had written a researched based piece on her heritage as a descendant of Maine's Penobscot people. A peer, her best friend actually, suggested that she tell more of the stories and legends that she only alluded to in her first draft. Rachel—in response to her friend's request for more stories—incorporated, in her final draft of her research paper, over three pages of Penobscot legends and stories—legends that helped Rachel realize that “No longer is my heritage a complete mystery to me” (Rachel, “Missing Heritage” 11).

I will be the first to admit that the three pages of stories, in a twelve page paper, seemed like a bit much to me at first, and I initially felt that Rachel had been led, through her friend's comment, on an unprofitable detour. However, something odd happened to me when I read Rachel's paper a second time before grading it: I began to think about those stories in relation to her and her relation to them. I began to realize that my initial reaction to her paper was uninformed and “Platonic” in the way that Newkirk describes. I was evaluating Rachel's paper in terms of its adherence to a set standard, and more particularly to the way that the stories seemed unconnected to Rachel's immediate thesis—that her research on the Penobscot people had helped her realize what it means to be “50% Italian, 35% English, and 15% American Indian” (Rachel, “Missing Heritage” 1). However, I realized, upon reflection and a talk with a Wapanoag friend of mine, that the stories themselves were directly tied to Rachel's thesis. In short, I had reacted to

¹ This is a pseudonym. For a more detailed explanation of my use of pseudonyms, see chapter three.

Rachel's paper through my own academic and racial lens, and this lens had distorted Rachel's reality.

It is this humbling point I want to emphasize in my last two chapters—the chapters that deal with my most recent research project and its implications for the wider field of composition. There is a risk in allowing your own unexamined ideas of “the good” in writing to guide your view of peer response. Peer respondents cannot, and I will argue should not, read with the same lens as a teacher. And this attitude runs counter to the popular, if unsupported, conclusion that one of the purposes of peer response should be for students to give critical, teacherly response. In my view peer respondents need to give their subjective impressions of a peer's work in terms that they and the peer understand. They need to learn techniques for doing this from the teacher (and they should also have some sense of what the teacher views as good peer response); however, they should not be forced to read evaluatively—as an apprentice teacher. This is a role that they'll either refuse or quite simply do badly.

Another, and very important, writer about the problems and potential of conventional peer response work is Karen Spear, and her book *Sharing Writing Peer Response Groups in English Classes* is a remarkable work of theory becoming praxis and vice a versa. For Spear peer response work in terms of writing is a difficult process that involves listening, reading, and writing skills, and she is quite aware that students can, if untutored, fall into “safe, objective, and non-threatening” response—response that manages to be both positive and positively unhelpful at the same time (24). However peer response can, if students commit to it, “bridge the gap between the ‘unreality’ that students often find in school” and “the vital and interesting realities that surround them

out of school” (83). This point is an interesting and important one in that it hints at the way that the selves that a student adopts during peer response are the result of both their experience inside, and outside, of the classroom. This is a key point in understanding how students perform their selves during peer response work.

Aside from this key point, there is something about the whole of Spear’s work that I find very appealing. She manages, in one short text, to deal with theoretical and praxis in a deeply meaningful way. Her take on peer response is based on the work of Newkirk, Murray, Sommers, Bruffee and even the work of Carl Rogers. However, she also manages to talk about how secondary and college teachers might set up a process writing class that makes use of peer response groups, covering everything from how to establish groups to techniques for “Recording Peer Input” (Spear 171). It is this practical and theoretical approach to peer response work that I want to emulate, as best I can, within the limits of my studies.

There is at least one book that showcases—at least in part—the work of teachers dedicated to peer response, and this is *Writing and Response: Theory, Practice and Research*. This text deals broadly with issues in response, talking about everything from teachers’ comments in conferences to early uses of CMC peer response. At the moment what interests me most in this work is Martin Nystrand and Deborah Brandt’s piece, “Response to Writing As A Context for Learning to Write.” In this piece Nystrand and Brandt describe “a student centered method of teaching expository writing,” in which they examined the response work of five students and the revisions authors made based on those responses (210). Nystrand and Brandt, in discussing the results of their study (which videotaped a response group at work over the course of a semester), write that,

in a very basic way, the extent of the discussion predicted the extent of the revision. If a discussion was short, perfunctory, or focused on surface correctness, subsequent revisions were typically perfunctory and limited to surface changes. On the other hand extended talk typically led to more revisions, and talk that focused on clarifying and elaborating specific points in a draft more predictably yielded revisions at the level of genre, topic, or commentary (and sometimes at all three). (221)

This point is interesting because it reflects a goal that many of us have: that peer review discussions move past a concern with surface error and towards some discussion of the structure and meaning of the work at hand. Brandt and Nystrand give us a reason for believing this, other than our own inherent biases for meaning over surface concerns. However, I must say I am a little skeptical about Nystrand and Brandt's claims.

It is a dodgy proposition to try to make a one-to-one connection between student response and revisions—unless of course you ask students about the comments with a transcript of a peer revision session in front of you. Even then, you have to take into the account that you're asking a student to remember back to a distant moment—with hindsight and retrospect clouding their and your vision of the process. Thus, while I take some hope from Brandt and Nystrand's work, I can't let myself be overly concerned with it; in fact, the logistic and other problems associated with making one-to-one connections between revisions and peer group work stopped me from trying to make that kind of causal connection between peer response and revisions in my own research studies. It seems to me to really understand how students use feedback from students to engage in revision, you would not only have to interview them—you would have to access to their world outside of the classroom. You'd have to know if students talked to other students in their dorm room, if they got feedback from the campus Writing Center, if they talked to their parents about their paper, and whether they considered revising their paper while they drifted off while eating a tossed green salad in the dining hall. Ultimately, I can

only offer theories about correlations between peer responses and revisions, but they are just that, theories.

However, I am not alone in thinking that some sort of immediate benefit precedes from peer response work. In "From the Park Bench to the (Writing) Workshop Table: Encouraging Collaboration among Inexperienced Writers," Sandra Lawrence and Elizabeth Sommers talk about some highly successful peer response groups. They are concerned with the fact that "many teachers at both the secondary and college levels continue to be discouraged by the apparent failure of response groups with their students" (101). They take a critical look at the talk that occurs in two first year composition classes, and they discover, almost to their surprise, that,

peer response groups focused primarily on the task at hand, with more than 90% of the talk considered task-related talk, more than 60% of the comments involved elements of the draft, the majority of them specific comments about focus, organization, and development of content. (105)

The question is then, how did this sort of talk happen? The answer that Lawrence and Sommers provide involves four elements. First, they point out that the teachers involved in the study (who are Sommers and Lawrence) actually taught students how to engage in peer response through "role-playing, modeling, extensive group discussion and clear rules about participation" (108). Second, they "worked on assignments that allowed them to experience first-hand the difference between speech and writing and to receive appropriate scaffolding" (108). Third, "students used journals in appropriate and useful ways, allowing both writers and respondents to make direct connection, to learn the advantages of writing before talking, to give respondents needed time to look at drafts globally and holistically" (108). And finally, "students benefited from teachers who were

willing to make a commitment to group work through careful training, supervision, modeling, and sequencing of classroom activities for an appropriate assignment” (108). It is this fourth and final point that I want to spend a little bit of time working through here.

Rich discussion about papers, the sort of discussion that addresses fundamental structural elements of students’ works, is not the sort of thing that just happens. There has to be a commitment to teaching students, not training them, how to do peer response. I want to make this a very clear distinction because sometimes there is talk in the literature of peer response (Lawrence and Sommers, De Guerrero and Villamil) about training students to do peer response, which to me has a behaviorist connotation that I find somewhat disturbing. I realize that I’m making a semantic point, but I think it’s an important one because in order for peer response work to produce rich, detailed discussions of texts there has to be ongoing modeling and scaffolding. Thus, the response work that I do in classrooms as a teacher-researcher takes into account this need—a need to engage students in peer response work that is ongoing. To me “training” has another negative connotation, aside from the behaviorist tinge to it: that you can send students through a few training sessions and then expect them to be “good” peer responders. This model, which one often sees in workplace computer “training” classes, is not an ideal model to follow—particularly for a teacher like myself who is influenced by social-expressivist pedagogy. What room is there in training for the exploration of the self and its relation to other if you merely “train” people to do peer response? I would argue very little.

However, this is one point of disagreement that I have with Lawrence and Sommers, and I think that their point about teachers committing to teaching peer response, particularly if it is an ongoing process, is an important point about how conventional peer response work needs to happen.

However, it is possible for teachers to take on too much responsibility for peer response work. In a very recent article on the use of conventional peer response work in second language classrooms, Fiona Hyland, makes an excellent point about the danger of teachers' excessive interventions in conventional peer response work leading to "students relinquishing control of their writing and revision processes, as well as their written product" (33). The interesting thing is that the primary means that teachers in this study used to intervene in their students writing was via peer response sheets, but that these sheets were often viewed not only as an assignment to be done, but as an obstacle to receiving the rich comments that students in Lawrence and Sommers work obtained (42). The students "work" with these sheets was perfunctory at best, and the students revealed (via a questionnaire administered at the end of class, observations of class, and interviews) that the sort of feedback they desired was often given to them by classmates, friends or family members in an informal, conversational context (51).

Hyland's work, along with the observations of Sarah Freedman, point out the danger of trying to micro-manage, via peer response sheets, the work that peer respondents do. What Hyland adds to Freedman is this: that informal talk may be one of the best ways for students to get feedback about their writing. Hyland reminds us that talk is an important part of learning, and that ultimately any form of effective conventional peer response has to engage in some sort talk.

Peer Group Talk

There has been a concern with the oral component of peer response work from the earliest work done with peer response up to the present—principally with how to make oral group response an effective way of giving feedback to authors (Huang 4-7). In *Writing Without Teachers* (first published in 1973) Peter Elbow outlines his idea of what oral response from peers in the “Teacherless Writing Class” should look like. For Elbow, readers need to give authors “movies of their minds,” which involves not holding the piece under review up to a certain standard but “answering a time-bound, subjective but factual question: what happened in your when you read the words *this time*” (“Writing Without Teachers” 85).

I have, for the last four or so years, stolen Elbow’s idea about having peer respondents focus, at least initially, on giving authors movies of their minds, and it has been an enriching experience for me and, according to my class evaluations, my students as well. However, it is a hard experience to research; after all, how can you render something as fleeting and momentary as oral discourse in a peer response session? The answer is that you can at least try to capture some of the flavor of oral peer response, but that the process will be involved because you not only have to capture the sounds of oral response (which any decent tape recorder can do), but you actually have to then figure out how to transcribe that response and make sense of it.

One of the key texts in my understanding of how to make sense of oral peer response work comes from Laura Gray-Rosendale’s. In *Rethinking Basic Writing: Exploring Identity, Politics, and Community in Interaction*, Gray-Rosendale’s endeavors

to understand how basic writers construct their selves in the presence of others through discussion and writing. To do this, Gray-Rosendale borrows from the social sciences, principally from work done in the field of Conversation Analysis, a subfield of Ethnomethodology (32-33). For Gray-Rosendale, conversation analysis involves three main premises:

(a) ordinary talk is systematically and strongly organized, (b) its analysis should be based on naturally occurring data, and (c) analytic interests should not be constrained by external considerations. (36)

In effect, this means that Gray-Rosendale attempts to understand peer response work on its own terms as a speech act, and Conversation Analysis, which focuses on exact renderings of the way that language is spoken (which includes pauses, renderings of accents, and other specific components of speech), gives her a way to think about peer group speech.

What particularly impressed me about Gray-Rosendale's work was the way that she managed, using techniques from Conversation Analysis, to glean some powerful insights from one meeting of a peer group. Out of this one meeting she made me realize a number of things: one, that the selves of writers and readers are negotiated on a moment to moment basis; two, that the conventions of peer group speech are reliant on oral conventions that are learned inside, and outside, of the classroom; and three, that the conversation that happens in peer groups is essential not only to the growth of students as writers, but to their growth as intellectual beings (Gray-Rosendale). I will have much more to say about Gray-Rosendale's work, and Conversation Analysis generally, in my chapter on methods and methodology. However, for now I want to point out that from

Gray-Rosendale I gained insights into how peer group talk might not only help shape evolving writing, but evolving selves.

Another scholar who has shaped my view of the role of talk in writing is Michael Kleine. In his article in the fall 1985 *Journal of Teaching Writing*, “What Freshmen Say—And Might Say—To Each Other About Their Writing,” Kleine discusses some roles that students might play, and he calls these roles Evaluators, Helpful Listeners, and Readers—under readers there being two subcategories, that of the Immediate Reader and the Audience (224). For Kleine, Evaluators are concerned with formal or surface level content, and they are often operating out of a perception that grammar is really “what matters” (224). Helpful listeners are folks who give writers “Rogerian feedback” and respect the writer’s needs during the revision (224). The two classifications of reader are perhaps the most interesting roles that Kleine describes.

The reader roles deal, in some way, with the way that students read and respond to other students work orally, and I have used Kleine’s “reader” categories in my own coding scheme, modifying them slightly. (For a more complete discussion of this, see my discussion of the “reader” self in my chapter on methods and methodology.) I also combine Kleine’s sorting of peer group selves with Gray-Rosendale’s gestalt-like sense of how oral peer response work proceeds. In other words, I talk about how the selves that students’ perform orally are shaped, moment-by-moment, by the social context in which they unfold. I also make sure that the oral component of peer response isn’t lost when students began writing peer response, be it with pen, pencil, or computer.

The Literature on CMC and Computer-Aided Peer Revision

The Rise of the Field of Computers and Composition: 1979-Present

Computers and Composition is a very new subfield of Composition, with the first dissertation being written in the field in 1979 by Hugh Burns; thus, the field itself is only 20 some years old (Hawisher, *Computers and the Teaching of Writing* x). However, in that time a number of pieces have been written about how computer mediated and online peer response works—or might work. Some of earliest pieces deal with how word-processors can be used to facilitate peer response and revision of student papers (Hawisher “The Effects of Word Processing,” Kurth and Owston). However, very soon after that, there came papers exploring peer response in CMC environments (Spitzer, Cornell).

The interesting thing about these early studies is that they all partook, in one way or another, of the tremendous and often uncritical enthusiasm that typified writing about computers and composition from the early 70s to early 90s. It was as Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran and Selfe put it in *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education*, an era of “Growth and Enthusiasm,” with a more critical mindset becoming evident in the late 80s (65). However, the unexamined nature of race, gender, and power didn’t last for long; at least not generally in field of computers and composition.

Researchers like Richard Selfe, Cynthia Selfe, Gail Hawisher, and Janet Eldred began to question the easy assumptions of the computer revolution. The Selfes (Cynthia and Richard) questioned the bias inherent in the “desktops” of the computer—asking

what the desktop of a computer meant in terms of race and class. Thus, for Selfe and Selfe, the computer interface (they cite the folders, telephones, desk calendars, and clocks of the Macintosh desktop interface) supports a type of capitalism that they—as critics of capitalism—don't wish to support (Selfe and Selfe 486-487). And while it's possible to argue that the icons of the "Mac World" also have significance within a school setting (folders, clocks, etc.), Selfe and Selfe create a convincing argument that the iconic representation of the Mac desktop owes more to office, rather than school, culture.

Selfe and Selfe then go onto argue that not only does a Macintosh desktop tacitly affirm capitalism (via it's iconic representations of programs), but also its icons

signal—to users of color, to users who come from a non-English language background, to users from low socio-economic backgrounds—that entering the virtual worlds of interfaces also means, at least in part and at some level, entering a world constituted around the lives and values of white, male, middle- and upper-class professionals. (Selfe and Selfe 487)

This sort of disturbing, and compelling, claim began to be made more and more. It became harder to believe the hype about the genderless, raceless, classless nature of the computer Interface after Selfe and Selfe published.

Along the same critical lines as Selfe and Selfe, Janet Eldred and Gail Hawisher went back to examine the airily optimistic research of the early years of computers and composition, and they found fault with many of the studies that extolled the anonymity afforded by networked computers. They ended up claiming that the field had engaged in a wholesale importation of data from the Social Sciences, but had failed to bring along the methodology. As Eldred and Hawisher put it, "Done responsibly such importation [the importation of empirical and speculative research] involves not just the light load of

a single piece of research, but the heavy freight of an entire field of inquiry” (Eldred and Hawisher). Thus, Hawisher and Eldred not only make a point about the validity of some of the claims for anonymous peer response, but they are also making a methodological claim: that you need to be aware of the context of the research that you borrow from other disciplines.

This sort of skeptical and questioning bent in subfield of computers and composition, this unwillingness to see technology as natural, has continued through the 1990s. Researchers have begun to question how gender is enacted online (Fey “Finding Voice,” Haraway, Styslinger); the way that computer technology functions in educational institutions (Tyack and Cuban and Selfe “Computers in English Departments”); and even the way that students read the text of computer screens (Bernhardt and Kress). All of these issues have bearing on my work, and I want to address them in brief now—and later in chapters 4-6 in greater detail. And I’d like to start with some of the issues surrounding gender.

Initially, as Gail Hawisher and Janet Eldred point out, many researchers in the computer and composition field felt that anonymous computer-mediated spaces might make considerations of gender-bias, race, and class unimportant—since “social cues revealing age, gender, race ethnicity, status, and mood” would be physically absent (Eldred 4). However, as Hawisher and Eldred point out this didn’t in fact happen; later studies in the social sciences (where the original ideas on reduced “social cues” comes from) revealed that, “Social cues may play a much stronger role in computer communications than had previously been acknowledged” (Eldred 5). In fact, it became

apparent to many people that the leveling of gender, age, racial, and ethnic status was neither fully possible nor fully desirable.

Like Hawisher and Eldred, Tyack and Cuban and Selfe and Selfe take a critical view of the easy assumptions that many of us (including myself) hold about computers. In *Tinkering Towards Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*, Cuban and Tyack make a simple but powerful point—that every technological breakthrough from the blackboard to television has been heralded as being a “revolutionary” change in the way that schools will, and should, operate. Of course this is not the case, and if we keep Tyack and Cuban in mind, we should be at least be a little guarded in our expectations and desires that computer technology will transform the world of education.

If we are to think about computers critically and systematically, we need to keep in mind Cinthia Selfe’s piece, “Computers in English Departments: The Rhetoric of Techno/Power.” In this piece Selfe argues that power grows from understanding computer technology, and that there can be a coercive and corrosive aspect to understanding how to use computers and control people (103). This issue is important to the field and to my work because it makes obvious a hidden fact: that computer knowledge is power and that power is not a neutral term. Issues of power play into how peer group work is conducted—and how students ultimately experience it. Thus, I, and any other teacher, need to keep in mind that certain students will, and won’t, have techno/power, and that part of the work of teaching is to make sure that there is a more equitable distribution of techno/power.

Another aspect of digital literacy that English educators now have to have some understanding of are current notions of computer-based literacy, or what Stephen

Bernhardt calls “the texture of print on screens.” A sort of literacy that is situationally embedded, interactive, functionally mapped, modular, navigable, hierarchally embedded, spacious, graphically rich, and customizable and publishable (151-152). For the sake of time and our collective sanity, I don’t want to delve into all of the categories that Bernhardt brings up; I want to focus on the skills that are needed to read such fluid, transient, and graphically rich texts. The sort of texts that our students can create in computer-aided and CMC peer revision via simple programs, like Microsoft Word, and considerably more complicated ones, like FirstClass Intranet.

Bernhardt’s contention is that “Readers of screen-based text are not so much readers as doers or seekers: they read to find out how to do something or to retrieve some bit of information . . . its more like using text than reading it” (153).

Students will have to realize, and I’m sure many already have, that literacy will increasingly be a “multilayered literacy.” This is the sort of literacy of Cindy Selfe speaks of, and it is a literacy that will increasingly ask, as Gunther Kress notes, people, including our students, “to understand the semiotic potentials of each mode—sound, visual, speech—and orchestrate them to accord with his or her design. Multimedia production requires high levels of multi-modal competence” (56, “Visual and Verbal Modes of Representation”).

Thus, our understanding of literacy is complicated by the demands of a new technology. The structure of many types of computer programs encourages “surfing” or skimming across the surface of texts to acquire information. Deep and systematic reading, the kind of reading that must happen in both CMC and computer-aided peer response work, can happen, but it has to be taught. Also students have to be made aware

of when it makes sense to skim the surface of electronic texts, and when it doesn't. At a certain point, it may even make more sense to have students engage in what Cindy Selfe's calls "multilayered" literate activity—literate activity in which people "function literately within computer-supported communication environments" by layering "conventions of the page and conventions of the screen" (Selfe, "Redefining Literacy" 7-8). Thus, the future of peer response may involve not only electronic copies of texts, but hard copies as well, so that students can both surf the electronic texts in front of them and actually deeply read the paper and ink texts, which will still need to be close at hand.

What is interesting about these skeptical and provocative approaches to the use of computers in writing classrooms is that it took some time before they caught on in studies of CMC and computer mediated peer revision.

CMC Peer Revision

Michael Spitzer, in a 1989 book chapter, makes some fairly impressive claims for how networked computers can change education. He believes that computers can connect teachers to other teachers and students to other students, overcoming "the limitations imposed by geography" (187). Spitzer does not consider how race, gender, and class factor into a place he refers to as "a classroom that exists in an electronic environment rather than in a particular place" (Spitzer 188). This is not to say that the Spitzer is willfully ignoring race, class and gender; it simply appears that these concerns were not on his and others minds in 1989.

Spitzer is not alone in not addressing issues of race, class and gender in the networked classroom. In their abstract for their influential piece “The Network-based Writing Classroom: The ENFI Idea,” Michael Day and Trent Batson claim that

A particular application of CMC, *Electronic Networks for Interaction (ENFI)* is being used to change the social dynamic of the writing classroom. ENFI is not software but a concept; the concept is essentially that writing is taught in a computer lab with a network supporting real-time CMC.

Later Batson and Day do temper their enthusiasm for the technology, they mention flaming and other unsavory aspects of CMC peer work, but they ultimately feel that while many teacher try and retreat from ENFI, that ultimately “CMC continues to nibble away at our traditional way of doing things.” This is an interesting claim, particularly if you consider the claims out of traditional peer response that teachers, and the classroom environment they create, have a tremendous impact on the way that students experience both collaborative writing and peer revision. In a sense I think that Batson and Day are assigning too much credit to the machine environment, and not enough to the teachers and students who populate that environment.

I bring up Spitzer, Batson, and Day, not necessarily because they are wrong (there are many compelling reasons to use CMC in a writing classroom—particularly for peer group work), but because their belief in the democratic nature of CMC and its ability to alter social relationships, reflects that attitudes of a number of researchers who have looked at how CMC peer revision works, and since few have looked at CMC peer revision in any depth, it makes sense to look at these attitudes.

In a fairly recent article from *Kairos*, Joel English describes the work that his students do as peer respondents in a MOO (a computer networked environment in which students can engage in “talk” and “actions” via text). According to English,

In MOO-based writing conferences, participants collaborate on a common text--the students' early draft--and they work over the issues of the drafts with spontaneous give-and-take of opinions and ideas, attempting to resolve what needs to be done during revision in order to strengthen the writing.

At this point, there is nothing unusual; English is simply describing the task, but this changes when he writes, but two paragraphs later, “Synchronous online conferencing provides metacognitive activity in an optimum learning environment for writers.”

English's reasons for making this claim seems to be the reflection that he has students do with MOO logs, which he has them annotate electronically. However, my point is that English *has* his students annotate the logs, and that whatever metacognitive value the logs have is due to English's use, and his students' use, of those logs in an educational setting.

English is not alone in ascribing more credit to machines than they deserve; in a 1993 conference presentation, and in a 1997 journal article, Marion Fey makes claims for CMC peer revision that mirrors the claim English makes for MOO based conferencing. In her 1997 article for the *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, Fey writes, “Through collaboration, computer networking can transform learning by extending classroom borders to encompass a wide range of differences, whether of age, race, class, gender, geography, or disability” (Fey “Sharing Writing Through Computer Networking”). This claim is a qualified one, but what's interesting is that Fey credits “computer networking,” not collaborative teaching, with this change. Fey again, in her 1993 conference presentation “Reader Response, Collaborative Writing, and Computer Networking makes

a similar claim that “computer networking when used for reader response to significant literature can facilitate honest communication, yet provide enough distance to maintain respect among group members” (18). Both of Fey’s claims, that computer networks can transform learning and allow for honest response, may be close to being true, but what I find disturbing about Fey’s claims are that they credit a machine, and not teachers and students, with successful CMC peer revision. Of course computers will have a role in shaping CMC peer revision, but, as David Tyack and Larry Cuban remind us, “the integration and sense-making that a good teacher can provide” are often the only things that can come close to guaranteeing any sort of student learning—regardless of the technology (126).

Of course, there are important differences between CMC peer revision and conventional revision, and some of them have a direct tie to the technology. One important distinction that English touches on is that CMC peer revision allows for a textual trace to remain of peer response work. What’s also interesting is that CMC, as well as computer-aided, peer response work ask students to respond to text in text, effectively giving students more practice at writing while they read writing. Aside from this, there is an effect that Batson and Day describe while discussing ENFI. Batson and Day write that,

Instead of the sound of voices in the room, you hear only keys clicking. Oh, some people make side comments and others occasionally laugh when a funny comment appears on the screen, but the locus of communication is really the screens, and everyone focuses on writing (“The Networked-Based Writing Classroom: The ENFI Idea”)

This on-task, textual focus is something that I have experienced, although not through a CMC environment, and this, for me, is one of the strongest arguments for using

computers to facilitate peer response: that students tend to write a good deal of comments when commenting on the screen, and they tend to stay focused when doing it. These are things that happen more often than not in computer-based peer response, and the same cannot necessarily be said of conventional peer response groups.

However, not all researchers are interested in all peer response work being done in a CMC environment. In her dissertation, *The Characteristics and Effects of Oral and Computer-Mediated Peer Group Talk on the Argumentative Writing Process*, Beth Hewett takes a careful, focused look at both oral and CMC generated response. She examines work that two peer response groups did in two argumentative writing classes at The Catholic University of America—looking at the oral and written response of one group and the oral response of the other group (Hewett). After looking at the role that peer response plays in the two settings, and the overlap that occurs, Hewett is willing to hazard a few conclusions about the nature of peer response in the two mediums (at least in terms of the classes she was working in). In her final chapter, she reveals that

teachers who believe that peer response group talk should involve the direct sharing of suggestions leading to revision changes might want to encourage using a medium or a method this is more concretely focused on the written draft. These data suggest that the CMC environment would be better suited to that goal, as students talked more concretely about writing content, form, and process using that medium. (229)

Thus, Hewett is arguing that CMC peer talk, in relation to oral peer talk, tends to focus very directly on the words on the page, which can lead to a much more focused discussion of writing issues. However, Hewett does also see importance in oral peer group talk; according to Hewett, “teachers who are interested in a more fluid generation and exchange of ideas, and who are open to the intertextual traces that such sharing leaves in writing (Mortensen), may prefer to give their interactive peer groups some oral

face-to-face discussion time” (229). Hewett makes this recommendation because she found that students’ oral comments tended to deal more with “abstract issues related to their writing” (224). Thus, when thinking globally, something that students must do particularly when brainstorming and organizing their work, oral talk seems to work better than CMC talk, which Hewett believes may be due to the CMC environment itself (224).

Ultimately Hewett makes an interesting suggestion--that “a combination of the two mediums might work even better” (225). This is the sort of conclusion that I examine in my study of the presentation of the self in peer response work—both oral and online. Like Hewett, who tracked the same categories of talk (derived from the work of Gere and Abbot) across oral and CMC mediums, I track the same categories of the presentation of the self in a computer-aided peer response medium and in a more traditional oral peer response environment. However, unlike Hewett who focuses principally on the differences between the two mediums, I also explore some of the shared characteristics between conventional peer response and CMC and computer-aided peer response. Ultimately arriving at a conclusion that the self a student presents to others in a CMC peer response environment differ from the self that he/she presents in a conventional peer response environment in a variety of significant ways.

Computer-Aided Peer Revision

Several other “computer specific” studies also bear on my work—albeit not as directly. However, that does not mean that these studies have no value to my work in that area.

One study that focuses solely on the way that computer-aided peer response happens is Susan Faulkner's dissertation *Computers and Freshman Composition Instruction: A Study of Faculty Preparation and Classroom Performance*. In her dissertation Faulkner attempts to do something both she and Gail Hawisher feel is lacking in the nascent field of computers and composition: a building of a body of knowledge by working with and extending previous research (Faulkner 14). Faulkner does this by looking at, and trying to replicate, a research study on the use of class time in a computer classroom conducted by Bernhardt, Wojahn and Edwards. Faulkner finds that most of the time in a computer-based classroom can be spent on work around writing, and students often do stay on task while working on computers with writing (70). Faulkner also notices that in the two classes she worked with that a good chunk of class time (43.8% and 36.6 % respectively) was devoted to "secondary activities" (70). These activities were, "the variety of activities which occur simultaneously and which create a workshop environment" (70). In other words, much of the talk that Faulkner noticed, but didn't directly code or address, was a sort of multi-tasking. Students were working on computers, soliciting help from their peers, and doing the work of workshopping their pieces in at least two modes: oral and electronic.

The sort of multi-tasking that Faulkner describes is something that pertains to my central research question: what sort of selves can, and do, students present in the presence of other selves? The sort of multi-tasking that Faulkner describes is the place where perhaps the most interesting formations of peer response happen—in the borderlands between the spoken and the electronic. Thus, part of what I do is to not only

compare moments when students interact orally and electronically, but to closely examine the moments when students do both simultaneously.

Not all of the work that helps create my web of meaning deals explicitly, or even implicitly, with oral and computer-aided peer response work. There is a group of studies that deal explicitly with word-processing technology (Hawisher "The Effects of Word Processing," Kurth, Owston, Murphy and Wideman, Strickland and Tannacito), and there are the studies that explore a number of non-networked based approaches to using computers to further the work of peer revision (Cyganowski, Levine, Donitsa-Schmidt and Zellermayer and Varone). All of the studies have something to recommend them, and all of them repeat certain themes—four of which seem essential to understanding the work that students do around both performances of the self in online peer revision and how students perceive these performances of the self in peer revision.

The four aspects of word processed texts and peer revision that I want to discuss from these studies are: the sorts of peer response comments that get made, the nature of "the writing process" in an computer classroom, how students' perceive working with word processors in a writing classroom, and how both students and teachers are affected by the layout of the computer classroom itself.

Interestingly enough, very few studies on word processing directly refer to using word processing programs as a means for peer response. However, there are two notable exceptions, Sandy Varone's piece "Voices from the Computer Classroom: Novice Writers and Peer Response to Writing" and the fourth chapter of James Strickland's book *From Disk to Hard Copy: Teaching Writing with Computers*.

In Varone's piece, she describes the way that students in a basic writing class provide feedback to each other. As Varone describes it, "Without heavy-handed teacher direction students talked, asked each other questions, and took on the roles of reader, supportive listener, and in some cases, collaborator" (214). What is so interesting about this response to Varone (and to me for that matter) is that students got feedback in the process of writing without making reference to teacher directions for peer response. The key phrase here is "in the process;" because it is within the process of writing that students' in Varone's class are receiving the response they need at the moment they need it. In other words, Varone and her students are making an important point about the nature of response via word processing, or any other writing technology: that response should be focused on immediate feedback to a writer's burning question, and that this feedback probably needs to have some level of informality.

James Strickland gives a more structured take on computer-aided peer response in his book *From Disk to Hard Copy: Teaching Writing With Computers*. In this piece, which is principally a series of wonderful exercises in using computer technology to further writing and responding in the classroom, Strickland devotes a chapter to the subject of helping students learn how to collaborate with computers. While Strickland does discuss some CMC peer revision techniques (like using a BBS to post papers or saving collaborative writing projects to a network folder), what interest me most deeply about this chapter are his descriptions of collaborative assignments, which are aimed at "providing response to student writing through conferencing and collaboration, while allowing writers to maintain authority of their texts" (68). What is interesting about the collaborative assignments and techniques that Strickland discusses (which include using

an LCD screen to model response to the whole class, saving response to a text under another name, and collaborative brainstorming and prewriting with students exchanging either machines or keyboards) is that they are based on the following principal: that there is a psychological cost to taking possession of texts and “marking them up,” regardless of whether that act is committed by a peer or a teacher (53). Thus, Strickland consciously tries to move away from having students mark and handle texts, and argues that with computers:

Taking physical possession of a paper is unnecessary when reading another’s text on a computer screen; the computer’s presentation of the text causes a subtle difference in ownership even while reading text on a screen, the writing belongs to the writer. During conferencing, a reader can comfortably sit side by side with the author at the computer—reading, negotiating meaning, and commenting on the text. The reader is *supporting the writer* rather than *fixing the writing*; if changes are made, the writer makes them. (54)

Issues of textual ownership are a key issue in considering the work of peer response work, and while we certainly want to encourage revision, we also need to be aware that if we want students to invest in their text, in terms of time, energy, and affect, then we need to respond to students’ texts in ways that allow them to make changes, not us to make changes for them. I think that it’s also very important that Strickland italicizes “supporting the writer.” This ultimately is the work of peer response, not having students engage in line editing. This is because not only do students often give inaccurate, or plain wrong, advice about fixing writing, they will often (as Sarah Freedman points out) refuse to engage in this sort of teacherly activity—red-lining a text.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to one word that Strickland uses in the above passage, and which may be the most important word in the whole selection: “author.” For Strickland, and myself, there is no such animal as a “student writer,” a

person whose principal goal in writing is to learn the language of the academy. Of course learning academic discourse is an important goal, and students obviously need student and teacher feedback on their writing to reach that goal. However, there are limits to what we should and can do with student texts, and we want to be sure, particularly if we view a self rather than a student as the “author” of a text, that we don’t let other students or ourselves appropriate our students’ texts.

One of the very interesting points about the texts created through and by writers working with computers is something that Carol Cyganowski discusses in her work on the use of word processors in collaborative learning: the non-linear writing process of word-processed texts. Cyganowski, in describing sessions where students drafted on the classroom computers, writes:

In class sessions devoted to drafting, students in pauses consulted their partners or went back to reread their text, then added by inserting within the text rather than at the end of what they had previously written . . . Students also inserted multiple returns to give themselves clean space to write, some trying out radical changes of direction and mode and then deciding in a later session whether to go with an overall change or to incorporate some of the new material into the prior text (76).

What this passage points to is a methodological problem and a reality of computer generated text: it is difficult—if not nearly impossible—to track changes and speak of a linear writing process with successive drafts. Of course our field has very much moved away from the idea of a linear writing process; however, much of our discussion about drafting still seems to presuppose discrete drafts of work—particularly the work of student authors (Freedman, Herrman, Spear).

In the face of electronic texts which exist as one “document” over the course of an entire writing project, it becomes much more difficult to talk about drafting, and also to

look at student “drafts” without referring to a sort of hybrid category—the printout. The printout is a printed version of an electronic document, and it is only a “version” of the document that existed prior to and after the print out. I want to bring up this idea of the printout (a common term in the parlance of computers) because it has had an impact on how I view the act of drafting and drafts—key components of peer response work. I now realize in a very real way that drafts are only moments in the life of a larger text—parts of which I will never see because they were not either saved or printed out. Thus, over the course of my dissertation I will refer to printouts, rather than drafts, to describe work in progress because the work itself is often ongoing, and the idea of a draft is only really an enabling fiction.

Something which is very real and physical, and which has as great or greater an impact on computer-aided peer response, is the way that computer classrooms are set up. A number of writers have addressed how computer classrooms are, or should, be set up (Varone, Burkowski), and Sandy Varone nicely encapsulates the central concern that researchers have about the physical layout of computer classroom: that the layout of computer classrooms should “encourage exchange and collaboration” (216). For some, like Varone, that means that computers should be arranged in clusters, and for me, my preference is for a sort of perimeter arrangement of machines with a larger table in the center of the room for discussion that doesn’t involve the use of computers.

However, the cruel reality of both my studies is that they have been set in computer labs, not computer classrooms. Thus, my students have often had to sit in rows at long tables, with their focus directed to the computer screens. This presents a variety of problems collaborating on writing, which I outline in detail in my methods and

methodology section. However, at this point I merely want to note that the layout of a computer classroom is a concern, and sometimes a very serious one, in either encouraging or discouraging collaboration via computers. To do computer-aided peer response work in an environment that works against eye contact between students, and which positions students facing a computer screens, is a unique challenge.

The final challenge that I want to discuss is the attitude that many researchers in computer-aided peer revision have discussed: that students seem to enjoy working on computers—particularly collaboratively (Kurth, Varone, Levine, Donitsa-Schmidt and Zeller-mayer). As Levine, Donitsa-Schmidt and Zeller-mayer point out the fact that students “like” working with computers is important, but what is even more important than this fact is that students’ perceptions of the classroom environment are often more important than actual environment itself because “it is the individual’s perception that dictates responses” (95). I take this to mean that students’ attitudes about computers, and the classroom environment of the computer classroom, are in some ways keys to their learning. Thus, part of my research is focused on getting at students perceptions of the computers and the classroom environment. Through the use of CATs (which I explain in detail in my section on methods and methodology) and retrospective interviews, I get at some of the perceptions of classroom climate that students have. Ultimately, to understand how students do peer response, in any environment, you have to know their perceptions of that environment.

Literature around the Peer Role and the Performance of Self in Peer Response Work

The Peer Role

Up to this point, I have not been terribly specific about my definition of a phrase that crops up in most of my other definitions: peer. I plan to rectify this situation right now.

The term peer is coming to be seen in the field of composition as word that can mean any number of things depending on your perspective. The sort of open category of peer that Ken Bruffee and other early writers on peer response and collaborative writing theory and practice used (see Murray, Elbow *Writing Without Teachers*, Gere “Writing Groups,” DiPardo and Freedman) is increasingly being viewed critically—both by researchers working directly with peer response in composition and particularly in the Writing Center Community.

Some folks doing work in the writing center community feel that a peer has to be able to move back and forth through a range of peer identities, from being an “expert” to being a “mentor” (Healy 42). Others feel that there is a therapist and client feel to peer tutor work that happens in writing centers (Suffredini 6), and still others feel that the idea of being a peer is somewhat suspect, based on the experience of the writing center tutor (Bokser).

One of the best examples of the complex nature of the peer relationship from the literature of the writing center community is a 1994 article by Alice Gillam, Susan Callaway, and Katherine Wikoff. In this article, the authors discuss the “role” of the peer

tutor in the writing center in critical terms—paying particular attention to issues of power and authority in the writing center conference. Leaning heavily on the extant writing in the field (see North, Trimbur and Runciman for further discussion of the issues), Gillam, Callaway, and Wikoff point out that the traditional idea of the peer tutor as “a more capable peer” is inadequate (164). This sort of definition is inadequate because it ignores the tensions inherent between the tutor and peer role, and it doesn’t acknowledge the fact that students tutors often have conflicting allegiances between the institution and their “role” as peer (165). However, as tutors reveal in the study that is at the heart of Gilliam, Callaway, and Wikoff’s work, peer tutors also feel some tension in the idea of being a peer.

One of the clearest examples of this is the example of the interactions between Johanna (a writing center tutor) and Cassie (a writing center user), where different ideas about writing, education, and even race complicate their peer relationship. Johanna, a white, middle-class non-traditional student, and Cassie, an African-American non-traditional student, run into problems working together from the word go. Their sessions in the writing center are “so tense” that “Johanna decides not to tape the first two and at times turns off the tape recorder during later sessions” (183). The reason for the tensions are multiple, but essentially boil down to a disconnect between expectations about the role of schooling and peer tutoring. Cassie is an African-American student whose academic success “has been achieved in spite of, not because of, her school experiences” (184). Cassie has been labeled as an at-risk student, and she has incredible problems with doing writing assignments—but not with doing self-sponsored work. Johanna, a traditionally-aged white student, on the other hand has had a wonderfully positive,

progressive educational experience in which she “has had personally meaningful writing experiences within the school context” (185).

Because of this history, Johanna tries not being directive, and Cassie sees this non-directive stance, and the positive reinforcement that goes with it as a “sham” (187). In this complete misreading of experience, and of motives, the ability of Johanna to be Cassie’s “peer” is nearly impossible. However, what’s interesting is that Johanna and Cassie do ultimately manage to connect and not talk at cross-purposes over a beer, but that this new relationship doesn’t translate into success in tutoring (190).

I bring up Johanna and Cassie’s relationship because it shows how difficult it is to be someone’s peer respondent. The truth is that a “peer” relationship is terribly complicated, and it’s success or failure often depends on peoples’ previous experiences as raced, classed, and gendered beings. This is the sort of experience that often colors our perceptions of our selves, and it is the sort of information that any conception of “peerness” must take into account. And this is particularly crucial for my work since one of the sites of my research, a first year composition class at the University of New Hampshire at Manchester, is a site of great diversity in terms of experience (most of the students in this class work full-time and many are returning students); gender (8 out of the 12 students in the class are female); and race and ethnicity (at least one out of the twelve students speak English as a second language). However, I also realize that I cannot, and must not, view students only in term of their gender, race, or class, and that there is a danger in doing so. As Laura Gray-Rosendale points out,

In other words, although identity categories alone—such as race, class, and gender—represent an important progress over purely formal criteria and definitions, examining

them to the exclusion of other factors has also at times limited our understanding of Basic Writers. This reduces their lives, situation, and utterances, both spoken and written, to these categories” (13).

What Gray-Rosendale says about categorizing Basic Writers only in terms of race, class, and gender applies to all students, and while we as teachers want to acknowledge difference, we do not want to make it totalizing lens through which we view students. Thus, in part, my attempt to focus on selves, selves created in the presence of other selves, is an attempt to talk about race, gender and class without leveling the personal identities of my students—the identities that they have often worked very hard to create.

Gilliam, Callaway, and Wikoff are not alone in their belief that race, gender, and ethnicity matter in the construction of the category “peer.” Their concerns for these issues are mirrored in a piece by Melanie Sperling (who is writing out of an Education background) called “Writing Tasks and Roles Students Play: The Case of Learning to Write in an Inner City Classroom.” In this piece, Sperling makes a number of important points about how students negotiate what Tipper and Malone call the “Conflicting Demands in Writing Response Groups” (77). First, Sperling comes up with interesting list of “connecting roles” which “marked their [the students’] relationships outside the context of the classroom but that theoretically shaped their thinking and subsequent writing inside the classroom” (28). The roles she identifies are observer (which involved information gathering about the Rodney King event—the topic of a paper in the class); critic (a position in which students expressed their opinions about the King verdict); prognosticator (a speculative role, in which students expressed their feelings about the future via the Rodney King incident); philosopher (a position where students tried to create “greater truths” from what they observed about the incident); and historian (here

students made historical connections to the events they witnessed) (28-29). These roles are interesting, and while I don't make explicit use of them in my methodology, I do use the ideas of students performing particular selves—and that those selves have importance past the walls of the classroom.

In fact the most important piece of Sperling's work for my purposes is her insistence that the world outside the classroom provides students with a sense of self that plays out in peer work, or as Sperling puts it, "we do not know whether individuals assume roles (and the perspectives that those roles bring) in order to write or whether the expectation that one is going to write leads to generating or constraining particular roles (and perspectives)" (39). This is a point that is key to my conception to the selves that students use, and bring, to peer response work. There is a degree to which instruction can impinge on the selves a student assumes, but instruction is not the only factor in producing the selves that one sees in peer revision. The self that a student performs in the presence of other selves is a self that their family, language, race, class, and gender help create. Peer, like self, is a social construct, and its many facets are directly tied to various places and spaces in the world outside the four walls of the classroom.

Chapter III

Methods and Methodology

Interchapter: From Jeff Davis to Chris Dean

About two years ago I decided to get in touch with my teaching roots. I was working on an assignment in which I had to write about something that connected my lived experience to the teaching of writing, and so I was chatting with my Mother and Father about their fathers', both of whom had been teachers.

Over the course of an hour, my Mother told me about her father, Jeff Davis, and my Dad told me about his father, Warren Dean. The hour or so of talk was interesting and engaging, but it ultimately didn't lead me anywhere—or so I thought. However, about a year after I had written another paper for the class, I flashed on my conversation as I began to think about my dissertation.

It was a hot, muggy day in August, and I was desperately trying to resuscitate our dying computer—performing every version of CPR to the CPU that I could think of. As I madly downloaded files onto Zip disks, swore, and tanked myself up on caffeine, I stopped for a minute to open up a file—to see whether I'd trash it or transfer it. When I opened the paper, it read, "It's sometime just prior to World War I, and John Davis has just started teaching. He presides over a small one-room school somewhere in the border area of Ohio and Indiana. He is only 18, and just a year earlier he was being taught in the same sort of school."

I read the three pages of text, and then I stopped. As the CPU of my machine ground away, a novel thought occurred to me: "I'm a third generation teacher." And rapidly following this thought was another, "Everything I've ever done in Composition Studies is related to teaching."

These were two simple, small realizations at the time—kind of a low-key "oh wow" moment. However, as I began to write my dissertation and search for a job, these two realizations became increasingly important to me. As I began to knock together my dissertation proposal, I started to look over every seminar paper I had written for the last five or so years, hoping to glean ideas, sources, and even text. As I looked over them, I began to realize that every piece of research I had done, and most of the reading I had engaged in, was very directly connected to questions of pedagogy. Even my reading responses for various classes made specific reference to teaching, teachers, and larger issues in education—regardless of whether it was appropriate or sensible to do so. I even tried, "tried" being the operative word, to extract immediate pedagogical meaning out Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*. It was as if I was seeing in ink what was in my blood and bones: a love of teaching.

My feelings of affiliation with the teaching profession gelled into the book that you have in your hands. In all three research sites I worked in, I positioned myself as a teacher researcher and worked hard to try to create research that would have implicit and explicit connections to teaching, teachers, and students. Ultimately I wanted to create a document that would do justice to the educative experiences of my students, my colleagues, my family, and myself, and to do that I had to modify, and sometimes create,

methods to gather materials for and about the teaching of computer-aided peer response.

You're about to read the fruits of my labor; I hope that I make my ancestors proud.

Methods and Methodology: An Overview of Three Central Sites

As a teacher-researcher I have built three research studies, each one resting on top of the other one like stories of a house. I have hammered sawed, framed and finally finished three research studies that are home to my fellow teachers, our students, and myself. Let me show you around our home.

The Ground Floor: UNH Durham, Spring 1998

Two years ago, I studied three very different writers in my English 401 class (UNH's required first year composition class) and gained a provisional understanding of how CMC peer review worked. There were 11 students involved in my study (one at Ball State University and the rest at the University of New Hampshire²), and ultimately I did case studies of three of those students in my class: a traditionally aged male student, who was a long-time resident of New Hampshire; a traditionally aged female student, who identified herself as being of mixed Caucasian and Native American history; and a non-traditionally aged student in her mid 40s. All of these students engaged in both online peer response (with physically absent peers at Portland State University and Ball State University), and they also all engaged in in-class CMC peer response; however, the bulk of the response work that students did was with students in their own classes at their home institutions. Thus, most of the work the students did was computer-aided peer response.

² There were four first year composition classes that participated in this research project (two at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon; one at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana; and my own class at UNH). However, due to scheduling conflicts most of the peer response work occurred between students at Ball State and UNH.

To get a clear sense of the response work the case-study students did, I collected three forms of data: all the papers students wrote over the course of the semester, all the responses they generated, and finally I transcribed an hour long interview in which students evaluated the experience of online peer response. This was an incredibly valuable piece of information because it helped me to gain some understanding of how student attitudes towards, and histories with, peer response and computers affected their willingness and ability to do peer response work. The interviews were perhaps the most valuable information that I collected from my students.

However, after reading *Assessing Writers' Knowledge and Processes of Composing* by Lester Faigley, Roger D. Cherry, David A. Jolliffe, and Anna M. Skinner, I realized that this interview is what Faigley and his co-authors might call "post-hoc work" because I asked my students to tell me about their experience with written peer response some time *after* they had actually done it. The authors of *Assessing Writers' Knowledge and Process of Composing* claim that this sort of work is not always the most reliable way to understand student work on peer response (169). Still there is much to recommend some post hoc work, since "retrospective interviews offer student writers an opportunity to express what they believe to be important influences on their writing and thinking processes" (Hewett 72). The post hoc work I did with my students allowed for some interesting discoveries about the way anonymity functioned in peer response, how gendered language plays out during the activity of peer response, and how students' histories with peer response and computers impact the process of peer response.

In fact, it was these discoveries that made me want to get back into the classroom, so that I could begin to understand two central questions: what can a discussion of the

roles (or more correctly selves) of peer response in a computer-mediated environment mean to the field of composition, and how do students define the situation definitions of peer response—both computer-aided and conventional?

The Second Story: UNH Durham, Fall 2000

During the fall Semester of 2000, I spent three weeks running a pilot study aimed at exploring how I could collect data that would answer my new research questions about student selves in peer response. I did this in an English 401 class taught by Warren, a Composition Ph.D. student at UNH Durham.

Out of a class of 24 students, 19 students agreed to participate in my study, and out of this group I focused, for the purposes of my methodological work, on two students, Joshua and Deacon, whose peer response work I will discuss at length later in this chapter. The class met mainly in a sunlight lit room in the basement of Hamilton Smith Hall. However, we also met in the same lab that my students had worked in during 1998, and while the equipment was improved (it was now stocked with a brand new LCD display unit and wonderful bright blue iMac computers), the layout was sadly the same.

In my short time in Warren's class, I was able to figure out how to record student talk about peer response, how to gather written and electronic peer response, and how to sort out the resulting paper blizzard. By the end of three weeks I had some decent data, but more importantly I had a research approach, with well-refined research questions, that I could export to the site where I would do the bulk of my work on the presentation of the self in peer response: UNH, Manchester.

The Third Story: UNH Manchester, Spring 2001

UNHM is a small commuter campus (“1,200 degree and continuing education students attend UNH Manchester”) located in a gorgeous converted mill building down by the Merrimack River in Manchester, New Hampshire (UNHM General Information). This building, built in 1880 as the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company’s machine shop, is now a three-story school in which the class I studied occupied a tiny room (UNHM General Information).

The tiny room was sufficient for us because there were only 12 students and, effectively, three instructors in the class. As for the teachers, there was the teacher of record, Pamela Oliver, a class linked tutor, and myself. The small, intimate space of the classroom, albeit with 14 foot ceilings, housed our group for the ten weeks of my study, and when we weren’t in the classroom, we were working down on the first floor of the mill building in one of the UNHM’s three computer labs. This was a traditional lab setting, and it had four rows of computers facing a white board at the front of the room—with 20 Dell PC computers filling the room. At UNHM, this classroom is both the PC computer lab and a classroom space; thus access to the lab was somewhat limited—allowing the students and myself only five visits to the lab during the course of the study.

The class itself was composed of a wide array of students. They ranged in age from 26 years to 18 years, and all of the students worked full-time jobs and attended school full time. In terms of gender, four of the students were male and eight of the students were female. For the purposes of this study, I focused on the work of ten students who attended the class consistently, and from this larger group I decided to focus

most directly on the work of two women as case studies—focusing on an occasion when they used the computer lab to engage in computer-assisted peer response.

In my work at UNHM, it was necessary to accustom students to the idea that many of their conversations during peer response, both working in the classroom and the computer lab, were going to be taped. Also, I had to accustom students to the use of CATs (Classroom Assessment Techniques), which I used to canvas student attitudes towards and experience with peer response. This was a way to not only give students a voice about the research and the process of giving a peer response prior to their retrospective interviews, but it was also a way to monitor the effect of my teaching of peer response. I wanted to make sure that I was, as a teacher researcher, as much a teacher as a researcher, so I felt compelled to engage the students I was working with as a teacher in an ongoing dialogue about my teaching and their learning.

The Teacher Researcher Position

In the study I conducted at UNHM, I took on a role described by Sondra Perl and Nancy Wilson's in their book *Through Teacher' Eyes: Portraits of Writing Teachers at Work*. In this book the co-authors confess that over time their roles (they started out as “participant-observers”) changed and altered so that,

Our understanding of each classroom grew, and balances shifted. We researchers found ourselves spending more time in some rooms than in others, forming closer ties to some teachers than to others. In some classrooms, we remained primarily observers; in others, more and more we became participants. (15)

The truth is that they both Wilson and Perl became teachers and learners in the classes they were researching, and to a certain extent they allowed themselves to be implicated

not just in the success or failure of their research project, but in the overall academic success or failure of the classes they researched.

I tried over the course of this class at UNHM to maneuver myself into the same position Perl and Wilson are in; a position that allows for teaching, co-learning, and ultimately some deeper tie to that classroom community than that of “researcher.” I wanted to do this for both ethical and personal reasons.

I’ve simply been a teacher and student for too long—and have three generations of familial loyalty to the profession tied up in my body and soul—to be an objective observer. My less personal ethical reason relates to something Patricia A. Sullivan describes as one of the hallmarks of feminist methodology, and while I would hesitate to call myself (as Kurt Cobain of Nirvana did) a “male feminist,” I think that Sullivan makes an important methodological point for all researchers.

In reference to the work of Sandra Harding, Sullivan writes that Harding insists, “the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter” (55). What I take this to mean is that the biases and positionality of the researcher have to be made obvious to the research subjects, the audience of the research, and (hopefully) to the researcher as well. Along those lines, I think that to deny my interests in and concern for the students that I am working would be unethical in the extreme. As would any attempt to show myself as less than I am: a teacher with a deep and abiding concern for the intellectual and affective work that revision can do for students.

Consonant with these concerns, is the position that I ultimately see myself in this research work—that of teacher researcher. Ruth Ray, in “Composition from the Teacher-Research Point of View” in *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*, defines

this position as more an attitude or movement than an exact methodology (172).

According to Ray,

A good working definition of teacher research is 'systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers,' where systematic implies methodical data gathering, analyzing, and reporting; intentional means planned rather than spontaneous activity; and inquiry implies a questioning, reflective stance towards teaching and learning (173).

This definition fairly describes my stance in the classroom I taught in at UNH Durham, and it also does a good job of describing my approach to my work at UNHM—where I taught peer response both in the traditional classroom setting and in the computer lab.

The position that Ray describes has a long lineage, and Ray identifies the English educator Lawrence Stenhouse as coining the term in the 1960s (173). However, the position/idea of a teacher-researcher was around long before the 1960s.

Both John Dewey and Maria Montessori believed in the importance of teachers being keen, scientifically oriented researchers of their own classrooms. And Maria Montessori might be considered in some ways the proto-typical teacher-researcher. She was a teacher for years before she began to take her "scientific pedagogy" and apply it to published research (Montessori 9). The end result was that Montessori wanted all teachers, particularly the ones she worked with, to feel the "spirit of a scientist" (Montessori 9). Montessori wanted teachers to "awaken in the mind and heart" to an "interest in natural phenomena to such an extent that, loving nature, he shall understand the anxious and expectant attitude of one who has prepared an experiment and who awaits a revelation from it" (9). I think that this "anxious and expectant attitude" of experimentation about teaching is what resonates most strongly with me from Montessori's work. As I prepared to do my work at UNH Durham and UNH

Manchester, I spent a great deal of time not only lesson planning, but reflecting on my work via conversations with my colleagues and mentors—and with the wider field of composition via reading. I deliberately planned my research and my teaching simultaneously, with teaching informing research and research instructing teaching. Ultimately, my research was a feedback loop; I was looping my reading into the design of my “experiment,” and the design of my experiment was focusing both my teaching and further reading and research.

However, floating above this feedback loop was a layer of personal experience that I could be only dimly aware of, but it’s a layer of experience that has profound implications for my work—and the work of other teacher researchers.

My biases as a teacher are, I hope, evident. I see great value in student voices, individually and collectively, and I am the child of teachers. However, there is a bias/factor which I haven’t revealed yet, and I believe that it’s intimately connected to my position as a teacher-researcher: my position of privilege as a white male.

My position of privilege is a composite of privileges afforded me by the way I am raced, classed and gendered. I am male (and I should add straight); white (at least in a historical and institutional sense); and the child of middle-class (even upper middle class) teachers. Also, I am a teacher and researcher, and to be a teacher with a set of students is to be afforded certain institutional power and prerogatives.

It is tempting at this point to break down all of the above categories and lay bare my positionality, to definitively get at what Dominick La Capra might call my multiple subject positions as a researcher—a researcher enmeshed in the “politics of research” (68). However, as La Capra and others point out, such a desire, a certain “rage for

order,” is not possible. Ultimately I have to acknowledge that my position is the combination of a number of invisible and powerful privileges afforded me by history and a sort of societal group think, and that they work together in concert in a way that makes untangling them impossible and beside the point.

What I’m talking about is something that Carrie Crenshaw talks about in “Resisting Whiteness’ Rhetorical Silence.”³ In her article Crenshaw reveals an interesting moment that brings her position of privilege into light for her. Crenshaw writes:

One morning a white student from my ‘communication and diversity’ course came to me in tears struggling with her beliefs about race. She volunteered her reluctance to return home because her family members were racist. We talked at length, and at the end of our conversation she thanked me with a smile and said, ‘I’m so glad you’re white. You’re so much more objective than other professors.’

Crenshaw goes on to add that this episode “reshaped the way I think about my own racialized identity” because her student had put into words an invisible fact: that her race afforded her certain privileges. However, I would add that not only does the student bring to light Crenshaw’s privileged position in terms of race, she also brings to light Crenshaw’s privilege as a teacher—as a representative of the academy.

Crenshaw reads her student’s comments about race in a very interesting way. The point of this exchange is not cast in light of the students’ evolving, if clearly imperfect, view of the way racism functions; the incident becomes a way for Crenshaw to talk about her whiteness. Crenshaw reads her students’ words, and the attitudes behind them, in a way that fits her research project and maybe changes, but not necessarily, the students’ experience.

³ I cite from an online version of Crenshaw’s article, so there are no specific page numbers to reference.

This is a problem that all researchers face, including teacher-researchers. We have not only the authority to teach and grade students, but as researchers we give ourselves an additional piece of authority: the ability to interpret students words, texts and selves for an audience past the four walls of a particular classroom in which we teach.

For me this is the most disquieting thing about the work I'm doing in this text; I am trying to read student texts, transcriptions of their spoken words, and, on some level, the students themselves. And while I'm trying to do that ethically and compassionately, my attempts to do that are complicated by the invisible identity categories (or as I prefer selves) that shape my vision. As Crenshaw reminds us, "whiteness and its intersections with gender and class are steeped in silence," and I want to acknowledge that my text, and the texts of my students, are written at these very intersections, and that what I'm trying to do is speak what is sometimes silent: the way raced, classed, and gendered selves perform for other selves in peer response.

Also, part of my work as a researcher interested in race, gender and class is not only to say how such identity categories might affect my students, but to show how these categories affect my own reading of myself, my work, and my students. Perversely, I also have to admit that there will be things beyond my vision—places where my privilege as a white male teacher will be invisible to me. These blind spots are my challenges, and they are the ghosts that haunt all teacher researchers as they try to faithfully render their and their students experiences in a given classroom. I hope to decrease my blind spots by including the voices and experiences of my colleagues, my students, and the wider literature of peer response; however, I know that I can only decrease, but not eliminate,

my blind spots. To claim perfect vision of my positionality would make me guilty of a certain sort of methodological hubris that could affect the reliability and validity of my research. Therefore, I can only claim a limited and evolving knowledge of my position of privilege, and hope that my blind spots are small enough to not affect the overall validity and meaning of my work.

The Methodological Boundaries, Concerns, and Outlines of My First Research Study

The Space

The first time my students and I stepped into the computer lab/classroom in the basement of Hamilton Smith Hall in the spring semester of 1998, we were faced with three long rows of tables with 31 power MacIntosh computers arranged along the tables like so many place settings. When my students sat down, they could only see each other peripherally, and to use the projection unit at the front of the classroom necessitated students spinning their chairs around to face the front in a military-like column. As for the décor of the room itself, let's say that it had a sort of beige institutional charm; in other words, it was, like many college classrooms and computer labs, decorated only by two white boards (on at the front and one along the near wall) and two sleek air conditioners (which adorned the back, windowless wall).

My students and I were faced with the inverse of Sandy Varone's expectations for computerized classrooms, that they might be arranged to "encourage exchange and collaboration" (216). Unlike the classroom where my students did their other, conventional peer response, the windowless lab that they did their computer-aided and CMC peer response in was set up to work against collaboration. Chairs were difficult to

move without folks knocking into each other, and most of the students' attention was focused on the screens in front of them.

I bring up this point not to bemoan my fate and certainly not to cast dispersions on the kind people of Computer Instructional Services who gave my class access to the room, installed software for us, and helped us out in a myriad of ways. But I bring up the arrangement of the computers to clue my readers into the way that the physical arrangement of the room ran counter to my desires for collaboration during my research project in the Spring of 1998. Computer peer response is not only about the technology and software that's used to facilitate the peer response, it's also the space that the collaboration occurs, or doesn't, occur in.

The Research Questions

In fact, collaboration did happen in my class, both in the computer labs and in my traditional classroom, and the collaboration was interesting enough to me that I decided to engage in some teacher-research. My initial research question, which almost immediately got muddled and complicated, was, "How might anonymity function in online peer response?" Ultimately, as the research progressed and little purely anonymous peer response got done (there were scheduling, technical, and logistical snafus), the focus of my research shifted slightly as I saw the way that gendered attitudes and language and issues of ageism played out in peer response. Over the course of the semester, I found myself interested in not only the anonymity afforded by the medium (which was of a provisional, aphysical nature), but in the way that this virtual space affected the very act of peer response and students' attitudes towards it. I was now very interested in a more involved research question: what happens in online peer response

when some students find on-line peer revision to be honest, helpful and useful—while others don't?

Data Collection and the Problem of Rendering the "Other"

To that end, I collected three types of data in my study from nine volunteers out of a class of 24: student papers, their CMC and computer-aided responses to those papers, and material from a one-hour retrospective interview (which six of the nine students participated in). I also had the students' introduce themselves both to their distant peers and to the prospective readers of my paper via an email form (located at <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~cwdean/info.html>), and I realize in hindsight that this was an attempt to have my students participate in some way in the research themselves. At the very least it was my attempt to open up some space for self-representation in my piece.

However, this desire also dovetailed quite nicely with another ethical desire that I have: to represent students through their own words as often as possible. This desire is born of reading around the ethics of engaging in naturalistic inquiry—specifically as it relates to the rendering of student experiences in the classroom as well as the personalities of the students themselves (McCarthy and Fishman, Newkirk 1996 "Seduction and Betrayal," Sullivan "Feminism and Methodology"). I wanted to avoid something that I occasionally saw in research in composition—the tendency of researchers to completely render student experiences through their own methodological lenses. I wanted to avoid describing students' appearance, their attitudes, and their work if I could possibly avoid it—leaving those descriptions to the students themselves or the imaginations of readers. Also, I very much wanted to foreground the students' work in

my research. If a self was to emerge in the course of my research in my class, then I wanted to make sure that it was a self that students would recognize.

The desire to foreground students words and text in my work comes from one central concern, “that ‘people should take heed what they say and write of other folks,’” so that “other folks” are not silenced (Newkirk “Seduction and Betrayal,” 15). In this quote Thomas Newkirk is directly quoting Sancho Panza while indirectly getting at the problem of representing the other, which Patricia Sullivan makes direct reference to in “Ethnography and the Problem of ‘Other.’” In her piece Sullivan defines “other” and it’s relationship to ethnographic research in composition as (quoting Clifford Geertz) “not us;” however, what’s more interesting than Sullivan’s definition of the other is the problem that Sullivan poses about representing the other (97). Sullivan writes,

If the other is the enabling condition of ethnographic research, I will argue then an ethnography must be both an adequate account of the literate practices of others and accountable to those others. As we seek to understand and render the lived experiences of others, our research should ultimately aim to benefit those whose voices, texts, and circumstances make such understanding possible. (98).

What is compelling about this quote is that it talks about the responsibility that researchers have to their subjects as both others and as learners. Like Sullivan, I wanted my research to be of benefit to the students involved, and I also wanted to make sure that their voices were included in my text as often as possible, so that the “others” of my text (the “not me”) had at least some chance of being heard on their own terms.⁴ However, I found out that there are institutional and practical limits to what students in classes can and will do as co-researchers. They might occasionally read texts that you write about

⁴ I also cite student work throughout this dissertation as texts. In a way student work is the text of this work, and thus I accord it co-equal status with the published work in the field of composition in my works cited. I would argue that for my purposes in this text it is in fact more important than almost any of the other work that I cite here in this work.

their experience, but they will rarely offer substantive changes in your text—probably due to the phenomena that Thomas Newkirk notices in “Seduction and Betrayal in Qualitative Research:” that students are often unwilling to comment on a full, finished manuscript (13).

Thus, in my first piece of research I attempted to talk to my students in a 90 minute-long interview about their experience of doing research, and to test my thoughts about how their work went with their actual experience. Thus, I would ask questions about their peer response work, and about my assumptions of how it went. For instance, when interviewing one of my research subjects Helen, I asked, “One of the things that I’m interested in is how people envision response . . . Um, in terms of being a responder, is there a type of response that your preferred to do? Did you prefer to do the in-class stuff, the online stuff” (Helen, “Interview”)? Helen’s response to this question, which was that she liked in-class response better, but barely, was illuminating to me, and it also allowed Helen to present her opinions about peer response which ran counter to mine. In a sense, I was trying, in the data-collection period of my work, to give Helen an opportunity to inform me of her experience in “my” research.

This concern, for giving students a voice in my work, is a concern that cuts across the three studies of this dissertation. What I did with my first piece of research, and the rendering I gave it as a seminar paper, is what I do throughout the three interlinking studies that are the backbone of this dissertation: I let you hear my students’ voices and work as often as possible. And while my picking and choosing of these voices is certain to distort the students’ messages, I can only say that at the heart of my work is a deep

concern with how I might render my “other,” my students and colleagues, in a way that they would at least recognize.

The Limitations of My First Study

While I did a good job of bringing student voices into my text in the spring of 1998, I would have to say that my study was by no means perfect. The study was small, eleven students total; it was short, only six weeks in duration; and, most seriously, it didn't adequately account for the impact that conventional peer response would have on computer aided and CMC peer response. My students exchanged papers across the semester, both in a traditional and computer class, and I failed to account in my research for the way that one sort of response might effect the other.

Thus at the end of my work in the spring of 1998, I had a sense of the limitations of my study, but more importantly I had an embryonic idea for further research. I wanted to do teacher research that would allow me to explore the way the self is presented in presence of others during computer-aided peer response. However, I now realized that to do that I needed to spend time looking at how students did conventional peer response, and how that work in conventional peer response might link to the work that I wanted to study.

Thus in the fall of 2000, I began to weave another strand of my web of meaning; a strand that became the pilot study for the research at the center of this dissertation: my research project conducted at the University of New Hampshire at Manchester. This pilot, conducted in an English 401 class at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, helped me refine my methodological approach to computer-aided peer response work,

and it also allowed me to think very deeply and particularly about the selves that students presented to others while doing peer response.

The Pilot: A Flight of the Self Into and Through Peer Response

There is a virtue in reading deeply, even madly, while conducting research; a certain focus pervades your thoughts as you read your way into a field while simultaneously doing research. At least this was my experience in the fall of 2000 when I began my pilot research. As I dug through through ERIC Online, journal articles, and dissertations, I found that my study became more focused. By the end of a three-week pilot study, I figured out how I could collect oral, written, and electronic data somewhat gracefully. I also saw my research questions shrink from five to two, I discovered a coding scheme to help me think about the selves of peer response, and I began to think even more deeply about the implications of what it meant for students to engage in computer-aided peer response.

All of this happened very quickly in two locations: a small classroom in the basement of Hamilton Smith Hall and the same computer lab that I used during my first study. In the computer lab I was in the familiar position of teacher researcher, but in the traditional classroom Warren, the teacher of record, taught his students how he wanted them to engage in peer response work. Warren is a Ph.D. student in composition and rhetoric at UNH, and he has taught composition courses in California and at UNH for over three years. Warren believes in actually teaching peer response techniques, and he has well developed reasons for having students do peer response work. As Warren puts it,

As a teacher, I use peer response groups in at least three ways: 1) to provide students with additional feedback on their writing; 2) to build and affirm the classroom

community; and 3) to give them practice in talking, reading, and writing about writing—to me, this practice consists of developing a shared vocabulary, an effective tone-of-voice and posture for delivering feedback, and the habit of close reading. This is my theoretical rationale for PR [peer response] groups. (Warren)

Clearly, Warren has thought a good deal about why, and how, to use peer response groups in his teaching. He uses them for pragmatic reasons, to provide additional feedback on their writing; for affective reasons, building classroom community; and as his comment about a shared vocabulary indicates, he clearly believes in explicitly teaching students how to go about peer response work. Like me, Warren relies a good deal on Pat Belanoff and Peter Elbow's *Sharing and Responding*, and in fact he and I once demonstrated 12 types of peer feedback from *Sharing and Responding* at the beginning of a conventional peer response session. Aside from this modeling, Warren also modeled responses to students and guided a number of full class workshops in which the whole class would respond both orally and in writing to the work of three student authors.

In Warren's class of 24, 19 students graciously agreed to give me access to their work, which consisted of oral peer response, written peer response, and oral peer response. There were no standing peer response groups in Warren's class, so it was impossible to follow one group through the time of my pilot (something done by researchers like Melanie Sperling, Marion Fey, and Gayle Burkowski). Thus, I ultimately chose to focus on one of the temporary pairings that occurred during peer response work during a class session: the oral response work that Deacon and Joshua

engaged in during a discussion of an analysis paper that Deacon was writing on a magazine ad for Bacardi Rum.⁵

Creating The Grid—Thinking Through Performances of the Selves in Peer Response

I chose to focus on Deacon and Joshua’s conversation for a number of reasons. First of all the quality of the tape was excellent, with all but a few moments being audible, so it made sense to use a tape that could be transcribed. Secondly, the dialogue that the two men engaged in (which lasted about 25 minutes) seemed in terms of content and concerns to be amazingly similar to the written and electronic response I read; generally, it was laden with specific praise and suggestions, and it got at global concerns and issues rather than local ones. Finally, there was something rich and deep about this short conversation, and even after a first reading, there seemed to be a variety of selves performed during the course of the conversation—some selves that I had read about in the literature on peer response and others that seemed novel.

To start to understand these selves, I created a grid for coding that was—in terms of layout—based on the grid that Beth Hewett uses in her dissertation, *The Characteristics and Effects of Oral and Computer-Mediated Peer Group Talk on the Argumentative Writing Process*. Drawing on Anne Gere and Robert Abbott’s article “Talking About Writing: The Language of Writing Groups,” Hewett outlines how she uses Gere and Abbott’s idea of the “idea unit” to divide up the peer talk she collected—both in a conventional classroom and in a computerized one (73). To Hewett, Abbott, and Gere idea units “are chunks of information, or ‘a series of brief spurts which reflect

⁵ Again, these are pseudonyms chosen by the participants. All students in Warren and Pam’s classes chose their own pseudonyms—as did Warren and Pam.

the speaker's object of consciousness" (73). These key markers of these idea units are "intonation, pauses, and syntax," and in terms of coding for idea units Gere and Abbott ultimately achieved 85% inter-rater reliability (73).

Thus in my work, I created a grid that used idea units to break down transcripts of peer response talk, written peer response work, and electronic peer response. Like Hewett, Gere and Abbott, I also attempted to establish inter-rater reliability by having the instructors I worked with, Warren and Pamela Oliver, look over my coding scheme and its implementation, and ultimately we achieved a 60% rate of inter-rater reliability in terms of assigning selves to students utterances. While this rate of coding is lower than that of Gere and Abbott's study, this is not entirely problematic since the categories we were coding for were constructed to allow bleeding between categories of the students' selves. Thus, our lower rate of inter-rater reliability in terms of coding student selves has much to do with the nature of the categories themselves, which are designed to reflect the fluid nature of selves and allow for bleeding into and out of categories. Hewett and Gere and Abbott's studies achieved higher rates of inter-rater reliability because their coding scheme was concerned with the rhetorical purpose of student peer response comments—something that lends itself more to distinct categories than performances of the self.

The categories that I created were drawn from the literature, my work with the transcript that resulted from Joshua and Deacon's conversation, and my own observations about the presentation of self in peer response. Before defining and delimiting the categories, I want to make one important distinction about the categories of "selves" I describe and their relation to students' selves—the larger issue at stake in my work.

The selves that I describe here, and in greater depth in chapter five, are selves that students have access to in the moment of peer response, and their origins are multiple. They are derived principally from students reading what Erving Goffman calls the “situation definition” and performing a self for the benefit of others (Goffman, *The Presentation of Self* 9). However, the genesis of these selves has much to do with the work of peer response itself. Peer response is in many ways an artificial sort of performance—one in which Goffman’s “front region,” the stage for the play of the self, is created by the pedagogical approach of the teacher and the demands of “the University” (Gray-Rosendale 71). Ultimately, the selves I describe here are not *the* selves of the students, which are multiple and more than the seven selves I define below—the selves that I talk about exist within the limited confines of the situation definition defined by peer group work.

Also, I want to add that the selves I describe below are selves that shift for a variety of reason—all dependent upon the situation definition that the students doing peer response work define. Laura Gray-Rosendale accounts for this fluidity of selves when she writes, in reference to the work conversation analyst Richard Buttny,

The speaker socially creates and re-creates various ethos or personae. This is done in conjunction with folk logics or group-constructed action theories about what counts as appropriate or right conduct within a specific group. This ultimately depends on a group’s cultural system of beliefs, values, and ideologies . . . Often there are wide disparities between diverse group members’ folk logics or institutional folk logics at various moments. Because folk logics are interactionally invoked, they also devise and re-create contexts for interaction (45).

What Gray-Rosendale makes evident here, and this is a key point, is that the group of students involved in peer work will not only create and recreate their own selves, but that folk logics, which can often be in conflict with institutional folk logics, will also

determine both the “stage” for the performances of the selves and the reading of those selves by the other members. The practical upshot of all of this is that the selves I’m about to describe, or identities as Gray-Rosendale calls them, are remarkably fluid and completely grounded in a social performance of the self.

With the fluid, provisional, and social nature of the selves I’m going to describe in mind, let me briefly outline the selves that I identified during the course of my work in the pilot study—using examples from the previously mentioned conversation between Joshua and Deacon as examples. This way I can define the selves and provide examples that will hopefully make the definitions feel a little more real.

The first self that I want to talk about is that of the evaluator. This idea come from Michael Kleine, and it is related to Kliene’s observation that many peer respondents respond principally to surface level changes (224). The role of the evaluator is also combined with Gere, Abbot, and Hewett’s idea of the directive response, a sort of teacherly identity in which students couch response in terms of “should.” It can also be a way of giving a sort of direct praise that establishes connections between students. A good example of this can be seen when Joshua, at the beginning of his conversation with Deacon, says “Which means you have good first. . .good (uh) first descriptions. It’s a good picture.”

Quite unlike the evaluator self is the reader self, which again I based on the work of Kleine, Gere and Abbott and Hewett. This refers to what Kliene calls the role of “immediate reader” in which the student gives a “movie of his or her mind” a la Peter Elbow (*A Community of Writers* 534-539). This is the sort of subjective, reader-based peer response that my co-teachers and I spent our time teaching students how to do. And

the results were rewarding, with students often using their reactions as a starting place for a conversation, such as what Joshua does when he tells Deacon, at the beginning of their conversation, “Now going down through this, I just have a few things (uhm). When you’re mentioning (uhm) somehow when you’re mentioning colors which is a huge thing.”

However, I would argue that one of the things that Warren, Pam Oliver, and myself hoped for was for students to become collaborative selves. The idea of the collaborative self is principally from Kleine, and this refers to what he calls the “role playing audience” (224). This involves students taking a more activist role in discussing the rhetorical context of a piece. They try to help the writer figure out the demands of the intended audience of the piece, principally by asking questions related to audience demands past the immediate readers in the group (i.e. “Who are you writing for?”). Also students in this role would be likely to make specific reference to the rhetorical demands and situation of the piece. Generally this sort of play of the self involves linked comments between at least two people, such as this short snippet of conversation from Deacon and Joshua’s conversation about the use of color in the ad that Deacon is analyzing:

Joshua: Which leaves it to the person seeing the ad.

Deacon: [Interjected] It could be anyone.

This sort of exchange, in which the students work towards the effect that the writing might have on a reader, is the sort of work that one sees when students perform the collaborative self during peer response.

A less rhetorically-based but extremely important self is the companion self, which arises from my readings in *Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis* (Ten Have and Hutchby and Wooffitt). In *Conversation Analysis* there is a great deal of discussion of the importance of phatic communication and the maintenance of folk logics of turn taking—as well as the challenging of them. By this, I mean that talk is patterned on conversational turns in which one person speaks then another speaks (Hutchby 28-29). The maintenance of the turn-taking sequence in conversation is accomplished by the interaction between and among conversational partners, and these interactions are generally governed by three general rules: “(1) turn-taking occurs; (2) one speaker tends to talk at a time; and (3) turns are taken with as little gap or overlap between them as possible” (Hutchby 47).

Of course this is more complicated than I’m making it seem.

Conversation analysis is really the process of rendering “talk in interaction,” and that the rules I just described are normative and observational; thus, they do not exist as laws but as normative practices that can, and will, be breached (Hutchby 50). Of course these normative practices are also problematized by the fact that the talk students engage in is talk organized by an outside authority—that of a teacher. Ultimately, peer group talk is not just organized by the students, their experience, and the way turns at conversation are allocated; it is also organized by the instructor who does, or doesn’t, lay down explicit or implicit rules for peer group conversation.

Thus, ultimately the companion self is a self that is composed of phatic discourse, process language about group tasks, and the general maintenance, or challenging, of turn taking sequences. It is the self that is spoken into existence in the immediate

conversational moment. You can see how this works by looking at a brief set of exchanges between Joshua and Deacon in which phatic discourse keeps the motor of conversation running. In this example Joshua has just finished telling Deacon what the bright colors of the ad Deacon's analyzing might mean. Joshua starts by saying ends this sort of monologue by saying, "You know. . .?" To which Deacon responds with an affirmative, "Uh huh." This short, seemingly insignificant exchange is important because it allows Joshua to check for agreement with what he just said, and Deacon's response allows Joshua to then continue talking with Deacon about the meaning that the colors might have in the ad Deacon is looking at.

However, there is also a social component to this performance of the self, and my conception of this self owes something to Ann Dyson's conception of social work. According to Dyson, social work is the work that she observed young students in a class she studied doing around the work of writing; social work involved students using their writing to "maintain and manipulate their relationship with peers" (12). For Dyson's children this sort of work is more literal, with students becoming characters in the works themselves, but there is a key point to Dyson's idea of social work that I want to use. Dyson says that when social work happens in a class the writing of students becomes "more embedded in their imagined, experience, and ongoing social worlds—in their 'multiple worlds'" (12).

Thus, the companion self is not just a way of marking out phatic communication and the work that students do to maintain conversation with their peers, it is also the affective work that students do to integrate their lived, and imagined experience, with the work of writing that happens in peer response.

The next category is an oddball sort of classification of the performance of the self, but it does have a direct tie to work done on peer response work. This self, which I call the “citizen” self is tied to Melanie Sperling’s work about the import of outside affiliations on the course of peer discourse. Sperling claims that students’ affiliations, in terms of race, class and gender, have “an impact on subsequent writing inside the classroom,” specifically on peer response work (28). The purpose of this category of self is for the performer of the particular self to establish a context and a connection past the immediate identity of the moment—that of a writer writing or a reader reading. This is a self that lives in affiliative, gendered, raced, and classed language.

This is also a self that is perhaps the most rarely performed, at least in my research experience. Thus, Deacon and Joshua didn’t actually perform this self for each other; however, it did later crop up in my research at UNHM, and one of the prime examples of this sort of performance can be seen in a moment between a student named Neo and another named Cassia. In a brief moment towards the end of an oral peer response session, Cassia, in reference to some ESL language patterns that she notices, says, “The, uh, English you use in it. Brings to mind, that you know. . .that I can tell that you’re not. . .an English first language speaker.” Neo’s comment, for a variety of reasons I explore in chapter five, is only “Yes.” For the moment I just want to point out that this sort of performance of the self is often created collaboratively, with one student in a way inviting another student to claim, or deny, a particular type of affiliation.

A more immediate self is the student self, which, from my experience, references both student identity and the need to address procedural issues of doing group response work within a context of a classroom. Performing this self often involves references to

peer response sheets, references to being a student, and references to the question, “What are we supposed to be doing?” This is a self concerned with procedural knowledge, and a good example of this can be seen at the end of Deacon and Joshua’s conversation, which ends with the following exchange:

Deacon: Would you like to say anything else?

Joshua: Uh, okay, let’s see.

This exchange, which is occasioned by Warren’s request that students wrap up their conversations, shows the way that the student self tries to organize the work of peer response.

The final self that I want to briefly outline is one that has little to do with procedural knowledge and much to do with identity: it’s the writerly self. Here the writer of the piece is either eliciting specific feedback (i.e. “What did you think of my lead?”); defending his or her piece (i.e. “That’s not what I meant?”); making specific reference to the act of writing (i.e. “I’m not sure I’m being clear here.”); or giving further information about the piece that the reader may not have access to (“I thought it shows the colors in the bottle label”). Most often the writer self is the default position for the person receiving peer response on his or her piece, as it was for Deacon.

At this point it probably obvious that these categories of the self allow for a great deal of overlap, and that is intentional. My experience has been that students shuttle back and forth between many selves within the space of a single peer response workshop—often times within the space of single idea unit. However, I am using selves, rather than roles or identities, for a very particular reason—despite the provisional nature of the selves described.

The self is, as Sherrie Gradin notes, not necessarily a solitary, solipsistic ideal. A self can be, “The self that confronts one’s own beliefs and examines her interaction with culture,” and this is a decentered, plural self that must ultimately “learn how to carry out the negotiation between self and the world” (xv). Thus, by using “self” as my key term I am making a specific point to deal with the affective impact of peer response work on students and on their growth as writers and people, but this affect is not disengaged from the social realities which students write out of and towards.

I realize that I will never have (nor would I want to have) access to the private self of the subjects of my research, my students; however, there is something gained by a focus on selves rather than roles or identities, and that something is the idea that students do possess something truly their own—their own experiences, histories, and selves. To foreground the development of selves in a discussion of peer response is to foreground the personal growth, intellectually and affectively, of students themselves—but it is a growth that only has meaning in the presence of others.

The Methodological Boundaries, Concerns, and Outlines of Research At UNHM The Space, The People and the Process

The first time I saw the mill yard at Manchester, where UNHM is housed, I was impressed. Pulling off Interstate 293 and onto Granite Street, I caught a glimpse of an ocean of brick—with dormant stacks pushing up towards the sky like a forest of ceramic trees. Three minutes later I was pulling my battered Honda in front of the old Amoskeag Machine Shop building, and after following Pamela Oliver’s thorough directions, I found myself in front of her classroom. I paused for a second, took a breath, and stepped through the door.

Inside I was greeted by nine faces, arranged in desks in rows, Pamela at the front of the class perched on a table. The room was small, it could at most hold 20 students comfortably, but the ceilings were about 14 feet high, and the original brickwork and wooden ceilings were still there. If I remember correctly, the first thing I said after T.H. introduced me, was, "This is the nicest classroom I've ever been in." In some way, it was as if the ghosts of old millworkers still haunted the place, and what was interesting was that most of the students sitting in front of me, unlike most of the students I worked with at UNH, Durham, worked a full-time job and came to school full-time.⁶

The students in the class ranged in age from 18-26, with four of the students being male, eight female. They were taught by Pamela Oliver, someone who had been a colleague of mine at UNH, Durham and someone who had also graduated from UNHM with a bachelor's degree. The team was also made complete by a class-linked tutor, who worked with the students on a one-to-one basis throughout the semester on issues around writing.

As the term went on, I became part of a teaching team. I would often work with the students during time set aside for peer response work (generally 90 minutes out of a three hour class), and Pam and the class-linked tutor would often conference with students, taking them out for 15 minutes or so at a time, while the rest of us did peer response work. Generally, on the days when we did peer response in the traditional classroom, I would sit around and either listen to what was going on, sometimes making a few notes to remind me of what transpired, but often I would be reading folks work. In truth, I became another set of eyes during our peer response work. Students would hand

⁶ There were three people absent this day, and they were to remain absent for the bulk of my research. Thus, on most days, the class was effectively a class of nine.

me their work, most often with questions appended to them, and I would try to be another reader of their work. A reader who was in some way their teacher, but not their evaluator, but at the same time someone who would often bring texts into class to work on.

In fact, much of the direct instruction that I did for peer response involved me using my own work (everything from an elegy for Robert J. Connors to a hastily written poem) as a sort of acid test for peer response. Thus, we used my work to talk about peer response and how it might work—as well as handouts and what I came to think of as the “Pam and Chris Show.”

These “shows” were the way that I very deliberately introduced the class to the work that we would be doing as peer respondents. Pam and I started by having students engage in what Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff call in *A Community of Writers: A Workshop Course in Writing*, “Sharing: No Response” (511). This sort of response calls for nothing more than students reading their paper aloud, though Elbow and Belanoff allow for students to have their text read silently, and the hope is that this sort of “sharing” gives students “an unpressured setting for getting comfortable reading” their words and “listening to the writing of others” (511). My and Pam’s reason for modeling this sort of response first was very simple: we wanted students to get comfortable with the process of response—despite the fact that Pam had engaged in some take-home response prior to this work.

Ultimately, we didn’t have to worry much about students being comfortable around each other.

The students in Pam's class took to response, and each other, almost immediately. As Pam told me on a number of occasions, "This class really seems to like each other." And they did—they really, really liked each other, which made the next step a comparative breeze.

The next step was for me to put myself on the block: to use a small piece from an elegy (which tied in with the work that Pam's students were doing on an assignment about writing about a person) that I had written for Robert J. Connors. The point and purpose of this was to have students begin to make the next logical step, which was to start giving each other feedback. To give students a sense of how to go about this, I again stole from Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff, this time by way of Gerald Grow. In this exercise Pam and I showed how we wanted students to give a "Movie of their Mind" to their classmates. In other words we wanted students to give their peers feedback that would show what happened in their mind (via pointing, summarizing, telling, and showing) while they read, rather than evaluating their peers' writing (Grow). Again, the students had no problem getting engaged in this sort of work—which led quite nicely to the next, and final, step in teaching peer response. And this happened in the UNHM computer lab in the basement of the building.

The Instructional Computer Lab at UNH M, which I described briefly at the beginning of this chapter, was four rows of Dell PC computers—arranged, depressingly, in a traditional lab sort of arrangement; however, unlike at UNH, Durham, there was some room for students to move about without bumping into each other. So, while the lab wasn't perfectly suited to the sort of collaborative work that happens during peer response, it didn't prevent it.

The work that we did in the Instructional Computer Lab at UNHM started with what Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff call “Criterion-Based Feedback,” which involves the writer asking particular questions of his or her readers to get at what the writer is “wondering about or struggling with” in his or her piece (514). Prior to showing up in the lab, Pam and I shared some questions with the class that might be profitable, with Pam asking the question and me giving a response to a trial piece. Thus, Pam asked, “What did you think of my piece?” To which I answered “Dude, I liked it . . . It like rocked.” After modeling, as amusingly as possible, some fairly useless questions and answers, I started to throw out other questions that might be useful, like “What would you say is main point of my piece, in your own words?” Ultimately, before we went down to the computer lab to work, the students had brainstormed a list of about 15 questions on the whiteboard—varying from the general (i.e. “What was your favorite moment in my piece?”) to the specific (i.e. “Could you tell me what you think of my description of my mother in paragraph three? Does it stick with you, or do I need more detail?”)

As god is my witness, everyone walked down to the lab fully prepared with a series of questions that they might be able to ask, and when we were all in the lab, a number of students asked me to look at their questions (of which I asked that they have at least five) to see if they were “good enough.” Amazingly all of the students’ questions were “good enough.”

In fact, I would say that one of the most impressive things about working with Pam’s class was that they managed to be very good respondents almost all of the time—regardless of the technologies involved. They would spend a great deal of time talking to

each other—always using the full 90 minutes we had, and they would often be talking about their papers as we took our ten minute break after peer response.

The Research Questions

From my first research project at UNH, Durham to my most recent research at UNHM, my research questions have narrowed and focused through reading, thinking, and experience. Thus, when I began my work at UNHM, my research questions were:

1. What does the prevailing literature say about student peer response, particularly the unwritten code of student conduct which only permits, as Kenneth Bruffee claims, students two positions: that of a teddy bear or a shark (Bruffee 26)?
2. What do students see as the fundamental differences, and similarities between responding to, and receiving response from, their peers on-line and in a classroom setting? And to what degree are their views colored by previous experience with computers and peer revision?

These questions were ultimately to lead me towards an intensive study of the selves involved in peer response—in lieu of a layered sense of literate and pre-literate practices in which students must, by necessity, work through peer responses with their voices, their pens, and their machines.

Working At UNHM: CATs, Data, and Multilayered Literate Practices

To capture the multilayered literate nature of the work done in computer-aided peer response, I needed to collect a variety of different types of data—six total. I started by collecting ink and paper copies of student papers with peer comments on them—either in the form of answers to authors' questions or additional annotations. In addition to this stack of papers and comments, I collected printouts of electronic copies of student papers and comments, which made use of the comment function of Microsoft Word. Of course I also needed to hear what students were saying about peer response, and I did that with the afore-mentioned audiotapes of peer response work—the coding of which I described but

scant pages earlier. This collection and coding of peer response speech occurred in both the computer lab and traditional classroom. To this range of work that caught students' work in process, I added two metacognitive pieces: audio tapes from one hour interviews with four case studies and CATs (Classroom Assessment Techniques) which asked the entire class to metacognitively reflect on the process of peer revision at the end of a particular peer response session.

Let me briefly explain how each type of data contributed to my understanding of the selves of peer response generally, and more particularly, the selves that students access during computer assisted peer response.

Ink and Paper Copies of Student Papers With Peer Comments on Them

In my work at UNHM, I collected student papers with comments on them from all students in the class. I looked at these papers for a very specific reason: to see what sort of roles students tended to play in terms of their performance as peer respondents. I also used these responses when talking to students during retrospective interviews at the end of my studies. Thus, during the conversation we would have during interviews, the interviewee and myself had a common text to look at and make reference to. (See Thomas Newkirk's, 1984 article "Direction and Misdirection in Peer Response" for an illustration of this methodological activity).

By looking at the students' work in class, I was able to start answering my first research question: what do students see as the fundamental differences, and similarities, between responding to and receiving response from their peers on-line and in a classroom setting? In order to understand what distinctions and similarities students see between

computer-aided and traditional response, I had to understand the sort of traditional response that students did.

Printouts of Electronic Copies of Student Papers and Comments

These pieces, which used the comment function of Microsoft Word to insert comments that float over the writers' texts, were collected so that I could understand some of the similarities and differences between student peer response in an electronic and traditional composition classroom. Specifically I looked at the selves that students play as peer respondents while they're doing this sort of work, paying particular attention to the differences, and similarities, in the selves students assumed in our electronic and traditional classrooms. Again, I also used these documents in the retrospective interviews to understand how students read the comments in the two mediums. I also read these electronic student texts myself for hints how students construct themselves as writers and respondents. Specifically I looked to see if students fall into the same sorts of selves when writing computer-aided peer response as they do when speaking or writing peer response in a conventional setting.

Audio Tapes of Peer Response Work in the Computer Lab and the Traditional Classroom

Again, this was an attempt to capture the way that peer response work gets done in a classroom. I had all the students in Pam's class audiotape peer response sessions during four types of response activities: traditional oral-based peer response, traditional written peer response, computer-aided peer response, and computer-aided peer response with a spoken component.

Upon reviewing the transcripts of these recordings in conjunction with my coded classroom observations, I began to understand some of the oral contours of student peer

response, and, more importantly, I began to understand the multiple roles that students could play during a given peer response session, both in using computer-aided and more traditional methods of response.

Audio Tapes From One-Hour Interviews With Four Case Studies

I conducted a retrospective, hour-long interview with my two case study students (Mfixx3 and Cassia), and used an email format with two other students (Neo and Cornelius) who played important roles in my research at UNHM. Using transcripts from peer review sessions in our computer and traditional classrooms, I had these students reflect on the process of giving and using peer response. Some questions that I asked in a rather open interview, were:

- What experience did you have with computers coming into English 401?
- What experience did you have with peer response coming into English 401?
- What differences and similarities do you see between doing revision in class and doing it with computers?
- What did you enjoy and/or dislike about response using computers?
- What did you enjoy and/or dislike about response when we worked giving oral response in class?
- What did you enjoy and/or dislike about response about when we gave written response in class?

These questions allowed me to begin to understand students perspectives on peer response, both CMC and traditional, and it was a way for me to check my perspectives on students' work as peer respondents against their own metacognitive understanding of peer response. The data I collected here let me get at two components of my central research question. What do students see as the fundamental differences, and similarities between responding to, and receiving response from, their peers on-line and in a classroom setting? And to what degree are their views colored by previous experience with computers and peer revision?"

CATs: Classroom Assessment Techniques

The final pieces of data that I collected were CATs, Classroom Assessment techniques. In *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*, Thomas Angelo and Patricia Cross talk about using a variety of techniques to produce short classroom assessments to monitor student learning in class (Angelo and Cross).

I slightly modified the idea of “CATs,” which are generally used as a tool for quickly engaging in formative assessment of classroom learning, for my use as a researcher. I designed CATs to get at students background as peer respondents and computer users, and to get their immediate feedback about the process of engaging in peer response.

Below are some CATs that I used, with none of them taking more than ten minutes for students to answer:

- What is your experience with computers, prior to English 401?
- What is your experience with peer response, prior to English 401?
- After today’s class, how would you define peer response?
- What are your main impressions of using computers for response after today’s class?

Aside from the first two CAT questions (which contain more elaborated instructions), most of the CATs I used dealt with questions specific to conduct of a particular class. Thus, most of the CATs I used gave me an impressionistic view of peer response on a given day, *from the whole class*. This was important in understanding the class’ attitude as a whole towards peer response, and it allowed me to triangulate the attitudes and values that my case study students had towards peer response with the attitudes and values that the bulk of the students had in class.

In a sense, the CATs were the best way of surveying the class as we did peer response, and, since I was operating from the teacher-researcher position the CATs also served a pedagogical purpose: to check in on how and whether peer response is working for all students. Since CATs are brief readings, they are a quick way to check in on the progress of an entire class. Also, CATs allowed me to instantly bring research back into the classroom, at the beginning of class via a discussion of CATs completed the class before. Thus with CATs I could discuss students' evolving metacognitive understanding of peer response, and their roles in it as the class progressed.

A Methodology For Building the Web of Meaning

Ultimately, it is my students' evolution as peer respondents, be it metacognitive or not, that has driven my work in three research sites over the course of almost three years. During these three years, I have, both practically and philosophically, began to make a web of meaning, but a slightly different sort than Janet Emig speaks of in *The Web of Meaning: Essays on Writing, Teaching, Learning and Thinking*. The specific difference that I'm thinking of, metaphorically and literally, is derived from writing on and about computers, and specifically it is related to the thinking around the way "web" is used in technology studies.

While web has been used as metaphor for some time in composition (Danis, Emig, Flower), I'm more interested in the way that the metaphor of a web works as a way of speaking about methodological concerns—specifically ones that are tied to issues connected to computer and writing. The idea of the World Wide Web is often mentioned in technology studies, and everyone from Cindy Selfe to Victor Vitanza makes at least

passing reference to the idea. However, there is one theorist who gets at the relationships I see as the key to the web of meaning that makes up my work: George Landow.

In *Hypertext 2.0* Landow, discusses various forms of what he, quoting Roland Barthes, calls *lexias*, “‘units of reading’” (64). Landow goes onto make an important argument about the way links to *lexias* work in hypertextual literature—particularly electronic texts. Landow says,

In this effect of electronic linking—dispersal of “the” text into other texts—an individual *lexia* loses its physical and intellectual separation from others when linked electronically to them, it also finds itself dispersed into them. The necessary contextualization and intertextuality produced by situating individual reading units within a network of easily navigable pathways weaves texts, including those by different authors and those in nonverbal media, together. (65)

It is this weaving together of texts, and the dispersal of texts into other texts, that describes the way I view my web of meaning as a methodological approach.

My work is the work of the texts of the writers I’ve worked with since 1998—all the students in various English 401 classes that I’ve worked with. And the texts that these students have produced are, in a very important way, multi-vocal texts, and they are texts that are linked up to other texts that classmates have written about their texts—both in electronic and conventional written forms. However, floating above my students, my colleagues, and myself are the texts of others—the *lexias*/links that have shaped the methodology and execution of my research.

The text that you have in your hands is consciously a link to other sources, which maybe in part explains the lengthy review of literature, but it is not simply what Landow would call a unidirectional link (12). The links in this text are links that tie together texts in a variety of disciplines (Conversation Analysis, Technology Studies, Composition, and

Education) into one large spider web, and my contention is that while we need to have a view of the whole creation, we can't forget the technology of this spider web.

All spider webs are a collection of fine, strong strands, and these strands are glued together to support the whole of web—yet they are separate strands as well. The argument that I am trying to make with my metaphor for thinking about methodology is this: that my study is a strand of a wider web, and that there is still more weaving to be done. My hope is that after my work in this book is done that myself and others will continue to weave together a series of linked texts—whose pattern may seem haphazard, but ultimately isn't. My hope is that I can, over the next three chapters, begin to show you the patterned web of computer-mediated and computer-assisted peer response.

Chapter IV

Honesty, Anonymity, Gender, Age and the Internet

Interchapter: Through The Looking Glass Darkly

Around December of 1997, I got a phone call from a friend and colleague, Rich Rice, asking me if I wanted to collaborate on a project that would use the On-line Writing Lab at Washington State University (the WSU OWL) to let our students—his at Ball State University and mine at the University of New Hampshire—act as peer respondents for each others' papers. Our students would be, in a sense, anonymous—strangers to each other, but they would be able to work together as on-line peers. Rich also mentioned that two compatriots from Portland State University would also be joining us to see if a “multi-geographic,” anonymous Internet setting (the WSU OWL) could provide richer, more rigorously honest, and useful peer response.

Before thinking too deeply or long about the proposal, I signed on to do it, and I have to admit that I am happy that I did; however, I am not happy for the reasons that I thought I might be. The project that I involved myself and my students in did provide us with access to the WSU OWL, which helped create a space that allowed some students to get past the idea that peer response had to be “safe, objective, and non-threatening,” but that is only part of the story (Spear 24).

The rest of the story is an old, yet new, tale in which a traditional value of an expressivist voice—honesty—is complicated by issues of anonymity, gender, age and ultimately pedagogy. My hope is that I can, in next twenty or so pages of this chapter,

show you what happened to my and my students' previously stable sense of "honesty"—that I can show you what my case study research showed me: that issues of honest peer response are more complicated than they would first appear to be, and that they are tied up with issues of age, anonymity and gender in important ways.

Where I Was: An Introduction To Chapter IV

With the research and teaching that I did in the Spring of 1998, I hoped to help make my students better writers and readers through the use of on-line peer revision; I had wanted them to expand their idea of audience to include a wider unseen audience. This desire, born of what Sherrie Gradin might call a "Social-Expressivist Pedagogy," is a desire to have students realize that the

discovery of others and of other worlds is, in reality, a discovery of the ways in which the self positions itself within, and is positioned by material conditions. A social-expressivism, building on the lead of scholars like Elbow and Murray, allows for an understanding of self as subject but also for others as subject. (Gradin 103)

I could envision computers inviting my students into a "community of writers" that operated outside of the four walls of the classroom, and I was, in a way, seduced by the promise of a "'virtual classroom,' a classroom that exists in an electronic environment rather than in a particular place" (Spitzer 188). It was my goal to move my students towards a place where they could encounter themselves and others as writers—as creators of computer mediated work.

The sort of computer-mediated work that my students did was what I refer to as CMC peer response. In theory this means that students used the capabilities of a computer network (in this case Washington State Universities World Wide Web site—The WSU OWL) to engage in peer review. In practice this involved students cutting and pasting their work from a word-processing program (generally Microsoft Word), into an

online form, which would then be posted to a web site for their peers to review—via the web site. In other words, even when students worked together in class, they were accessing their fellow students' work via the WSU OWL.

The work that my students did via the WSU OWL stretched out over the course of an entire semester, but the bulk of our use of the UNH computer lab was during four weeks in which students researched and wrote their Bruce Ballenger inspired research paper—a paper that asked them to explore something that made them “curious” (Ballenger xx). And the “curious” students who are the focus of my study are Amy, Dave, and Helen, who will introduce themselves to you in just a moment.

Before Amy, Dave, and Helen introduce themselves, I should tell you about some of the boundaries and outlines of my study. Initially, I asked for volunteers to come forward and take part in my study. The result was that nine folks came forward and agreed to do the following: give me access to all of their writing over the course of our six week research project—both their responses and the drafts of their work; take part in an hour and half interview in my office, where we would talk about their responses to the online work that we were doing; and agree to letting me as both a teacher and researcher.⁷

Two of the participants in my action-research case study were two conscientious 18-year-old students (Amy and Dave) and one conscientious non-traditionally aged student. This grouping reflected the realities of the night class of Freshman Composition that I taught. Two-thirds of my students were traditionally aged, and the remaining third

⁷ I have to thank my students for their goodwill in this project—particularly since the only “monetary” award they received from me was pizza. Needless to say, their responses were worth much more than the pizza we ate at a local pizza palace in Durham, New Hampshire.

were returning students. Also, the students involved in this case reflected another interesting reality of this class: that about 1/3 of my students were male and 2/3 were female.

Another mitigating factor in choosing Amy, Dave, and Helen⁸ as case studies was that they managed to complete all the assignments I asked them to do, so I had a more or less complete record of their work. This was not true of everyone involved in the study.

At least two of the students who took part in this work (Amy and Dave) seemed to enjoy the process of working on-line with their classmates and distant peer respondents at Ball State. Helen, unlike Dave and Amy, did not enjoy working on-line, and it was Helen's reaction to on-line peer editing that has made me seriously reevaluate my previously uncomplicated vision of honesty in peer editing.

At this point, you probably should meet the participants of my study, and, rather than giving you a short, slanted description of Rachel and Dave, I'll let them introduce themselves by way of a short biography that they wrote at the beginning of the year. I'm doing this so that the "Other" of my text (the students I am trying to ethically represent) can be "heard in its own terms" (Sullivan, "Ethnography and the Problem of the 'Other,'" 105). To do otherwise would be, in some important way, to flatten and distort the reader's first and perhaps most important impression the people who are the real stars of this paper: Rachel, Dave, and Helen.

Now, let us meet the cast. First there is Rachel:

⁸ All the students have been give pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

I am from New Hampshire. I do a lot of sports, and like to try new ones. At the present I constantly do skiing and karate. But I have also done 9 years of horseback riding. I love to swim, used to be on the basketball team for my school, and have also done a variety of regular and weird sports. I love the outdoors, the arts, Sailor Moon, reading, Battletech, animals, etc. I'm very much a people person. I am very much a renaissance woman, in the respect that I've done a little bit of everything (not necessarily well though). I have no brothers or sisters. I only have a loving nuclear family.

I enjoy using computers because it gives me world-wide (limited) access, and I may make contact with many other individuals. I enjoy school, and would enjoy it more if you didn't have to do homework and just had to watch and learn. I love to write as a hobby, mostly on subjects of sci-fi or fantasy. (Yes I like programs like Babylon5, Space Above and Beyond, Star Trek, Star Wars, etc.)

I find it interesting being a freshman, but I have quickly tried to adapt to the faster life of school work, and I occasionally try to get in my extra activity like Intramural broom ball, concert Choir (being in both) or watching the games.

I want to learn how to write to catch a reader. To want my readers to want more of my work. And to keep them on their seat and on the story at hand. (Rachel, "Biography")

Rachel, quite clearly, is a woman of wide interests, much computer experience (unlike a great many of my students) and someone who wants to learn to write. Also, judging from the length of her biography, it's clear that she's a fluent and engaged writer.

As for Dave, here's what he had to say for himself:

I am from _____, NJ, and I graduated from _____ High School.

I think, after today's class, that computer cluster systems often have problems; all computers often have problems, and in the end only after much frustration can I get them to work. Recently computers have let me down because they have been too unreliable and confusing.

Other than that, my life is good. And I hope to learn how to write interestingly and well in English 401. (Dave, "Biography")

Dave, unlike Rachel, was never entirely comfortable with computers; one of his papers was a very well thought out discussion of how researching on the Internet could lead one to "raging hell in the computer lab. Thrashing the computers because they were the cause of my anger" (Dave, "Researching on the Internet"). However, even Dave found on-line work to be interesting, honest, and useful.

Helen, unlike Dave, found little to like in on-line peer revision. In the Interview I conducted with Helen, she expressed general misgivings about peer revision (“It’s kind of like the blind leading the blind”), and she expressed even stronger misgivings about on-line peer revision; saying that during on-line peer response sessions she felt that she was “typing into a dark hole to fulfill an assignment” (Helen, “Interview”). In fact, Helen’s reticence to writing on-line even extended to her biography that she wrote for class—her three-line biography reads:

I live in _____, NH. I graduated from _____ High School, in _____, NH in 1969. I have three children. One in college and the other two in High School. I know I’ll probably like this better when I know what I’m doing. (Helen, “Biography”)

Clearly, Helen—a non-traditionally aged student in her 40s—has issues, many I believe connected to gender and age, with on-line peer revision and the “honesty” that most of my students claimed to be able to express and accept in an on-line environment.

My question is why did Dave and Rachel—but not Helen—find on-line peer revision to be honest, helpful and useful? I’m certain that the answers to these questions are tied up with issues of anonymity, gender, age, and pedagogy.

What I Saw: Issues of Anonymity and Honesty

Up until this point I have not defined the type of honesty that I saw during my research, and my reason for that is simple: I wanted you to understand that my understanding of honesty was uncomplicated and, ultimately, untrue. I simply thought that honesty was self evident—something that students would experience and know through peer feedback—that honesty was, in terms of peer revision, a virtuous truth telling.

I was obviously naïve.

It was only after my research was done, after I started to read my students' texts in terms of gender and age, and after I was introduced to Thomas Newkirk's reading of Erving Goffman, that my notion of honesty was complicated. In *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*, Newkirk writes that

According to Goffman (1959), the key element of a socially competent performance is the ability to maintain a situation definition consistent with that of the audience. In these cases 'honest' can cue a mutually agreed-upon type of performance. (7)

It is this honesty, the honesty defined by a "situation definition consistent with that of the audience," that seems key to my newer, more complicated understanding of honesty and how it functions in the on-line peer revision that my students did through the Washington State OWL. I think that my students who viewed on-line peer response as enabling and honest were able to use the limited anonymity afforded by the WSU OWL to create a situational definition in which honesty was defined as on-line peer response that allowed them (and their virtual peers) to step outside of the habitual role of student-writers who were "all in this thing together." Thus, the lack of a physical peer enabled two of my students (Rachel and Dave) to get a sort of response that indicated, in the words of Rachel, that students "weren't afraid of saying things they normally wouldn't say" to each other (Rachel, "Interview"). Rachel and Dave managed to move past social conventions that make student response, in terms that both Rachel and Dave used, "dishonest." Rachel and Dave's definition of honesty in response had moved past what Kenneth Bruffee calls the "teddy bears or sharks" stage of response—a type of peer response in which respondents either "refuse to admit that they see anything wrong with a fellow student's work" or "refuse to admit that there is anything of value in it at all" (Bruffee 26). And part of the reason for this move was that they saw the anonymity

afforded by on-line interaction (such as produced by the WSU OWL and physically absent peers) to be liberating and honesty.

Ultimately the concept of honesty in peer response is tied up with how students, regardless of medium, create a “situation definition consistent with that of the audience” in which “honesty” is possible (Newkirk, *Performance of Self* 7). Honesty is ultimately a situation definition that students co-create when they perform particular selves for each other during peer response. “Honesty” as a concept is almost completely dependent on the interaction between two people in the moment of peer response. It seems that in a peer response performances many, if not most, of the students I worked with demanded that there be some sort of honest peer response, but there is no absolute definition of response; honesty is relative to the situation definition that two peers co-create in the moment of peer response. Honesty is more a about a particular situation definition than it is about what a particular communicative medium brings to the conversational table.

However, there are some things that Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) does bring to the table, things that affect the way that students may, or may not, co-create an honest situation definition. According to Janet Eldred and Gail Hawisher, questions of research on computer networks (such as the computer network that houses the WSU OWL) in composition has “As a field . . . difficulty balancing these twin modes of inquiry, speculative and empirical,” and this difficulty in balancing has forced us to hunt for empirical evidence in other fields (2). One of the principal difficulties associated with this borrowing empirical research from other disciplines is that “Done responsibly such importation [the importation of empirical and speculative research] involves not just the

light load of a single piece of research, but the heavy freight of an entire field of inquiry” (Eldred 3).

Eldred and Hawisher point out that much of the research that Composition has drawn on about the functioning of anonymity in computer networks was done in the early 80s at Carnegie Mellon University (3). According to Eldred and Hawisher, many Composition scholars interested in research on computer networks rather blithely accepted the results of the Carnegie Mellon experiments—not knowing that research in the social sciences almost immediately started to question those results (4). Interestingly enough, two of the findings of the Carnegie Mellon experiments—and the subsequent challenging of those findings by other researchers—applies directly to how anonymity functioned during the course of my teacher research: issues of “reduced social context cues” and “The Equalization Phenomenon.”

When a Social Psychologist refers to “reduced social context cues” she is talking about computer-mediated communication’s (CMC) reputed ability to obliterate “social cues revealing age, gender, race ethnicity, status, and mood” (Eldred 4). However, such researchers as Matheson and Zanna began to believe that ““Social cues may play a much stronger role in computer communications than had previously been acknowledged””(Eldred 5). Thus, it’s difficult to say that the absence of a physical presence actually equals an anonymous subject position. As for “The Equalization Phenomenon,” it “can be summarized as follows: Because CMC reduces social contexts cues, it eliminates social differences and thus results in a forum for more egalitarian participation” (10). This claim, like the idea of reduced social context cues, is disputed—and it further complicates issues of anonymity might function.

In Cyberspace people still read for clues about gender, race, class, and status, and people still make judgments about people based on class laden language (such as the use of “ain’t”); gendered language (such as the use of what Robin Lakoff calls “‘Empty’ adjectives like divine, charming, cute”); and ethnic and racial language cues (such as Black English Vernacular’s use of the habitual “be”) (Lakoff 53). Anonymity cannot exist in some sort of absolute form in cyberspace, and even if it could there is no guarantee that anonymity would “liberate” students from constraints of class, race and gender. Anonymity can constrain you, or it can set you free.

In interviews both Rachel and Dave claimed to feel liberated by the relative anonymity afforded them—an anonymity that was more about physical absence than it was about an anonymous identity.

Rachel claims that she found anonymous response on-line to be more useful to her because her peers “weren’t afraid of saying things they normally wouldn’t say to my face” (Rachel, “Interview”). Like Rachel Dave found that “through the computer you can get more truthful responses. Especially if you don’t know who the person is” (Dave, “Interview). For Dave and Rachel on-line responses—ones in which they could not know or physical see their respondent—felt more truthful and useful, for them the anonymity afforded them via reduce social context cues and “The Equalization Phenomena” was real and liberating; they were able to experience an honesty in a situation definition that allowed them to experience honesty and truth from their on-line peer respondents.

Helen, unlike Dave and Rachel, did not experience this liberation.

For Helen, not knowing who was responding to her text made her distrust the response she received. In her interview Helen, in response to a question, about what she could add at the end of our interview said:

I think that the only thing that I'd like to say is about the on-line work because I do have, maybe other people had this feeling . . . but I had a real feeling that I was just typing into a dark hole to fulfill an assignment. I didn't want to read their [her virtual peers'] papers because I didn't know them. I couldn't see them. I looked at their responses with a bit of curiosity, but . . . For all I knew they could be somebody who's illiterate on the other coast. I didn't value their opinions necessarily. I don't know these people. (Helen, "Interview")

Helen obviously felt that knowing the people—to have a real-time sense of who they were—was absolutely essential if she was to accept what the person told her. It is also clear, through her wondering aloud about the literacy of her virtual peers, that social context cues (illiterate being a snub par excellence at the University) did not completely disappear in Cyberspace.

The proof of Helen's discomfort with the anonymity of cyberspace can be seen in the response that she wrote to her peers work. Unlike Dave and Rachel who wrote lengthy, specific responses to anonymous peers, Helen wrote short, terse, safe responses. None of Helen's on-line responses were more than 60 words, and this response to a media analysis paper that a UNH peer of hers' wrote, is typical of Helen's response style:

I like you analysis of Fridge magazine. I gave me a real feel for the overall content of a new magazine. Why does it not surprise me that it's full of T&A. That theme seems to run in ads in everything but women's magazines. (Helen, "Response to 'Fridge'")

In this response, despite my pleas to the contrary, Helen did not give specific feedback about specific points in her peers' text. It seems that for her anonymity was not something that freed her; it was something that shut her down. In the next section I'll

attempt to answer why Helen felt inhibited by on-line response while Rachel and Dave felt liberated.

What I Saw: Gendered Honesty in CMC and Computer-Aided Peer Revision Work

I found, via interviews and looking at student work, that students expressed a sort of conditional honesty—conditional in the sense that group work forced them (even on-line) to get past being “teddy bears or sharks,” peer respondents who either “refuse to admit that they see anything wrong with a fellow student’s work” or people “who refuse to admit that there is anything of value in it at all” (Bruffee 26).

However, all of this did not necessarily guaranty that students used the WSU OWL in the way that it was intended to be used. I spent a better part of the semester trying to coach students through peer response. I ran them through exercises from *Sharing and Responding*, specifically spending two class periods on skeleton feedback, just prior to going into the computer labs for the first time.

However, I quickly discovered that students can give response, as Helen did, that is vague and of questionable utility regardless of the format of the OWL. Still, there seems to be something about the OWL environment that encourages a sort of anonymous honesty in response—an honest that can be, as Rachel noted, “good [and] sometimes bad” (Rachel, Interview).

Also, this view of honesty, and how it works, is gendered as well. And I want to be clear by what I mean by “gendered” here. I am not arguing for an essentialist view of gender, one which conflates biology with a larger societal and linguistic category—that of gender. Gender, as theorists like H el ene Cixous and Donna Haraway point out, does

have a bodily, even physical presence, but when Cixous and Haraway speak of the “body” or other physical aspects of gender they are also working with larger, aphysical concepts (Cixous and Haraway) However gender is not just the physical body, it is, as Deborah Tannen and others point out, the way language and even society works (Tannen).

Also, I want to make clear that my case study students, while they seem to be expressing gendered attitudes, are not standing in for all males or female gendered beings. In fact, I would argue that while Dave, Helen and Rachel’s attitudes towards gender may in some ways be indicative of some gendered trends in peer response, they are not indicative of the way men and women necessarily do peer response. My attitude I realize runs counter to some of the work in peer response.

A good number of the articles which address issues of gender in peer response, which are rare, seem to hold a vaguely essentialist view of gender. For instance in Mary Styslinger’s article, “Mars and Venus in My Classroom: Men Go To Their Caves and Women Talk During Peer Revision,” she claims in her results section that the process of peer response “because of its social nature and dependence on intimacy and collaboration for success is naturally biased towards female students” (54). Styslinger is not alone in, in some ways, essentializing gender. Elizabeth Sommers and Sandra Lawrence in “Women’s Ways of Talking in Teacher Directed and Student-Directed Peer Response Groups,” claim, while discussing the results of their study of eight college level writing courses they taught, that “Many females in student-directed groups learned entirely different sorts of lesson than males did” (29).

I bring up these two studies not to attack Sommers, Lawrence and Styslinger for essentialism, but to make a crucial point about the study of gender: that gender can be tied to biology in some important ways, but gender is ultimately a social construct—a social construct maintained, or challenged, via language. Thus, for my purposes gender is a really a social and linguistic lens through which to view peer response.

However, at the moment I want to deal specifically with the way that “honesty” seems to be, in terms of peer response, a gendered term. And the best examples I have of this are Dave’s views on on-line peer revision.

When I asked Dave about which type of response he liked to receive, he said, “I found that through the computer you could get more truthful responses. Especially if you don’t know who the person is” (Dave, Interview). This statement is not sufficiently different from what Rachel said, but what Dave said as he elaborated his point is very telling:

Even the people from like Ball State, basically the same thing [a reference to their honest response]. Like I’ve gotten people saying to me—telling me that writing “hell” in my paper was wrong. And like saying that a formal paper does not have the word “hell in it, or when I put “shit” in one of papers they’d say “a research paper doesn’t have shit in it.” (Dave, Interview)

Dave seems to enjoy being challenged, and he really seems to have enjoyed hearing specifically what people had to say about his aggressive language. For Dave, a male gendered student, the challenge was invigorating; the honesty, as he later put it, was “helpful” in thinking about his writing (Dave, Interview). Nowhere in our interview did Dave, like Rachel, hint that “honest response” could be counter-productive—“good” or “sometimes bad” (Rachel, Interview). I think that this is due in part because Dave is

more ready, as a male gendered being, to accept the agonistic nature of much of academic discourse—discourse that often demands “either adversarial or disinterested modes of discourse” (Sullivan, “Feminism and Methodology in Composition Studies” 40).

However, there is, as Deborah Tannen points out, something that males, such as Dave gain, from “adversarial or disinterested modes of discourse:” they gain the potential of bonding through opposition (40-44). Dave is perhaps, in the straight shooting honesty that he senses, looking for a challenge that can be a prelude to bonding, or at the very least something analogous to “the situation of fruitful collaboration that began when an audience member publicly challenged a speaker after his talk” (Tannen 44). Dave not only gains feedback from online interaction (in an American male gendered perspective); he also gains affiliation.

I cannot of course verify that Dave is looking for affiliation from peer response, at least at a conscious level, and really that’s beside the point anyway. I am merely saying that Dave expresses, in at least one moment, a male gendered attitude about peer response, and that part of his reason for doing so might, and might is the key term here, have something to do with the way male gendered humans sometimes seek out affiliation. Ultimately, I would say that I am arguing, with Dave’s response, not for or against a particular sort of discourse, and I am certainly not saying that male gendered discourse has no place in peer response. What I am arguing for is that male gendered attitudes can exist in an anonymous subject position, and that we, as teachers, should be aware that they do.

Of all my students Helen was the least interested in the sort of male, agonistic discourse that typified, for Dave, honest response and an opportunity for intellectual affiliation and “fruitful collaboration” (Tannen 44). Several times in our interview Helen—much like Rachel—made reference to trying “to be polite” and “kind,” because she didn’t want to offend anyone (Helen, “Interview”). Even more interestingly, during a digression Helen made several comments that reminded me of what Bernard Whitley discovered during a “meta-analysis of US and Canadian studies of gender differences in computer-related attitudes and behavior:” that “women score higher on negative beliefs [in terms of their own computer skills] than do men, but that there is no gender difference for positive beliefs” (13). What this means, and I’m sure that Whitley would qualify this assertion heavily, is that women could be considered more likely to have negative views of computers than men—while at the same time their positive attitudes towards computers (and themselves as computer users) would not be significantly different from men’s attitudes towards computer use.

For my purposes, this means that I might have a partial explanation for why Helen, and even Rachel to a lesser extent, worried about the negative aspect of on-line peer response—something that did not seem to even concern Dave. It strikes me that Rachel, and particularly Helen, might be slightly uncertain about whether on-line peer revision would uniformly honest and useful without being hurtful. Rachel does say in her on-line biography that she enjoys “using computers because it gives me world-wide (limited) access, and I may make contact with many other individuals;” thus, it seems that in most cases Rachel’s positive attitude towards computers far outweigh negative attitudes (Rachel, “Biography”). However, for Helen her negative attitudes—stoked by a

number of non-virtual experiences—made the male gendered honesty of the on-line responses problematic at best.

The real life experiences that I'm speaking of are two things that Helen told over the course of our interview and the semester: her first experience with computers was a question of compulsion, not choice, and her email account was her not her own, but her husband's.

Let me explain.

Helen, in her interview with me at the end of Freshman English, managed to articulate what may have been the cause of some of her resistance to on-line peer revision. In her interview Helen said that her initiation into computer use happened

In the 80s, when I went through my first divorce, I had to go back to work. And during the time I'd left, the travel business had become automated, and I had to learn to use the travel computer, and I had no idea what I was doing. I did not have time, because I had little kids and was a single-mom, to go off to the one-week training program in Dallas where they would teach you this thing. So, I had to learn it by myself with a little manual and sort of muddle through it. And I did eventually, you know.

Helen's experience in learning to use computers (in her case it was the Sabre airline reservation system) is fairly typical of the experience that many people in workplace have when forced to learn how to use a computer. Aletha Hendrickson claims that "psychological factors that feed cyberspace intimidation include the obvious human tendency to worry, frustration due to time and financial constraints, human resistance to change, and workplace pressures (exigencies)," and that this sort of intimidation can be silencing and terrifying (Hendrickson). However, I would not say that Helen's

experience completely intimidated her. She did after all eventually learn to use the Sabre system; however, it was a pretty high stakes type of learning.

Another type of learning that Helen had to do in terms of my class was to learn how to use email, and she, very interestingly, used an email account that was her husband's. At the beginning of the year, I had to spend some time teaching Helen how to use email, so that she could participate in an email reading journal that was part of my course. After about two tutoring sessions, Helen had mastered using our Pine email program—which is no mean feat. What is interesting, for my purposes here, is something that Helen told me about her husband “never expecting” her to be able to use his email. This seemingly slight comment is very telling. Clearly, Helen's husband thought that he had what Cynthia Selfe, quoting Colette Dowling, calls “techno/power.” Techno/power is “that advantage of influence that grows from the control and understanding of computer use” (Selfe 103). Very clearly the email account was Helen's husband's account, and he had ownership of it. He viewed himself, at some level, as having techno/power—a power that he felt Helen didn't have.

Beneath this little meta-moment about email lurks a larger truth. The Internet has become, and maybe even was back in its incarnation of ARAPA net, a place where women are not always welcome, and it is certainly a place where men are often perceived as holding more techno/power. The point I want to make about Helen's experience with the Sabre computer system and her husband's email is this: many students will enter into computer-mediated classrooms with prior experiences with computers—both positive and negative, and Helen's experience with the Sabre computer system and her husband are

strong reminders to us practitioners that gender does not evaporate in the glare of a computer screen.

I also want to add one more observation. I think that Helen's discomfort with using computers was justified. Helen was a non-traditional student of wide experience in the world; she had worked in the business world, raised two children, and been married twice. She had also lived a life that was defined in some ways by gendered experiences; she had been a single mother, a working mother, and then a returning female student. All of these labels are shorthand for experiences that must have made Helen somewhat nervous of an anonymous medium, like the WSU OWL, where your writing was to be reviewed by people who "could be illiterate" or worse (Helen, Interview). Helen sensed that when you put something forward in an anonymous environment, you are in a way opening yourself and work up to critique, and I can't help but wonder if a good part of Helen's reticence, which now strikes me as being quite justified, was due to some of the gendered attitudes that undergird much of what happens on the internet.

What I Saw: Subtle Ageism in CMC and Computer-Aided Peer Response

By now I hope that its obvious that gender does not simply vanish in on-line peer revision—that cultural attitudes like gender still shape us. Of course this is not really a new claim; after all Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe in their new textbook, *Literacy, Technology and Society: Confronting the Issues*, have an entire section on the importance of gender in computer studies. My addition to the research that Hawisher and Selfe outline is that that teachers, and students, must be aware that gender will not vanish when students start editing each others' works on-line.

Another socially constructed category that affects our students, but receives less discussion in the academy, is age. It may seem odd to say that age is a social construct, and that age can be as important to understanding how on-line peer revision works as gender, race and class, but it is not terribly odd if you think about it for a moment. In the post-modern field of Composition there is fairly general agreement that knowledge is—at least in part—socially constructed, and that “thinking and language use can never occur free of social context that conditions them” (Faigley 31). In this context, age clearly is a socially constructed category; a societal construct that circumscribes our students, our collective interactions, and us.

I bring this up only because Helen showed me, in no uncertain terms, that age was a factor in how she responded to on-line peer revision. In her interview Helen made several references to herself as a mother, a divorced woman, and—indirectly—a non-traditional student. The strongest instance of this was when Helen explained why she “didn’t value” the opinions of her cyber-peers; Helen said,

For all I knew they could be somebody who’s illiterate on the other coast. I didn’t value their opinions necessarily. I don’t know *these people*. But that *could be my age*, not growing up with computers. It could be many things, and I would be interested in if the traditional aged students felt that way, or they may not. (Helen, “Interview”)

The italics in the above passage are mine, and they show that Helen, at some level, did not identify herself with the traditional students in my class—the 18 and 19 year olds that have traditionally dominated my Freshman English classes at UNH. This is understandable—particularly in lieu of Helen’s long experience with computers, which dates back to the early 1980s (when the rest of my class were children). Helen views her younger classmates as “these people”—people who she is experientially distanced

from—and she thinks that her reticence to engaging in on-line revision might have been due, in part, to her age (Helen, “Interview”).

Of course Helen’s feelings of being an outsider are more complicated than I’ve just presented. Helen also, in her interview, admits to being in a group of novice writers; a group which problematizes the advice given because, in Helen’s words, “Do they really know what they’re talking about, should I really take their advice? Or should they take mine? I’m not a writer. I’m a student—they’re a student.” Clearly, Helen’s view of herself as a non-traditional student is not monolithic, and her behavior in class clearly showed that. There was never any indication that Helen thought of herself as being outside the experience of her younger peers in class, and she certainly never held her life experience over the heads of her younger peers in on-line revision work or in class.

Still, I think that age might be a factor in enabling students to participate in on-line peer revision. Althea Hendrickson maintains that older computer users—users who, like Helen, didn’t grow up with computers—often feel intimidated by them, and that often times this intimidation can be disabling (Hendrickson). The question then becomes how can a teacher make on-line peer revision seem less intimidating—less alienating—to non-traditionally aged students. After all, now “approximately 30% of college freshmen in New Hampshire delay entry for more than one year,” and “these freshmen include, for example, older adults who have decided to continue their education and individuals who went into the military directly out of high school” (Knapp). I have no firm answers how to do this, but I now at least know that I need to address this problem.

I need to address this problem because if I do not, then another non-traditional student like Helen might not learn how to use and value an important source for revision:

the Washington State OWL. Another student might not be able to—due to constraints of age and gender—make the sort of important changes that Rachel (someone circumscribed by gender and gendered attitudes towards online peer revision) made to her work via online peer revision.

When Anonymity Works: Rachel and Dave's Stories

Rachel, like Helen, is someone who is gendered female, and it is possible that she could express some of the same negative attitudes that Helen expresses. However that is not the case. Over the course of the semester, Rachel became a fine peer respondent, and she found ways to make substantive changes to her drafts based on peers' comments. For Rachel, the at best partial anonymity afforded by the WSU OWL was enabling—enabling enough that she managed to create a situational definition that allowed her, Amy, her peer respondent at Ball State; and her best friend (a classmate of hers) to use online peer revision to reshape her work as a writer and peer respondent.

By the end of my research, Rachel's responses to Amy (her virtual peer from Ball State University) showed that she had learned to create responses that addressed larger content issues in Amy's writing, and that the anonymity afforded to her—an anonymity of situation definition—led her towards making more specific and helpful comments. One set of comments is instructive in showing how Rachel changed her relationship towards Amy as an online peer respondent.

The first time Rachel gave Amy response, Rachel managed to be as vague as possible in her comments—more than likely an attempt to “not offend” her peer (Rachel, Interview). However, as the semester progressed Rachel was more willing to get specific with Amy about what she saw that worked and did not work. In a paper that Amy wrote

about the use of computers in early childhood education, Rachel wonders if Amy might want to include more examples of how computer programs are used in early childhood education. Rachel asks Amy if she might want to use such programs as “Math Blaster Plus,” to support her arguments about the utility of educational software, and Rachel even mentions that Amy’s works cited entries might be “a bit short” because Amy is leaving essential information out of her works cited page (Rachel, Computer Class Response). This level of specificity allows Rachel to give response that moves beyond bland, unspecific response.

However, even more interesting than this is Rachel’s comment in our interview that it really did not matter to her who the responses to her papers came from. Rachel claimed that, “most of the time I didn’t look at the name [on the on-line response]” (Rachel, Interview). Is it possible that Rachel has managed to move away from a grade orientation (i.e. “I’m made the changes you told me to—can I get an ‘A’”)?

The answer is “yes” and, unfortunately, no.

Rachel has managed to look past valuing just my response to valuing her peers’ responses as well, but this is at least partially due to the fact that Rachel experienced anonymous review of her art portfolios in her high school art classes (Rachel, Interview). However, I think that it is possible that the interface of the OWL, which indicated the names of people who responded but little else, allowed Rachel to make use of people’s comments to alter her work. The anonymity of afforded by the different situation definition (which was the result of the physical absence of Rachel’s auditors of her work) allowed Rachel to get past viewing people’s response as being from a friend or foe.

The clearest example of this can be seen in her final draft of her research paper, a paper exploring her Penobscot Indian heritage. In this final draft Rachel incorporated, making obvious rhetorical choices, the observations of her self-identified best friend and classmate who wrote “you might want to add some more stories . . . not too many though, just one more or maybe even 2 more” (Anonymous Response). What is interesting is that this comment, from her best friend, was offered in the relative anonymity afforded by the WSU OWL. Rachel clearly knew that the response came from her best friend, but I think that the physical absence of her friend allowed Rachel to make redefine the situation definition to see her friend as a respondent who offered her advice that could alter her paper for the better—not just as her best friend.

Rachel—in response to her friend’s request for more stories—incorporated, in her final draft of her research paper, over three pages of Penobscot legends and stories—legends that helped Rachel realize that “No longer is my heritage a complete mystery to me” (Rachel, “Missing Heritage” 11).

Also, these voices made Rachel’s text a text that accounts for how we are socially constructed; how our written voice is—as Sherrie Gradin Claims—“an understanding of self as subject but also for others as subject” (Gradin 103). As a teacher influence by Gradin’s conception of social expressivist pedagogy, I find Rachel’s attempt (which is not perfectly executed by any means) to be very encouraging. Rachel has used the words of a peer—who saw something I neglected to see—to enlarge her sense of what it means to be “50% Italian, 35% English, and 15% American Indian” (Rachel, “Missing Heritage” 1). Without a willingness to listen to her peer, Rachel’s text would have been less rich for me as a reader, and it certainly would have been less rich for her as a writer.

Also, I think that physical absence of her friend (who was two rows away from Rachel when she typed to response that Rachel used) afforded Rachel an opportunity to resee her paper, and I am not sure that Rachel would have been able to make the sort of revisions that she did if she had received her friends advice in real time, face to face. The online environment gave Rachel only words to work with—words that are encoded with gender, race, and class—but words at a remove from the traditional role she saw her friend in: a best friend. Physical absence allowed Rachel to change the situational definition so that she could incorporate advice that helped expand her paper—that helped her see her story of discovering her Penobscot heritage.

Dave, like Rachel, said that he used peers' on-line response to revise his work. Dave claimed that he made decisions about "using" on-line peer revision (and my on-line suggestions as well) based on whether the suggestions "were reasonable" and "made sense" (Dave, Interview). An example of is can be seen in how Dave responded when I asked him "How did you use it [on-line peer revision]? Did you immediately plug their suggestions in your paper, or did you think about it" (Dave, Interview)? Dave, without a moment's pause, launched into an explanation that, after touching on issues of using profanity in a college essay, went as follows:

I just would think to see if they [his peers' suggestions] were reasonable, and they made sense. Sometimes you just can't do it yourself you know—because you wrote it. It's even like when you read over your paper you just skip words that you didn't write in there because you wrote it. (Dave, Interview)

Dave here shows a sophisticated sense of what he can get from his peers' responses to his work; he expresses a moment of realizing that another person's "eyes" are helpful in thinking about how you can make sense of your own work (witness his

remark about “reasonable” suggestions). Here Dave is allowing himself to use feedback as Karen Spear believes it should be used—to “bridge the gap between the ‘unreality’” that students often find in school and “the vital and interesting realities that surround them out of school” (83). Here Dave has moved past the idea that peer response should move him towards a grade; he is willing to conceive of evaluating what he is told based on his own rhetorical purposes.

Of course, it is also obvious from what I’ve quoted that Dave is still very interested, as many students are, in mechanical concerns—sentence level changes. Dave says that he is interested in hearing what “words” he’s omitted from his work, and later in our conversation Dave even mentioned that he liked on-line response because his on-line peers cut to the chase and told him what to “fix” (Dave, Interview). A bulk of how Dave described his use of peer feedback was related to “fixing” grammar mistakes, and this means that Dave, at some level, has not managed to take people’s reactions to his work and use them to re-see his work; he is still more interested in paying “attention to sentence-level writing issues” (Alexander 2).

Unlike Rachel, Dave did not manage to get past thinking of revision as sentence level work, and I wondered if part of that might not have been reticence to accepting people’s feedback on the ideas of his text. I also wondered if this reticence might not, in some ways, be related to questions of anonymity.

Perhaps Dave represents that middle ground between Rachel and Helen. Dave, as he said in his biography, never entirely liked using computers, and perhaps his negative attitudes influenced his acceptance of his peers’ comments (Dave, Biography). Perhaps the anonymity afforded by computers (which is of course partial and really just related to

physical absence) was only somewhat liberating. Perhaps part of Dave's resistance to reseeing his work through the eyes of his peers is the result of an unwillingness to see anonymous response as being valuable only when it related to lower order revision concerns—such as spelling and grammar. However, this is only a guess, and ultimately I would say that Dave certainly did manage to figure out how to do something that many writers, including myself, struggle with: how to use peer response in a way that fits your own purposes and needs as a writer. This is no small feat.

Towards a Critical Reading of Gender, Age, And Class in CMC Peer Response

Ultimately, I want all my students to have an opportunity to see that on-line peer revision can enable a deeper understanding of “self” and their self's relation to other selves and “others,” and that the limited anonymity afforded by a changed situational definition can help students have access to a newer, more social vision of themselves.

Of course, this is easier said than taught. Questions of gender, age, and class are never obliterated by what can best be described as the provisional anonymity of Cyberspace—nor would I argue should they. One of the chilling things about some of the studies that praise the democratizing effect of anonymous peer interaction online is the way it conflates a genderless, raceless, ageless subject position with a sort of electronically democracy. Even careful researchers in the field of computers and writing like Michael Day and Trent Batson are willing to say that “On the computer students have little recourse to body language, or feelings of inferiority based on race, gender, and other hierarchies, especially when participants are anonymous.” Day and Batson seem to think that this is a good thing, and the one negative that they talk about in relation to an anonymous subject position is flaming.

However, I would argue that we don't ever want a classroom where difference is leveled and rendered beside the point—as if it could be. As Don Murray notes in *A Writer Teaches Writing*, one of the exciting things about teaching writing is the diversity of experience in our classrooms; as Murray notes, “Many experienced composition teachers do not complain about diversity, but glory in it” (135). Ultimately, Murray argues, and I concur with him, that it is the composition instructor's job to

teach to those differences, glorying in the variety of backgrounds and voices our students bring to the composition class. We must learn to respond to their diverse needs, their diverse learning styles, the diversity of what they have to say and how they can say it.

Unlike Murray, I would not couch issues of diversity as a problem to be overcome, but diversity in terms of race, gender, class, age, and experience is what makes for a democratic learning experience in any given classroom—not anonymity. I would argue that not only is an online genderless, classless, and ageless class impossible, it isn't really desirable because we are conflating an erasure of certain identity markers, which people can ascribe value and importance to, with a sort of democratic discourse which really doesn't exist.

Also I want to argue that our students' histories as learners and people are, like gender, age, and class, always present. Our students all walk into a computer-mediated learning environment with their histories as learners and computer users in tact—histories that can enable or stymie learning. It is these histories, these deep repositories of experience that can lead to what John Dewey refers to as the “reconstruction or reorganization of experience,” which allows for growth of an experience that can increase a student's “ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” (76). It is this sort of

experience, educative experience, which we as a field need to be more aware of— particularly in terms of gender and age. If we begin to understand our students experiences with computer mediated communication during and prior to our composition classes, perhaps we can begin to understand why certain students flourish in CMC and others don't.

Ultimately, I want all my students to have an opportunity to see that on-line peer revision can enable a deeper understanding of “self” and their self's relation to other selves and “others,” and that the limited anonymity afforded by a changed situational definition can help students have access to a newer, more socially situated vision of themselves. I think that there is some promise in places like the Washington State OWL; a place where peer response can help students and their teachers rethink the act of revision. An act that can, to paraphrase Kenneth Bruffee, move students and teachers into the “conversation of human kind.”

Chapter V

Layering Literacies

Interchapter: What Does A Job Description Have To Do With Peer Response?

At the end of my tenure as the Assistant Director of UNH's Robert J. Connors Writing Center, I found myself trying to write a job description for our writing center consultants—the folks who tutor writers in our real and virtual writing centers.

In this pithy document, I tried to articulate all of our spoken and unspoken demands for our writing center consultants. And by “our” writing center, I mean the writing center that my director, my other co-assistant director, and myself believe we run. Thus after I finished the first draft of this document, I thought I should run it by my director and my co-assistant director.

I first met with the director of our Writing Center for lunch. About five minutes after sitting down to eat, I plopped my laptop down on the table and we began to work. My director read the whole piece, and then asked, “Don't we ask them to do four, rather than five, observations?”

“Yeah,” I mumbled, gnawing on a fry.

“You wrote five.”

“Damn, really? Better change that.”

With that, I made the correction, and we continued on—the two of us chatting, eating, drinking ice tea, editing, and writing with as much thought as we breathe.

The next day, I met up with my co-assistant director, and she asked about the job description. I opened up the file that the director and I had worked on, and I printed up a copy for my friend and colleague. With that we plunged into our days—days filled with writing center consultations, business calls, and preparing for our weekly staff meeting.

A couple of hours after our initial meeting, my co-assistant director and I met said “Hi” to each other for the first time. Then we opened up the file with the job description on it. My friend had her paper copy marked up—catching a couple of grammar mistakes and omissions that our director and I had missed. Over the course of the next fifteen minutes, we honed the prose of our job description, with my colleague and I looking at her marked up printout, me making changes to the text, and all along chatting about word choice, the shape of our day in the Writing Center, and (if I remember correctly) what we were going to do for lunch.

The work that I did on the job description with my colleagues is the work of multilayered peer revision, and specifically it’s a performance of a particular set of selves in the presence of other selves. For instance, I knew that my director would be comfortable working directly from the lap-top, and I also knew that by this point in our four year association, I could shove fries down my throat without deeply offending her. The “situation definition,” to use Goffman’s term, that my director and I co-created allowed for us to eat, drink, and work (Goffman, *The Presentation of Self* 9).

The “situation definition” of my work with my co-assistant director was slightly different. My co-assistant director and myself have a very comfortable working and personable relationship, like I have with my assistant director; however, I knew from past experience that my friend and colleague liked to work from paper copy. Thus, I made sure that I had a paper copy for her to work from, and when we came together to finish our work, I (the resident computer geek of the writing center) set myself up as the typist who translated the proofing and revision work of my colleague into electronic—then printed text.

Ultimately, the work that I did with my friends and colleagues on our job description is the sort of experience that I want to explain here in chapter five. It’s an experience that layers three communicative competencies on top of each other: oral discourse, writing, and electronic text. Ultimately, I want to argue that the sort of work my colleagues and I did is *the* work of peer response: a multilayered performance of self in the presence of other selves. It’s a play in which the sights, sounds, and syllables of the real world co-exist, but are not co-opted, by the cool white screen of the computer.

An Introduction to Multilayered Peer Response: Central Concerns and Main Points

The performance of self that is the focus of this chapter is one that occurs in two, as Goffman would say, front regions: the traditional classroom and the computerized classroom. To Goffman front regions are, more or less, the place where the self is performed for others, relative to a particular performance, and it is in these particular front regions of performance that peer response work I describe in this chapter happens (“Performance of the Self” 107).

To give you a complete sense of the front region, and the performance of selves that occurs in the front regions, I plan to show you the context, actors, and pedagogy that defined the front regions of the computerized classroom and the traditional classroom that I did research in during the Spring Semester of 2001. From there you'll move into a discussion of some of the specific differences and similarities between performances of the self in the two front regions—with close attention paid to the way that face-work and affiliation shape the discourse of peer response. Next the chapter will move into a detailed case study of a computer-assisted peer response session between two female students, which will show in greater detail the way that actual people create patterns of performed selves. Finally, the chapter will end with a discussion of some of the implications that this study might have for the conduct of future research and teaching in Composition.

At its heart, this chapter talks not just about how peer response gets done—either well or poorly; it talks about the way that selves interact in two particular pedagogical spaces. The value of this work is not that it necessarily evaluates peer response in terms of “good” or “bad” peer response practice (you might read Karen Spear for an excellent example of this); it's value resides in the way that it articulates how students engage in multilayered peer response through performed selves that make novel use of computerized spaces, without being co-opted by them.

The Context, The Actors, and The Conduct of Class

The Context

All of what is described in this chapter happened in two locales at the University of New Hampshire at Manchester (UNHM). As I mentioned earlier, UNHM is located on the banks of the Merrimack River in an old mill building (UNHM General Information). The practical, and aesthetic, value of this is that the classrooms, computer labs, and offices at UNHM have gloriously high ceilings, exposed wooden beams, and working class history that are literally built into the brick and granite backbone of the school.

This living, working class history is particularly appropriate when you consider the make-up of the student body at UNHM, which UNHM describes as being “A unique mix of traditional college-age students (18-23 years old) and adults and reflects the region’s diverse ethnicity” (UNHM General Information). Pamela Oliver’s class at UNHM, where I did my research in the spring of 2001, was a class that matched the University’s write up.

The Actors

The students in Pam's class all worked at least part-time (and generally full-time) at some job in the Manchester, New Hampshire area. Thus, all of the students had a finite amount of time to devote to my research, Pam's class, and school in general; in short, they lead busy lives filled with work, family commitments, and schooling.

Of the twelve people registered for Pam's class, eight attended the class regularly (four men and five women); three students rarely made class, and one man attended the first class before disappearing for good. According to Pam, this pattern of attendance is not atypical at UNHM, and she should know since she got her bachelors degree there.

Pam, the head teacher, is three year veteran of college composition teaching, and in her forty-some years, she has done everything from writing a computer column for a midsized daily newspaper to working at UNHM as a tutor in UNHM's Learning Center. In the three years that Pam has been teaching first year composition, and she's developed a casual but focused style of instruction—laced with humorous asides and ample space for student feedback. Ultimately, Pam has created a style of teaching on the job; she never had a "methods class" or T.A. teaching seminar, and her teaching style owes as much to her experience at UNHM's learning center as it does to any sort of formal training in the teaching of writing (Oliver, "Personal Interview").

In a move that brought Pam full-circle, a tutor from the UNHM Learning Center worked in Pam's class this semester as well. This tutor, while officially affiliated with the Learning Center, attended all of Pam's classes and worked with students on their

work during class time and outside of class. And while I do not focus on the work that happened in these tutorials (or on the conferences that Pam had with her students), I imagine that they had some effect on the student's work as writers.

However, ultimately, my focus in this chapter is on what happened within the context of the class, on the way that students performed certain selves in the presence of other selves in their classrooms—one with, the other without, computers. Here I am concerned with the peer interaction that happened during the course of computer-aided peer response, and it is the shape of this sort of peer response that I want to spend a little bit of time discussing here.

The Conduct of Class

The performance of the self that I want to discuss is a performance mediated by the use of computers—specifically by the use of the comment function in Microsoft Word. However, before getting to the technological particulars of computer-aided peer response, it's necessary to tell you a little about how the teaching occurred in Pam's class.

Pam's class met once a week for three hours, and half of that three-hour block each week was devoted to peer response work. I was, in all but three cases, given the authority by Pam to plan peer response activities, but the teaching that occurred was really a joint venture.

At the beginning of the class Pam and I consciously modeled, using my own texts as well as other texts by students Pam and I had previously taught, the sort of response

that we wanted students to give.⁹ The sort of response we started with is what Elbow and Belanoff in *A Community of Writers: A Workshop Course in Writing* call “Sharing: No Response” (511). This sort of response, which I modeled before our first peer response session in class, involves students reading aloud to each other, so that students can get comfortable reading “out loud and listening to the writing of others” (Elbow and Belanoff 511). From this fairly low-key, unthreatening form of response, Pam and I started doing what I referred to in class as the “Chris and Pam Show,” which involved active modeling of peer response—generally using work I brought to class. While we did this, over the course of about three classes, we were trying to get students to see value in a subjective sort of response, a sort of Peter Elbow influenced movies of the mind, which managed to be critical but respectful.

Finally, we moved into the Instructional Computer Lab at UNHM and started with what Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff call “Criterion-Based Feedback,” which involves the writer asking particular questions of his or her readers to get at what the writer is “wondering about or struggling with” in his or her piece (514). After demonstrating this sort of response with Pam, students brainstormed a list of about 15 questions on the whiteboard—varying from the general (i.e. “What was your favorite moment in my piece?”) to the specific (i.e. “Could you tell me what you think of my description of my mother in paragraph three? Does it stick with you, or do I need more detail?”)

In the lab itself, and later in the course when we were in the traditional classroom, students generally kept using some form of criterion-based response. However, with about three sessions left, Pam and I gave less and less instruction, with the hope that students would start to evolve their own processes for response. We did not abandon

⁹ To see a more detailed description of this process—see chapter III.

students, Pam or I were always present during peer response sessions; however, we were interested in the way that student would, or wouldn't, create their own ways of responding to each other's work.

The rewarding fact was that students did seem to create their own ways of responding to texts, and, interestingly enough, most of them involved some sort of criterion-based response that had written (or electronic) and oral components—with the oral components predominating. In fact, Pam's students would spend a great deal of time talking to each other about their work—always using the full 90 minutes we had, and they would often be talking about their papers as we took our ten minute break after peer response.

As I spent the semester in Pam's class, I began to think of a metaphor for the way that we all worked together—the students, Pam, our class linked tutor, and myself. It seemed to me that the peer response work we did was like breathing. We, the various selves in the class, came together in small groups to talk about writing in front of computers or in small groups scattered throughout the class (the inhalation), then we would break apart for a break and come back to discuss writing, research, and other aspects of Pam's class (the exhalation). The way that we came together and pulled apart, with students often conferencing with Pam and our class linked tutor at the same time I was "in charge" of the peer response work, felt like the slow and steady labor of our pumping lungs. There was something organic and bodily about the movement towards, then away from peer response—as well as the move towards and away from computers. We would work in front of machines to do peer response work, then use machines (via Classroom Assessment Techniques) to reflect on that work—inhalation, exhalation. We

would move from the computer lab to sitting around in the high ceilinged classroom—
inhalation, exhalation. And we would spend the class talking then writing, and then
talking again—inhalation, exhalation.

This bodily, organic-seeming pattern, strikes me as being important—and not just
as a convenient metaphor. There is a tendency in the field of computers and composition
to locate the bodily within the machine or vice a versa, and perhaps the clearest example
of the desire for machine body synthesis can be seen in the idea of the cyborg,
particularly as expressed by Donna Haraway, who calls the cyborg a human machine
symbiosis that “is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it doesn’t not seek unitary
identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends); it
takes irony for granted” (Haraway 180). For Haraway, the body is ultimately merged
with the machine, and that is, in some post-modern sense, a cause for celebration because
the idea of the cyborg can put to an end many painful dualisms—such as gender, the
mind body split, and even the natural vs. the real (181).

I am not so sure that I share in this celebratory mood, or in a desire to merge the
computer and the composer. And my reason is that I see another sort of bodily principal
in action when people begin to write, and respond to writing, using a computer. The
physical world that I see as being important for computer-aided peer response is a dual
world—a virtual and real world that share permeable, but real, borders.

I want to briefly touch on this because it is an important pedagogical point—and
by pedagogical I mean a philosophy and experience of education. From my research in
Pam’s class there is still a pressing need for physical contact and face-to-face

conversation in what David Jay Bolter calls the “late age of print” (Joyce 93). During face-to-face conversations about the oral nature of our work together, all of Pam’s student’s mentioned that they liked and needed to have face-to-face, oral feedback to their work. As Cornelius, a student in Pam’s class, put it in response to a CAT that asked him what method of response he preferred, “I enjoy the oral revision the best because there is a back and forth feedback situation” (Cornelius, CAT).

There is an affective side to computer-aided peer response that is carried in oral language in real, physical space, and the students in Pam’s class sensed this affective aspect of oral peer communication quite clearly. Notice that Cornelius said he “enjoyed” oral revision “the best,” and that he mentioned the “back and forth feedback situation” is significant as well. For what type of communication offers students as effective a means of dialogic communication (to paraphrase Bakhtin) as oral discourse (Bakhtin, “Speech Genres” 95)? Oral discourse, as I argue through the rest of this chapter, is key to understanding not just how conventional peer response works, but to understanding computer-aided peer response as well. It is in oral language, our first language our mother tongue of sorts, that carries a great deal of affect in peer response work, and it is oral language that ultimately makes computer-assisted peer response work a human, and humane, endeavor.

A Human Endeavor: Classwide Patterns and Tendencies of The Performance of the Self

In Peer Response

An Introduction

Computer-assisted peer response is, due to its human and humane nature, an enormously variable activity; however, over the course of my work in Pam's and Warren's classes, I began to notice particular patterns and trends in the way that students wrote, spoke, and computed peer response. To try to understand these patterns I created a coding mechanism, which I wrote about at length in chapter three. Ultimately, this coding mechanism was really a heuristic for thinking about various performances of selves; it is not an airtight coding scheme that would be easily replicable in another study. I have used it primarily as a way to see, and note, various performances of selves by students in the course of peer response—performances that tended to easily escape the confines of my coding scheme.¹⁰

I do not claim that the classifications of self I have come up with cover every aspect of a generic student's self, nor do I even claim that they represent the sum total of selves available to students in the moment of social performance in the front regions of the traditional classroom or computerized classroom. However, these codes do provide a profitable jumping off point, a sort of Independence, Missouri to our Oregon Trail, to our journey through the selves of computer assisted peer response. The categories of selves that I used to code the idea units (idea units being 'a series of brief spurts which reflect

¹⁰ In fact, this sort of variability led to a rendering of 60% inter-rater reliability. However since the purpose of the coding was to think productively about the social performance of the self, and not to establish replicable categories for research, this rate of inter-rater reliability is not a serious issue.

the speaker's object of consciousness") that students spoke, hand wrote, and typed allowed me to think about patterns of performance of the self, and it is these patterns that are the focus of this section (Hewett 73).

Now about these patterns, It might make sense to briefly touch upon the coding scheme for a moment. To do that, I want to draw you attention to the Table 1 below, which defines and provides examples for each performance of self that I coded for.

Table 1

Categories of Performances of Self in Peer Response Work

<u>Self</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Examples</u>
Evaluator Self	A self interested in evaluating writing in terms of right and wrong—with the person performing this self often expressing interest in seeming surface level grammatical issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mflxx3 to Cassia: What a great starting sentence. • Mflxx3 to Cassia: Oh hey. . .you just had a comma where it didn't belong.
Reader Self	A self in which a reader's reactions to a text are foregrounded—this self interacts with other selves to provide what Peter Elbow calls "movies of the mind" ("A Community of Writers" 513).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassia to Neo: But then for about ½ a page to a page I felt like you changed to whole focus of the piece. • Neo to Mflxx3: Back in the first paragraph I'm kind of confused.
Collaborator Self	A self that attempts to collaboratively, in a sense that Kenneth Bruffee would recognize, get at or create a deeper meaning for the piece; this is a speculative position that ultimately seems concerned with the negotiation of "higher order concerns" between two social performers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mflxx3 to Cassia: And a lot of people are interested in this subject anyway, so when they hear it's about this subject they'll just read it and get right into it. • Mflxx3 to Veruca: But the thing is you kind of don't get to the point until the end, and I was like "Oh man."
Companion Self	A self composed of phatic discourse, process language about group tasks, and the general maintenance, or challenging, of turn taking sequences; it is the self that is spoken into existence in the immediate conversational moment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veruca to Mflxx3: Uh huh. • Mflxx3 to Cassia: You know what I mean?
Citizen Self	A self that pushes past the boundaries of the classroom; it is the self that consciously states and creates identities and affiliations, be they classed, raced, or gendered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassia to Neo: Brings to mind, that you know. . .that I can tell that you're not. . .an English first language speaker. • Mflxx3 to Veruca: Do you really come from an alcoholic family?
Student Self	A self that exists principally in the classroom, being made up of utterances aimed at working through classroom processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neo to Cassia: Ask Chris about the assignment. • Cassia to Mflxx3: They're going to terrorize my piece next.
Writer Self	A self that expresses writerly intentions, concerns, and questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veruca to Mflxx3: But see if I were to take this, I mean, would it help if I just got rid of this? • Neo to Cassia: Do you see my main point of my paper?

Now let this “writer self” make sense of work that stretched out over eight weeks, involved written and electronic texts, and over eighty pages of direct transcriptions of peer group sessions. I used a File Maker Pro 4.0 database to code 2118 idea units—the sum total of the class’ work up through midterms in their ever changing peer response groups. After all of the idea units, be they written, oral, or electronic, were entered into my database, I started crunching a few numbers—which brought into view some general patterns. In this number crunching I focused not on the percentage of idea units that each self was responsible for, but on the percentage of the total number of codings.

Let me explain.

When I started coding, I quickly realized that many of my categories bled, and I had expected this.¹¹ This bleeding was the result of my focus—the performance of selves—and while the coding categories did a good job of accounting for various performances, they were not (nor did I wish them to be) perfect. The upshot of this was that many idea units received two codes, rather than one, and this resulted in there in fact being more total codes than idea units (there were 2118 idea units and 2370 total codes). Thus to do justice to the patterns of performance of the self I used a formula for percentages and numbers that used percentage of codings rather than idea units.

¹¹ See chapter three for a more involved discussion of this bleeding and its methodological importance.

A Holistic Look at Patterns of Performed Selves

After looking at all the codings in a holistic sense, the following breakdown of performances of the self was evident:

Table 2

Total Codings of Performed Selves

Number of Evaluative Self Codings:	590	(25 % of total)
Number of Companion Self Codings:	526	(22 %of total)
Number of Reader Self Codings:	437	(19 % of total)
Number of Collaborative Self Codings:	345	(15 % of total)
Number of Writer Self Codings:	294	(12% of total)
Number of Student Self Codings:	147	(6% of total)
Number of Citizen Self Codings:	31	(1 % of total)

Even a quick glance at the above numbers and percentages reveals a couple of patterns.

First it is evident that 74% of the selves performed (which included the evaluative self, the reader self, the collaborative self, the writer self, and the student self) were focused directly on the task of giving and receiving comments. This finding is consonant with the work of other researchers who found that with active teacher involvement, modeling, and a facilitative classroom environment students would spend most of their time “on-task” in peer response groups (Hyland, Lawrence and Sommers, and Freedman). The remaining time fell into what I might call facilitative selves: the citizen (1%)and companion (22%) selves.

It is tempting to ignore or downplay these selves since they don’t involve direct comments about text by writer or peer respondent; however, to do that is to miss the way that performances of the citizen and companion self shape peer response discourse—particularly oral discourse (which accounted for 1906 out of 2370 codings, or 80% of the

total codes). The citizen self, which is principally marked by phatic discourse, is important in keeping talk going. The “uhs,” “yeahs,” and “ums” of phatic discourse are the engine that drives oral discourse in a sense—letting people know they are being heard or even agreed with (Maltz and Borker 421-422). In a sense, these “minimal responses” make sure that conversation continues rather than stalls, and it’s terribly important, particularly for many women, that these utterances occur throughout conversation (Maltz and Borker 421). It’s particularly important for those gendered female, because, “for women a minimal response of this type means simply something like ‘I’m listening to you; please continue’” (Maltz and Borker 421).

This sort of conversational use of minimal responses is rather important to the work done in Pam Oliver’s class because a bulk of the pairings were male-female or female-female. Interestingly, given free choice in their partners, most students chose either same sex female groups or mixed gendered groups.

At any rate, I just wanted to point out that overall the companion self was important in maintaining and continuing the flow of conversation; without the “uhs” and “yeahs” of minimal response, the work that the other selves do in peer response simply couldn’t happen.

The other self that I haven’t mentioned yet is the citizen self, which overall only accounted for 1% of the total. In spite of the low frequency of these sorts of performances, I believe that they are rather important. These performances allow students to bring in outside identities into the moment of peer response. For instance, in the exchange below two female students, Mfixx3 and Veruca, talk about and around an important and difficult type of affiliation: *membership in a family affected by*

alcoholism. This conversation, which happened late in a peer response session, went as follows:

Mfixx3: Do you really come from an alcoholic family?

Veruca: I do, yeah.

Mfixx3: You do? Do you have an issue? Oh, I'm sorry. [Mfixx3 laughs and turns off the tape.]

There are a number of interesting things about these performances of the citizen self, and for the moment I want to focus on three things.

First of all it is interesting that Mfixx3 invites Veruca into a certain performance of self—one that relates to the topic of the paper (a response paper written to Caroline Knapp's *Drinking: A Love Story*) but is ultimately about life away from the classroom. It seems to me that this sort of interaction, where a non-academic self is brought into performance, has import to the selves involved. What's interesting about this interaction is that it happened relatively early in the course of the class (there had only been three previous peer response sessions), and it seemed that this moment had some fallout for the core selves of Mfixx3 and Veruca. What I mean is this: after this moment, Mfixx3 and Veruca worked together a number of times, with their responses deepening and expanding with the subsequent sessions. It may be possible that this moment, in some way, cemented a connection between Veruca and Mfixx3—so that from this shared intimacy (and intimacy of true selves that D.W. Winnicott speaks of) led to more involved working as peer respondents (Winnicott, *Home is Where We Start From* 66).

This is of course conjecture, and what's humbling about this moment is that the tape *does* turn off. At a certain point it seems that while Mfixx3 and Veruca were willing to share intimate knowledge via their citizen selves, they weren't willing to make that

knowledge public, which makes perfect sense to me. In the space of this silence, which we in the field of Composition increasingly see as a rhetorical strategy, I am left only with the ability to guess and wonder. I certainly cannot claim that I know exactly what transpired during the moment, or after it; however, I think that the moment was in a certain way important to the two performers involved.

What is also interesting about Mfixx3 and Veruca's performance of the citizen self is the way that Mfixx3's invites Veruca to perform the citizen self then elaborates on Veruca's performance—just prior to the tape being turned off. This is a sort of turn taking sequence, to use the parlance of Conversation Analysis, that one can see in almost all citizen comments. According to the authors of *Conversation Analysis*,

At the heart of CA [Conversation Analysis] is a concern with the nature of turn-taking in talk-in-interaction: how is it organized, how do participants accomplish orderly (or even apparently disorderly) turn-taking, and what are the systematic resources which are used in this accomplishment." (38)

I take this to mean that the sort of invitation and response that we see from Mfixx3 and Veruca, which Conversation Analysts might call an adjacency pair, is a way of structuring conversation about and through the citizen self (Hutchby and Wooffitt 41). What is significant about this to our current discussion is a theme I want to now introduce and develop throughout the rest of this text: that the dialogic nature of peer talk is essential to the performance of the citizen self, and the companion self as well.

As Hutchby and Wooffitt note in quoting early Conversation Analysts Sacks Schegloff,

What two utterances, produced by different speakers, can do that one utterance cannot do is: by an adjacently positioned second, a speaker can show that he understood what

a prior aimed at, and that he is willing to go along with that . . . Also, of course, a second can assert his failure to understand, or disagreement, and inspection of a second by a first can allow the first speaker to see that while the second thought he understood, indeed he misunderstood. (41)

What Hutchby and Wooffitt, via Sacks and Schegloff, are talking about is the dialogic nature of talk, focusing on how understanding is created through a process of talk organized through a turn taking sequence. In a sense, to paraphrase 80s dance hall favorites Rob Base and D.J. E-Z Rock, “it takes two to make a thing go right.”

What I mean by this is that talk is a natural way of selves being brought into dialogue; if you believe linguists like Noam Chomsky, we are hard-wired for talk, for conversation. We are not hardwired for writing; writing is a technology (be it writing with a stylus on clay or typing away at a keyboard) that we have to learn. Writing is everyone’s first second language; it is rarely the language of home and hearth. Thus, to me it is not surprising that the two selves I identified as having lives past the borders of the school, the citizen and companion selves, live best in an oral medium. In fact, in looking at the breakdown of computer-aided and conventional peer response, it became evident that citizen and companion selves are rarely, if ever used. In conventional (paper and pen response) only 3% of the total codings (2% companion, 1% citizen) were performances of the citizen or companion self, and this pattern held in computer-aided peer response, with 6% of the total codings being for performances of the companion self—there were no codings for the citizen self.

The near absence of the companion and citizen self, particularly the citizen self, in handwritten and electronic comments is somewhat troubling, if not unexpected. One would, due to the technology involved, imagine that less phatic language would be

involved in written peer comments, which were, largely, responses to questions. However, what's more disturbing is the fact that the front region provided by electronic and written discourse seems to have difficulty housing performances of the citizen self—at least as they existed in the classroom I worked and taught in. While it is possible that some of this might be alleviated by using a MOO, or some other sort of synchronous electronic forum, there remains a nagging question: can one perform the citizen self and companion self with equal effectiveness, or comfort, across all media? This is a central question to me since I practice a pedagogy aimed at allowing the self to discover its place in the world via dialogue with other selves. If computer-assisted peer response, or even written response, attenuates expression of a citizen self, then what are the ethical implications of this for a teacher like myself?

I don't have immediate answers to this question, but I intend to grapple with this point. I doubt by the end of this work that I'll have definitive answers, but I imagine that I'll have at least more developed questions.

Patterns of Performed Selves Across the Competencies

Oral. What is most striking about the breakdown of performed selves associated with oral competencies, aside from what I mentioned about the citizen and companion self, is that there is a tremendously even distribution of all the selves. Looking at the breakdown of codes in table three on page 168, you can see what I mean:

Table 3

Total Codings of Orally Mediated Performed Selves

Number of Companion Self Codings:	504	(26% of total)
Number of Evaluative Self Codings:	399	(21% of total)
Number of Reader Self Codings :	348	(18% of total)
Number of Collaborative Self Codings:	268	(14% of total)
Number of Writer Self Codings:	214	(11 % of total)
Number of Student Self Codings:	144	(8 % of total)
Number of Citizen Self Codings:	29	(2 % of total).

As one might imagine, the companion self, the self that keeps other selves speaking dominates in oral peer discourse, but not by much. The Reader and Evaluator Roles are a close second and third respectively, and every category is represented.

Electronic. The pattern set for oral discourse doesn't hold up in electronic discourse or for handwritten discourse. The overwhelming numbers of codes (47%) in Electronic discourse are associated with the evaluative self. This is the self that is concerned with surface level error and whether writing is correct or not. In a way this is a sort of teacherly self that, in the literature, is a poor fit with students (Hyland, Freedman, and Spear). However, as I will discuss later in this chapter, students often use value judgments in ways that affirm the choices that writers make (i.e. "This is a really good introduction") rather than passing judgment in a teacherly way on their fellow students' texts. However, this pattern is more associated with oral rather than electronic discourse.

As for the distribution of the rest of the codes in computer-assisted peer response, they are as follows (as seen in Table 4 on page 169):

Table 4

Total Codings of Electronically Mediated Performed Selves

Number of Reader Self codings:	40	(17% of total)
Number of Collaborative Self codings:	38	(16 % of total)
Number of Companion Self-Codings:	14	(6% of total)
Number of Citizen Self Codings:	0	(0% of total)
Number of Student Self codings:	2	(1% of total)
Number of Writer Self codings:	31	(13% of total)

Ultimately, there is not much that is striking about these numbers, particularly when they're compared to handwritten performances of the self. However, as I mentioned earlier, what is striking is how few performances of the citizen and companion self one sees in the electronic medium, and even the few companion comments one sees are rather cursory and seem to be vestiges of oral discourse.

The truth is that much of the discourse used electronically is rather terse (as it is with handwritten discourse). For instance, in comments that Mfixx3 made to another student, Cassia Williams, on a research paper, the longest comment was 18 words ("Huh? Fragment; you seem to be lost in thought and you lose your reader at the same time.") and the shortest one word ("Redundant"). What seems to have happened with electronic discourse (which accounted for 10% of the total codings) is that the comments that respondents wrote down became talking points for discussions that happened during and after the writing of the comments. They had some significance in that they provided a written reminder of the topics of discussion for the given author of a text; however, the same can be said for handwritten comments.

The principal difference between handwritten and electronic comments was that students tended to write more in the electronic medium—with more selves being in play. Despite the fact that students had only two opportunities to engage in computer-aided

peer response, they produced more codes (233 vs. 225) and almost as many idea units (192 vs. 201) as they did during three conventional peer response sessions that used the technology of pen and paper.

Perhaps one of the reasons for this difference is the strong preference that a number of students (three out of the eight “regulars”) expressed for using computers to engage in peer response—only one student expressed an equally strong preference for handwritten comments. One of the reasons for this preference may have something to do with the technological expertise of Pam Oliver’s class, which was pronounced (with at least three students working with computers at their jobs on a daily basis); however, I think that there are other reasons.

One reason for this preference might be something that Cassia, another student in Pam’s class noted during an interview with me. Cassia revealed that one of the things she enjoyed about using the comment function in Microsoft Word™ was that it allowed her to “see exactly where I wanted the comment to be” (Cassia, “Interview”). Cassia’s comment about the visual exactitude of using the comment function in Word strikes me as important in understand why many students preferred to use the computer to generate their written comments. There is something visually appealing about the way that Word allows for comments to be inserted at an exact point, in legible writing, and this is also significant in that this technology can reinforce that students focus their comments on specific issues within the text rather than generalized comments that will be of little value to the student (i.e. “There seems to be a problem with organization in your piece”). What I mean by this is that the nature of the technology asks students to choose a particular place to insert a comment, and this channels students’ responses in a productive way. A

student is in a way making a particular “link” (to use a term from web design) to another student’s text, and the exact nature of this linkage is obvious to the student because Microsoft Word highlights comments in yellow, and then when students mouse-over the yellow, highlighted text, they can see their peer’s comments.

However, the most interesting thing about this electronic way of commenting is the way it affirms the student’s ownership of his or her text. Comments that anyone made can be deleted by simply right clicking on the yellow, highlighted text and selecting “delete comment” from the pull down menu that appears. Thus, ultimately the author, who in Pam’s class always saved the comments to disk, has control over which comments he or she wants to have, and if you (as we did) ask students to save their comments under another name on the author’s disk, then the author can in fact have a text that students do not write on.

All of this is significant because textual ownership in peer response, and in a more general sense in English studies, is an important ethical consideration. In “Habits of Mind: Historical Configurations of Textual Ownership in Peer Writing Groups” Candace Spigelman argues that there is a tension in Western Culture, which is echoed in peer response groups, between writing as intellectual property and writing as a “communal” endeavor (237). Spigelman then goes onto argue that such tensions are unavoidable in our larger culture and in group response work, and through a qualitative study of four writers in a first year composition class, Spigelman makes a crucial point: “In this peer group, the students made a valiant effort to place their texts in the public domain, to appropriate and to be appropriated, at the same time that they retained their roles as autonomous writers who would submit their essays as individual projects” (239).

This tension in terms of textual ownership is something that any teacher who wishes to use peer response groups, regardless of the technology involved, should be aware of. Thus, it strikes me as important that Microsoft Word allows student writers to decide on the degree of collaboration that they want to use. They can go as far to use some of the words that their respondents provide for them, or they can simply delete the comments—effectively removing them from their text. Handwritten comments do not provide these two options. Students either write on another sheet of paper (such as a peer response sheet) or on the paper itself. These two options seem inadequate in light of what the comment function in Microsoft Word allows: the acceptance or erasure of comments based on the way that the self of a writer feels about the given comments. However, while the comment function of Microsoft Word allows for authorial control of comments, it also allows for the author to appropriate the language of his or her respondents—but only if he or she desires.

Ultimately, I think that one of the reasons for students preference for computer-aided peer response is that it allows for some authorial control of textual ownership, and it allows the author to decide to what degree he or she is willing to collaborate with his or her auditors—the respondents to his or her paper.

The final point that I want to make about electronic performances of the self, and specifically about students stated preference for using computers to generate written comments comes courtesy of a student in Pam Oliver's class named Mfixx3. On a CAT that asked about her experience with peer response in English 401, Mfixx3 said, "I especially like the anonymous touch here. You can say what you think without having reactions from the author."

This anonymity, which is the partial and provisional anonymity I talk about in chapter four, seems to be one of the reasons that some students expressed a preference for writing their comments on a computer. What's clear is that for some students (not surprisingly the most technically sophisticated ones) they note a clear preference for performing their writing on a computer, and I imagine that in the coming years more and more students will (with increasing exposure to computers) express a preference for writing with computers.

Handwritten. As with electronic discourse, there seems to be a preference for the performance of the Evaluator self—with nearly 37% of the codes being associated with the evaluator self. Still, this is about ten-percent less than what we saw with electronic discourse. The immediate implication that springs to mind is that there is something about handwritten comments that might slightly, and slightly is the key word here, lessen the desire to perform the evaluator self. What that reason is I'm not sure, and I'm not sure that it's terribly important.

The point I want to make about handwritten comments is that students seemed in Pam's class to make fewer of them, and only one student expressed a preference for doing handwritten comments rather than electronic ones—while all the students expressed a desire to engage in oral peer discourse. What I want to say about handwritten comments is that they seem to be part of a technology that our students have less and less affective tie to—an attitude that I share.

What I mean by this is that students in Pam's class tended to write first, second, and final drafts of papers on computers (provided of course that they have access to computers), and that the expressed preference of Pam's students for using computers to

perform peer response makes sense, particularly if you think of the changing pattern of writing technology. According to recent U.S. census data, there has been a jump for adults using computers at home, school, or work, with the rate of computer use among adults moving from 18.3% in 1984 to 47.1% in 1997—that's a doubling of adult computer use within thirteen years (Newburger 1).

There are still of course thorny issues around access to computers (it's worth noting that only 36.6% of households in the United States own a computer as of 1997); however, there does seem to be a trend among adults (and certainly among children where 74.4% of children use a computer at home or school) to use a computer as the primary writing tool (Newburger 1).

This is not to say that handwritten peer comments have no place in peer discourse, and I think that it's important to keep in mind that students experience with computers will be enormously variable for quite some time to come: there will be students who enjoy the medium (like Mfixx3) and those who don't (like Helen). But in the end, I'm not sure how different handwritten comments are from electronic ones. The distribution of selves for handwritten comments in my study is closely aligned with the distribution of electronic comments, as you can see in table five below:

Table 5

Total Codings of Handwritten Mediated Performed Selves

Number of Evaluative Self Codings:	83	(37% of total)
Number of Reader Self Codings:	48	(21% of total)
Number of Writer Self Codings :	48	(21% of total)
Number of Collaborative Self Codings:	39	(17% of total)
Number of Companion Self Codings:	5	(2% of total)
Number of Citizen Self Codings:	2	(1% of total)
Number of Student Self Codings:	0	(0% of total).

A quick comparative look at the distribution of performances of selves between electronic and handwritten media reveals that there is little difference between the two—with the exception that more students seemed to express a preference for working with what may increasingly become *the* writing tool for all occasions: the computer.

Face Wants, Affiliation, and Sequencing In Computer-assisted Peer Response

An Introduction

As you may have guessed from the previous section, I'm principally concerned with computer-aided peer response, and more specifically with the way that selves are performed in the front region of the computerized classroom. However, as I said earlier, I think that oral discourse is in some ways a primary way of engaging in performances of the self that have a great deal of affective weight when students engage in computer-aided peer response that makes room for oral interaction. In a way, we are faced with a minor paradox: to talk about the performance of the self in computer-aided peer response is to necessarily talk about the performance of the self during oral peer response as well. And while this may seem contradictory, this is not necessarily so—particularly if we think of one of the guiding metaphors of this text: layers of literacies. In the performance of the self in peer response it is necessary to think of literacies, or more correctly competencies, being layered one on top of each other like blankets on a warm, comfortable bed. Thus, what I want to do now is to talk about the warmth that the blankets of my metaphorical bed provide—not the individual blankets.

To do that, I want to move from quantitative work, which typified the first part of this chapter, and start talking about individual students and their performances of their particular selves—ending with an extended meditation on one particular peer response

session in which you will see the layering of literacies and the play of the self. In an attempt to order this discussion, I want to focus on two general ideas that are evident in the performance of self in computer-aided peer response: the issue of face wants (including Goffman's ideas of positive and negative face) and issues of affiliation (which will include a discussion of how race and gender played out in peer response work).

Face-Work

In *The Goffman Reader*, Ann Branaman, in her piece entitled "Goffman's Social Theory," writes that, "The main function of 'face-work' is to maintain the ritual order of social life. For the most part, an individual's 'face' is not something freely chosen but is something accorded by society" (lxvii). Branaman, then goes on to point out, by quoting Goffman, that in terms of face work the self is "'kind of player in a ritual game'" (lxx).

As a player in this "game," the self can,

engage in aggressive face-work practices, attempting to make points by introducing information favorable to himself and unfavorable to others (IR, p. 15). At still other times, face-work will be oriented towards correcting assaults and reestablishing the ritual of equilibrium of the hierarchy of face (IR, p. 19). (lxx)

I bring up the workings of face (or face-work) because they have a definite impact on the performance of self in peer response. There was a certain sense of face-wants that was, to quote Hamlet, "more evident in the breach," rather than in the practice. In other words, over the course of my research it became evident that face wants could be tied up with the work of performed selves in peer response—and the best way that one could see face-work is when one or more participants in a group did not meet face-wants.

To give you a specific example of this I want to focus on a specific moment that occurred during a conventional peer response session between Cassia Williams and Neo—two students from Pam Oliver's class. I realize that my work here is focused

computer-aided peer response, but, as I will show in a few pages, the pattern of face-work that is present here is evident in computer-aided peer response as well.

Now, let me introduce you to the participants, or, rather, let me have the participants introduce themselves via a short biographical piece they wrote at the beginning of the semester.

At the beginning of the semester, Cassia wrote:

I came from ___ High school. I have too much of a messed up family, it would take a few hours to even scratch the surface. I am an independent person, and I love to write, as long as I choose the topic. I am a Leo and my favorite color is navy blue. Computers are ok. They make life a lot easier sometimes, and harder at others. I am a student government member and am obviously a freshman. It is a hectic life trying to get assignments done and work (or find a job), and sometimes I fail at both. I want to learn how to write more descriptively and consciously. How to write what I don't like and what I don't know about. How to check my own grammar. ("Biography")

From this short biographical piece it's obvious that Cassia is a busy woman who is, on some level, struggling to balance her home and school lives. Also, it's obvious, that Cassia want to become a better writer—the sort of writer who has command of the English language ("How to check my grammar") and can write "descriptively and consciously."

The peer that Cassia worked with, Neo, also wrote a short biographical piece.

Neo writes,

I am currently working on my degree in Business Administration. I think the computer is the essential machine that helps communicates; it lets you do something faster and get more information. And writing helps to communicated to others and open our creative thinking. In writing you can express yourself as you please. School is for learning and applying your skills to the real world. My life as a student is pretty busy I guess. I currently study part time and work full time. I would like to learn about writing effectively and using proper grammar to express myself. ("Biography")

What is obvious from Neo's biography is that he is a serious student interested in learning writing skills that he can apply to "the real world." What is less evident about Neo is what he reveals in the portfolio that turned into Pam at the end of the semester. As Neo says in his collage essay, "At the center of the poster board, you will see the map of the Philippines, which indicates that I was born in the Philippines. I lived in the Philippines until I was twenty years old" ("Collage"). Thus, Neo grew up speaking and writing Spanish, which as Neo admits created for his peers, "ESL issues" ("My Portfolio").

I bring up Neo's "ESL issues" and stated national affiliation (with the Philippines), not just to describe Neo, but to give you some sense of identity markers that were important to Neo. Over the course of the semester Neo wrote at least two pieces about his life in the Philippines, and he also worked very diligently with our class-linked tutor and Pam on his "ESL issues" because he wanted to, as he writes in his Biography, "to learn about writing effectively and using proper grammar to express myself" ("Biography").

With the above introductions in mind, let's take a look at Cassia and Neo engaging in face-work. In a traditional peer response session, at about mid semester, Cassia made the following comment about Neo's response paper to Caroline Knapp's

Drinking: A Love Story:

The way, and I'm being really gullible in saying this, the way that you write this, and I'm not sure you wanted this to be that way, but the way that you write it, um, infers that *you may be an alcoholic in denial*. Because [Neo gives short laugh] a couple of the sentences that you use, you say "I try to control my drinking even though it's hard." And especially if you're with someone who likes to drink a lot, then I can always say no that I've had enough to drink.

The italics above, “you may be an alcoholic in denial,” are mine, and they represent the first, and not the last, instance where Cassia challenges Neo’s face, and we can see that Neo feels this challenge in his short laugh, which struck me, as I was listening to the tape of this conference, as almost a slight laugh of disbelief.

After Neo tried to disavow this reading of his piece by saying “No, I’m just saying that to the other person,” Cassia continued to challenge Neo’s face by saying, “Well, I know other alcoholics that are in denial.” At this point, the following exchange occurred, which effectively ended the peer response session,

Neo: Now I’m an alcoholic.

Cassia: I never said that.

Neo: [Laughing] No. Just kidding

Cassia: [At the same time as Neo above] It was just in the writing.

Neo: Something in my face, I don’t know.

Cassia: [Laugh] Your eyes? Your glasses?

What interests me about this exchange is the way that Neo, and then Cassia, reacted to Cassia’s challenge to the presented self of Neo in his paper—they began to joke. This joking acted, in some way, to restore a sort of equilibrium to the conversation—with Neo going on to give his comments about Cassia’s paper, but the subject of Neo’s piece never came up again. In a sense Cassia’s comments were, to use the language of Conversation Analysis, irreparable. In Conversation Analysis, “repair” refers to “organized ways of dealing of dealing with various kinds of trouble in the interaction’s progress, such as problems of (mis)hearing or understanding” (Ten Have 116). What happened here is a situation that, in some sense, defied repair strategies, and the participants of this conversation ultimately moved onto other matters.

While Conversation Analysis, provides some insight into what happened between Cassia and Neo, the work of Goffman provides even more. In *The Presentation of Self in*

Everyday Life, Erving Goffman talks about the fact that a person performs, either consciously or unconsciously, a particular self that “is in his interests to convey” (4). It is this presentation of the self, this performance, that any given performer or “teams” of performers wants to maintain, and usually the other performer or performers will help “tacitly and tactfully” maintain this impression of self (Goffman, *Performance of Self* 166). However, it is possible to have a moment where such face-wants aren’t met, and where the words and actions of one person in a conversational group call into question the presentation of self of another group member (Goffman, *Performance of Self* 165-169). It is this sort of information, information which makes “useless the impression that the performance fosters,” that is at the heart of the misunderstanding between Cassia and Neo (Goffman 141).

Cassia and Neo’s interchange is just such a face-challenging moment, and interestingly the challenge to Neo’s face stems from a particular reading by Cassia of Neo’s piece. Cassia writes, “but the way that you write it, um, infers that you may be an alcoholic in denial,” and the phrase “the way that you write it,” is a phrase that I want to focus on. Here Cassia is using one of the conventions of Peter Elbow’s idea of subjective response: a reader-based response that gives “an accurate account of what goes on inside readers’ heads” as the reader reads the author’s work (Elbow, *A Community of Writers* 534). I don’t dispute that Cassia is accurately conveying her impression of the text, and it could even be, on some subjective, psychological level, accurate to a certain extent.

However, the problem with Cassia’s subjective response isn’t that it isn’t subjective, it’s that it isn’t sufficiently responsive to the face-wants of her partner, Neo. Her subjective response, while couched in reader-based terms (“the way that you write

it”), doesn’t take into account a presentation of self in Neo’s writing, a sort of presentation at a psychological distance, that does not identify himself as an alcoholic, but as a person who can understand the lures of alcohol. In the section of his paper that Cassia is making reference to, Neo writes, “I try to control my drinking even though it is hard and especially if you are with someone who likes to drink a lot. But I can always say no or I have enough to drink” (Neo, “Drinking a Love Story”). From this passage it’s clear that Neo understands the lure of alcohol, and that he has some vested interest in seeing that he has the ability to “say no” to drinking too much—to being an alcoholic.

Thus, the problem with Cassia’s comment isn’t that it is wrong, right, or appropriate to the text: the problem is that Cassia’s comment is abrading against a particular performance of self as expressed in Neo’s writing. This sort of problem, which Cassia repeats a little later in the peer response session, is significant for a couple of reasons. First of all, this sort of problem of performance was somewhat common during peer response work—particularly on subjects that were directly or indirectly linked to some deeper performance of the self. At least four out of twelve of the full-length transcriptions I worked with in Pam’s class have incidents involving problems around face-work. Thus, to understand when peer response doesn’t work, we need to, in some way, understand what happens when face-work goes awry.

The other point I want to make is that by looking at moments when face-work doesn’t work, when misreadings (at least in the mind of the author) arise, we can understand breakdowns in peer response interaction without pathologizing it. Generally, in the literature of peer response these sorts of moments are seen as moments of “misreading” or, even more simply, as moments when peer response “doesn’t work.”

Ultimately, these two explanations are inadequate because they do not account for how such misreadings occur; they only say that they have. Through the lens of Conversation Analysis and Goffman, we can see that peer response is social work in which other selves have to pay attention to performance of other selves. And when there are, to use Goffman's terms, "gaffes" or "bricks," the fault lays in the breakdown of conversational and psychic conventions—not some abstract conception of how peer response should work (209). What I'm asking for is that we see face-work in some ways as central to the social interplay of peer response work. Students need to do more than perform selves in the presence of others—they need to have those selves affirmed by others as well.

Affiliation

As is probably evident from the quantitative work at the beginning of this chapter, there were few idea units that were tied to what I call the citizen self—the self interested in expression affiliations that extend past the walls of the classroom. However, as I argued earlier in the chapter using the work that Mfixx3 and Veruca did, these are important selves to consider in the work that is done in peer response.

To build an even stronger case for this, I want to briefly look at moment that Neo and Cassia shared during the peer response session that I just finished discussing. At the beginning of her comments to Neo, Cassia says,

I liked a lot of the ideas in it, but the, uh, English you use in it. Brings to mind, that you know . . . that I can tell that you're not . . . an English first language speaker. I can tell. Because, uh, you know what I mean? When somebody translates into English you tell because they don't—they don't use it in the same way that somebody who's a native speaker [Neo: Yes] uses it? And you did that.

What is interesting about this performance of the citizen self, which really centers around the idea unit “I can tell that you’re not . . . an English first language speaker,” is that it shows Cassia recognizing the quality of “otherness” in her peer Neo, and here the “otherness” is Neo’s status as a second language speaker in an English speaking class.

At this moment Cassia is enmeshed in an interesting and difficult communicative moment. She pauses and fights for the “right” words to express her thought (notice the ellipses in the passage above, which indicate pauses), and she uses two questions at important moments to check for agreement and, I would argue, to gain some sort of affiliation. In *Gender and Discourse*, Deborah Tannen points out that women are more likely than men (and Tannen qualifies this idea in a number of ways) to use questions to show interest and gain affiliation (67 and 166). However, as I said, this is a heavily qualified assertion, and Tannen couches her belief in this pattern very firmly in two specific conversational instances that involve participation by both genders: a thanksgiving conversation and excerpts from Ingmar Bergman’s play *Scenes From A Marriage*.

I bring up this point because it seems possible, and possible is the key word here, that Cassia is trying to articulate some sort of statement about Neo’s affiliation through language that partakes of some possible gendered patterns. She asks two questions in the passage I quoted, and only moves onto her final statement, “And you did that,” after Neo affirms that he is engaged in the conversation, which he does by saying “yes.”

This moment shows a complex play of citizen selves happening at the same moment. Cassia is, in all likelihood, using a gendered pattern of response to talk about a certain linguistic self that Neo very clearly identifies with: his Spanish speaking,

Philippino heritage. What is remarkable about this moment is that it doesn't lead to any immediate friction; that occurs later when Cassia brings up Neo's depiction of alcoholism in his response to Caroline Knapp's *Drinking: A Love Story*. In a sense there is some agreement about the nature of Cassia's comment; as Neo said in his portfolio, he wants to work on his "ESL issues," and Cassia, well her opinion on the matter is clear.

However, I want to point out that this citizen comment is not just about gender and ethnicity; it is also about personal knowledge and experience. In an interview with me, Cassia mentioned that with Neo she tried "to put a positive spin" on her comments particularly around second language issues; however, she found this somewhat difficult to do. She even mentioned that she would have "a hard time" doing the second language work that Neo had to do in Pam's class; particularly since she admitted to having her own grammar issues with her first language, English (Cassia "Interview"). Still, at some level she felt obliged to mention language concerns to Neo because "he's the slightly sensitive type, but he wants to know" (Cassia "Interview").

What Cassia's interview reveals is that she herself struggled with ways of performing the citizen self; or, put in a different way, with helping Neo perform a citizen self. Cassia's comment may have defined a citizen self moment for Neo, but the reasons behind them were complex, and they were tied to gender, linguistic affiliation, and experience.

This is the key point I want to make about the citizen self and affiliative work in general: is that it happens through oral language and is wrapped up in a complex web of experience and societal definitions. Also, it's important to note the pattern here, one that was evident in Mfixx3 and Veruca's conversation as well: that a performance of the

citizen self is often invited by the peer. Veruca and Neo were invited to consider the way that their writing, and their selves, were created via affiliations to certain groups, and their willingness to respond to those comments was essential in the “success” or “failure” of these comments.

Digging Deeper: Mfixx3 and Cassia’s Layering of Literacies

Now I want to move into the central part of this chapter: an example where you can see the play of the self across three discrete, yet related, competencies—oral, written, and electronic. To do that I want to focus on a peer response session that occurred between Mfixx3 and Cassia around midterms—at the point when students were most comfortable with the technologies, the processes of giving peer response, and each other.

Ultimately, Mfixx3 and Cassia don’t perform just one sort of self over the course of an entire peer group response session. Cassia and Mfixx3, like the other students in Pam’s class, slid from one self into the other, “assuming a wide variety of identities: readerly identities, writerly identities, teacherly identities, facilitative identities, raced identities, classed identities, gendered identities, authoritative stances, and deficit identities” (Gray-Rosendale 78).

Rather than moving through this vast array of selves in chronological order, I want focus on some of the more common patterns that these two students used while sliding from one self into the next—patterns that are in some ways typical of patterns that other students used in Pam’s class. The work that Mfixx3 and Cassia reveals how Cassia and Mfixx3 sequenced the selves of peer response, used humor to help in this process of sequencing, and moved, through talk, from sentence level issues to deeper ones.

A Little Background

Before moving forward, it is important that you meet both the students who worked together during this computer-assisted peer response session: Cassia and Mfixx3. You've already been introduced to Cassia through her biography, and it only seems fair to allow Mfixx3 equal time.

The biography that Mfixx3 wrote is short and to the point, with Mfixx3 using the prompts for the biography as a way of organizing her biography. Mfixx3 writes,

Personal Info: Majoring in psychology.

School and computer background: Essential if a person plans to evolve and participate in the working world.

Life as a UNHM student: I like UNHM and have had a few unique opportunities arise from being here.

What I want to learn: My goal is to write and establish my point clearly, concisely, and without getting preachy.

From this brief introduction you get a sense that Mfixx3 values computers, clear writing, and attending UNHM. What you don't get is information that I gleaned from an interview with Mfixx3.

In the interview Mfixx3 revealed that she had completed an undergraduate degree in psychology at a Florida School, worked at an investment firm as a computer application specialist, and perhaps most significantly for the work that we did in this class, she described herself as enjoying computers—as being a “techie” (Interview).

I bring up Mfixx3's attitude towards computers because attitudes towards, and experience with, computers can have a great impact on the willingness of students to engage in computer-aided peer response, as we saw with Helen in chapter four. Thus, Mfixx3 was, in a way, predisposed towards enjoying computer-aided peer response, and while Cassia was less enamored of computer-aided peer response, she was willing to

admit that “They make life a lot easier sometimes” while also feeling that they could make certain things “harder” at other times (Cassia “Bio”).

Ultimately while both women showed some preference for working with computers to do peer response, their work together (and they worked together at least four times over the course of the semester) involved a great deal of talk; in fact, when they were engaging in this computer-aided peer response session they spoke from the beginning to the very end of the hour and twenty minute session. They started talking from the moment I said “let’s start,” to the moment that they were printing up copies of their text and computer-generated comments for me.

However, at the same time that the two women were talking, they were typing, reading aloud to each other, and manipulating text on screen. They corrected each other’s grammar, changed each other’s text, and Mfixx3 even helped Cassia print up her document and comments at the end of class. So that Cassia could walk away from the session, as Mfixx3 did, with a set of comments that she could work from later.

The work that Mfixx3 and Cassia did is perhaps the best example of layered literate peer response practice that I can offer after a semester of research, and while it is true that their work is in some sense a model it is not so different from the work that other students did over the course of the semester. Still, I have chosen to discuss this particular session between Cassia and Mfixx3 because it provides an example of what we in education call the “best practices” of computer-aided peer response. Their multilayered literate work is rich, complex, and engaging, and I think that it indicates, in some provisional way, the way that peer response will be done in the future.

Let’s take a peek at the future.

Sequencing Selves: An Introduction

The literate future that I'm speaking of is a future of multi-tasking; however, it is not the most commonly know form of multi-tasking in which one has a variety of computer programs open at the same time. It is a literate multi-tasking in which students layer literacies of the page and screen on top of each other, while talking through and to the layers.

In peer response, this sort of layering of literacies happens when you put people in close proximity, have them work using computers, and teach them how to respond to each other's texts. In this sort of pedagogical situation, students end up talking to each other, editing their own and other students' texts on screens, and often times printing out copies of the work that they're doing. For Cassia and Mfixx3, this sort of peer response activity happened across the whole of the semester, and the specific example that we're about look at is an excellent example of their exemplary work.

What I find so notable about Cassia and Mfixx3's work together is that the layering of literacies, and of performed selves, is almost seamless. However, if you peer deeply into the seams that stitch together their collaboration, you can see some patterns—particularly around the way that, orally, Cassia and Mfixx3 build towards certain performances of the self. To that end I want to focus on the way that Cassia and Mfixx3 build towards three selves that I haven't spent much time talking about: the collaborator self, the evaluator self, and the writer self. While all the selves that I discuss are essential to peer response work, it seems that these selves deal most directly with one of the central goals of most peer response work: to provide writers with feedback about not just the surface structure of their piece, but the deeper structure of their piece as well.

The Collaborator Self. The Collaborator self is the self most inclined to implicate him or herself in the actual deep rhetorical strategies and purposes of another self's writing. When a student performs the collaborator self, her discourse focuses on questions of audience, structure, and overall impact of the piece.

Obviously this is an important and powerful self, and it is also a performance of self that one sees across all types of peer response: traditional, oral, and electronic. What is interesting about this performance of the self is the way that in traditional and electronic sense, there is not much of a sense of building towards this self, while in oral discourse there is.

Perhaps an example will help with this. In, the electronic comments that Mfixx3 made to Cassia about Cassia's research paper on a local library, she made the following comment about a rhetorical question Cassia asked concerning families being displaced to build said library: "Good question" (Mfixx3 "Comments on Cassia's Paper"). I coded this comment as an evaluator self comment, which makes sense in the electronic form.

However, in an oral discussion that followed Mfixx3's electronic comment, the nature of this evaluative comment is transformed by what Mfixx3 says to Cassia. In a sense the electronic comment acts as a trigger for the discussion that follows; to appropriate the language of diplomacy, it is a sort of talking point in the performance of self. I want to underscore this pattern because I believe it's particularly important to the work that gets done in peer response generally, and particularly in terms of electronic peer response. Oral discourse is, in my research, the layer of literacy that leads to elaboration, but written comments provide a sort of rough outline for the conversation that follows. All of the students I worked with in Pam's class at some point read their

comments, and often even the writer's text, aloud to their peer—then they elaborated on the point they made in writing.

In some deep sense the worlds of electronic and oral discourse can be pulled into the same orbit during peer group work, and when they do electronic discourse seems to provide the template, the talking points, for the interaction that happens through talk. In the peer group work that I was witness to, talk about writing does not happen without writing, and writing without talk—well it seems less productive and rich, less human.

This sort of relationship makes sense when you look at the work that has been done around talk and writing—specifically what I would call writing in a traditional classroom. According to Peter Mortensen in "Talk About Writing" "Talk surrounds writing, envelopes it. We talk our way into writing, and we talk our way out of it" (105). This attitude, that talking is intimately connected with writing, is part of Composition's research agenda, and, again according to Mortensen, this desire to study the relationship between these two forms of discourse can be seen in work that examines the work that happens in small group writing instruction, teacher-student conferences, tutor-student conferences, and in peer group work (115-116).

Ultimately, my contribution with this research is to show the essential nature of the relationship between what Mortensen calls "talk about writing" ("conversation in which speakers attend to text or the process of creating text") to electronic discourse (105). It's a relationship that hasn't been deeply explored in the field of Computers and Composition, aside from Beth Hewett's excellent study of the link between the two in her 1998 dissertation.

To get at the relationship between oral and electronic discourse, I now want to focus on the way that Mfixx3 and Cassia elaborated on Mfixx3's electronic comment: "Good question." Mfixx3 starts off by reading from Cassia's text; ("If so, was it worth it to exchange a family treasure for a town treasure"); then she gets into the why of her electronic evaluator self comment, ("I put this comment here saying that this is a good question, but then you counteract your question by the very next statement "); and she ends her set piece with a series of collaborative comments that aim at the deep structure of Cassia's piece (Mfixx3 "Comments on Cassia's Paper"). Let's look at these comments for a moment. At the end of this exchange with Cassia, Mfixx3 says,

There's probably a lot of people who have opinions about that. Maybe some people who's families were totally displaced . . . How about, how about people today who think that, you know what, we've really out-grown this library. Was it worth it? For this guy who it built it for his wife? To put all of these people out of their homes?" You know what I'm saying? So it's, so it's kind of an interesting question. It would be interesting to see if there were any formal complaints made to the town. Did anybody . . . you know what I mean? Did anybody say any comments about it? I mean these are things that you might want to. I don't know if you're going to find anything, but it doesn't hurt to maybe check. Because maybe it was an issue. (Mfixx3 "Comments on Cassia's Paper")

What is remarkable about this passage are the number and depth of these questions, which (with the exception of the companion self question "You know what I'm saying?") are aimed at one point that Cassia could maybe expand. What is also interesting is the sort of comments that Mfixx3 offers Cassia through these questions: the suggestions are suggestions for further research that may interest Mfixx3 or other readers.

Cassia's initial response to all of this is "I don't know how to look though for that." However from here another discussion ensues about how to do archival research ("And so records like this are going to be really hard, but you know maybe somewhere in the archives there's something that says "so and so complained."); how to work around

absent research (“maybe to say, “Possibly there could have been formal complaints made. Possibly there could have been a petition against this. We don’t know because records were not kept.”), and finally a discussion around a moment in Cassia’s piece that has deeper significance than Cassia initially thought it did. It is this moment that bears deep scrutiny.

The moment that I’m speaking of goes as follows:

Mfixx3: So the question is the people who didn’t get their rights, you don’t hear about them anymore. So was it possible that people got . . .

Cassia: It was a really bad picture.

Mfixx3: Yeah, exactly [A: I saw a picture.] People losing their homes, getting plowed down I is sure.

Cassia: Well they only have one picture, and they put it in the corner . . .you, you, read about this.

Mfixx3: Yeah.

Cassia: They put it in the cornerstone.

Mfixx3: Um huh.

Cassia: I’m like how horrible can that be? Like why would you put it in the cornerstone? You plow down these people’s houses, and then you put it in the cornerstone a picture of the house with the children in front of it. (Mfixx3 “Comments on Cassia’s Paper”)

What seems to be going on here is that in conversation with Mfixx3, Cassia remembers a telling point: that the builders of the library entombed a picture of the former residents and their homes in the cornerstone. This is a significant point to Cassia, and in her interview with me she mentioned it, and Mfixx3’s role in helping her realize it.

In our interview, which occurred three days after her work with Mfixx3, Cassia mentioned that Mfixx3 helped her remember that there was a picture entombed in the cornerstone of the library, and that, “There was public outcry.” More significantly, Cassia told me “It really rankles me when people are thrown out of their homes.” This attitude, a socially conscious attitude towards forced homelessness, was a theme that Cassia said that she wanted to develop more (Cassia “Interview”).

What I want to emphasize here is not whether Cassia expanded on this point or not (which I'm not sure that she did), but that she came to a realization in collaboration with Mfixx3. And this collaboration of two selves started with a comment that seemed, on the surface, patently evaluative.

I think what happened here is that Mfixx3 and Cassia did what Peter Elbow hopes all writers and respondents will do with an evaluative comment: work together to not only evaluate the writing, but to articulate what "perceptions and reactions" the evaluation is based on (Elbow "Community of Writers" 508). It is this step, the revealing of reasons for evaluation, that is crucial to peer response work, and in my research it seems that such "perceptions and reactions" are more likely to occur through talk than any other layer of literate activity.

Quite simply, students in my research did not expand and sequence the evaluator self into a more collaborative self through writing; they did it through their first language, oral discourse. This pattern of sequencing from the evaluator self to the collaborative self is a general pattern that I saw across all oral response, but only rarely in electronic or handwritten response. In other words it seems that the sequencing of selves in terms of the collaborative self is really a strategy of oral discourse. This seems a compelling reason to continue to use, even in the face of the "late age of print," oral discourse in peer response; because it is through oral discourse that students, at least the students I worked with, seemed to build and sequence towards truly collaborative moments.

The Evaluator Self

As Cassia and Mfixx3 revealed in the above section, the evaluator self can become a means to move towards more collaborative work—specifically towards

performances of the collaborative self. However, there is another way in which the evaluator self was often used by Cassia, Mfixx3 and other students: as a way of affirming a writer's work—and the worth of that work.

This happens throughout the work that I studied, and it happens early and often in Cassia and Mfixx3's peer response work on the 21st of March 2001. At the beginning of the session just as Mfixx3 has started to respond to Cassia's paper, the following exchange occurs:

Mfixx3: Wow. What a great starting sentence.

[5-second pause]

Cassia: The starting sentence is good, and the rest just goes downhill.

Mfixx3: Oh stop.

What is interesting about this brief exchange is that a compliment is offered via the evaluator self; Mfixx3 is clearly focusing initially on a surface level issue—the opening sentence of the paper. However, I think that this sort of pattern, which is repeated throughout the piece, is significant because it establishes a certain type of relationship between the writer and her peer respondent. Evaluative comments, which researchers as diverse as Elbow, Dipardo, and Murray caution against, seem to be more in the hands of peers than simple statements about good and bad writing: they are ways of establishing affiliation and mentioning what works in a particular piece of writing.

The key here is the peer nature of these evaluative comments, and the way that they are responded to by the writer's themselves. Often there is, as we see with Cassia, an attempt to downplay the compliment; however, as we see in this case with Mfixx3, there can also be a more forceful attempt to have the writer accept the compliment, and I think that the reason for this has something to do with the affective nature of oral peer speech.

There is also a way in which positive comments, particularly believable ones that focus on a specific moment of good writing (such as Mfixx3's compliment to Cassia), grease the wheels of conversational interaction. To get at this I want to look briefly at a point that Erving Goffman makes about deferential activity in his essay "Interaction Ritual." In "Interaction Ritual," Goffman points out the deference, with its attendant compliments, is not just an act of subservience, which Goffman feels would be "an extremely limiting view of deference" (59). Deference is also, "a kind of promise, expressing in truncated form the actor's avowal and pledge to treat the recipient in a particular way in the on-coming activity . . . Actors thus promise to maintain the conception of self that the recipient has built up from the rules he is involved in" (Goffman, "Interaction Ritual" 60).

I believe that compliments in oral peer response can operate as a pledge to interact with the writer in a certain way: a way that allows evaluative comments to be seen as affirming the worth of the writing itself. This may seem like a minor point, but I believe that it is a crucial one. In a sense students are appropriating the evaluative language of teachers, which their schooling has made them deeply familiar with, and using it in a way that provides affirmation that their writing works and matters. This strikes me as being one of the key affective roles that peer response groups can, and often do, have: a way of telling the writer that their writing has worth and value. This is information that teachers have not traditionally given students, as Rick Straub points out, most teacher comments tend to be evaluative and directive, which is not necessarily a bad thing (247). However, the nature of the evaluation is somewhat different than the work of the evaluator self that I am describing here.

The work that teachers often do in their response is to point out where student writing is deficient; I know that this is the way that my comments have often worked. However, peers provide a counter-balance to this deficit sense of student writers; they use evaluative comments not to point out what's wrong, but very often to point out what works. They also can use evaluative comments to forge affiliative bonds (as I would argue Mfixx3 does with Cassia) that are necessary for the oral work of peer response. Without respondents availing themselves to the evaluator self, there could very well be less work accomplished; in a sense, compliments and deference are necessary aspects of any oral interaction—whether it be a conversation with a parent, a peer, or a writer.

The Writer Self

The writer in computer-aided peer response has a self to perform that is in some important ways independent of the other performances she is involved in. What I'm speaking of is the performance of the writer self, a self that expresses writerly intentions, concerns, and questions. Cassia performed this self particularly well and often during here session on March 21 2001 with Mfixx3. Of the 133 codes that Cassia created during her work with Mfixx3 on March 21st, 14% of the codes were performances of the writer self. In fact, performances of the writer self were second in terms of overall codes to performances of the companion self, which accounted for 46% of the total codes. The way that Cassia played this role is of particular interest because the patterns of her performance of this self are in some ways indicative of the work that others did while performing this self.

The Writer Self as Resource. One of the key roles that the writer self performs is to provide additional information to the reader—which is generally prompted from the

reaction of the reader to the writer's work. For instance, at one point Mfixx3 while reading Cassia's piece makes reference to the fact that the building only cost "350,000 dollars" to construct, which on the surface seems to contradict Cassia's quoting of a source that "no expense was spared" (Cassia "Research Essay"). To this Cassia replies "In 1914." Mfixx3 accepts this comment by saying, "Good point, I take it back" and both women laugh.

This seems an unremarkable moment, but it hints at the degree, and way, in which the writer self acts as a resource that ultimately controls the oral discourse during peer group response work. In a subtle way here, Cassia seems to be asserting her control not only over her paper, but over its content as well. This is research that she has done, research that, to paraphrase Candace Spigelman, she in some sense feels she owns. Thus, Cassia's short comment that implicitly makes reference to the idea of inflation and constant dollars, is a statement of ownership. Ultimately, the work that the writer self as resource provides not only fills in gaps in the readers knowledge, but asserts the writer's ownership of her piece.

The Writer Self as A Deficit Identity. This is one of the aspects of the performance of the writer self that Cassia and other students' in Pam's class indulged in quite often. In this facet of the writer self, the writer downplays the significance, importance, or quality of his or her writing. These can be opening comments that the writer makes, such as when Cassia mentioned to Mfixx3 that "The starting sentence is good, and the rest just goes downhill," or more commonly they can be specific moments where the writer points out a particular weakness of her piece. I want to focus on this aspect of the performance of this facet of the writer self because it has significance in

terms of both the social performance of the self and the idea of “peeriness.” I’ll explain myself in a moment.

But first I want to look at seemingly mundane example of this sort of deficit writerly performance of the self. The specific example that I want to focus on is taken from the middle of Cassia and Mfixx3’s discussion about Cassia’s essay, and it goes as follows,

Mfixx3: You got too many spaces here.

Cassia: I think I forgot. . .

Mfixx3: [Interrupting] Trying to get to eight pages? [Both laugh]

Cassia: I think I forgot to put two spaces between the period and the next sentence too.

Here the writer self is acknowledging a surface level problem in terms of spacing—admitting to a deficiency that the reader notes. It is on one level an interesting moment of student learning, another student’s reaction prompts a writer to consider a change to his or her text. However, there is something else that might be going on here.

In “On Face-Work” Erving Goffman notes that in face-work there is something he calls “negative-attribute etiquette” (29). This is a move made at the beginning of a conversation by a performer to acknowledge “an apparent negatively valued attribute” (29). According to Goffman this sort of disparaging remark is made by a performer to warn others,

Against making disparaging remarks about his kind of person and [the others] are saved from the contradiction of acting in a friendly fashion to a person toward who they are unwittingly being hostile. This strategy also prevents others from automatically making assumptions about him which place him in a false position and saves him from painful forbearance or embarrassing remonstrances (“Interaction Ritual” 30-31).

What this means in terms of our discussion of the writer self is this, the performance of the deficit writer self is an attempt to present a certain face to the writer’s co-performer,

and in Cassia's case it is a performer who knows grammatical and syntactical clues, but quite simply, in the moment of writing, forgot them. In a sense many deprecating remarks made while performing the writer self in peer response work are writerly attempts to have other performers acknowledge a particular writerly face.

This point is also linked to ideas of what it means to be a peer in peer response work. In this micro moment, Cassia is making reference to a larger uncertainty that she has as a writer: here knowledge of grammar, syntax, and "correct writing" (Cassia, "Interview"). In her biography that she wrote at the beginning of the semester, Cassia wrote that she wanted to learn "How to check my own grammar." This comment resonates with other comments that Cassia made to me throughout the semester: that she was concerned about her command of the formal aspects of English.

What's interesting is that the person Cassia worked with the most was Mfixx3, a student with excellent command of grammar and syntax, and someone who (at the beginning of the response session that's the subject of our focus) says that "I'm correcting your spelling as I go by the way." Cassia's response to this is telling, she says, "Mmm, fine." What Mfixx3 provides Cassia with is not just an excellent reader for higher order concerns, but a copy editor as well. In some sense Cassia wants a reader of her work who will read her work with the critical eye of a line-by-line copy editor, and this makes sense when you consider the fact that while Cassia and Mfixx3 are peers, they are peers with a difference. As Gillam, Callaway, and Wikoff point out, the traditional, and theoretical, idea of the peer tutor, "as a more capable peer" is inadequate to understanding the nature of the peer relationship (164). Gilliam, Callaway, and Wikoff are interested in the tensions that surround the idea, and reality, of being a writing center

peer tutor, but their basic idea that there can be—and in fact are—power asymmetries, no matter how slight, between “peers” is the point I want to make here.

Ultimately, Cassia does have a need of the expertise that Mfixx3 brings to the table as a reader. At some level she feels the need to have an expert reading of her paper in terms of grammar, and Mfixx3 can provide that for her, and the mechanism for Cassia getting this sort of help is the work she does through the writer self—a self that in some sense invites response to a writer's work, while at the same time preserving the writer's face.

The Writer Self as the Director of Peer Response. One of the principal ways that a writer can control his or her face is through the questions that he or she asks of his or her reader. Specifically, I'm thinking of the way that writers, at my insistence, typed out questions for their respondents to focus on during their peer response session. I did this because I felt, as Don Murray does, that writer should speak first and set the agenda for peer response (198). I do this for the reasons that I discussed earlier in this chapter concerning the “ownership” of student texts; unlike Murray I don't assume that the writer “owns” her piece in an absolute sense—I agree with Candace Spigelman who argues that there is a tension in peer response group work between writing as intellectual property and writing as a “communal” endeavor (237). My reason for foregrounding the writer's desires for response is that I believe that the writer should play a primary role in the negotiation that is ownership of texts in peer response groups.

As one might imagine with my insistence on writers formulating the agenda, many of the questions that students asked while performing this version of the writer self focused on things higher order concerns: concerns of coherence, order, rhetorical impact

and other global concerns about a particular paper. However, what is interesting about Mfixx3 and Cassia's work on March 21st is that they did not create questions before beginning their work together.

The reasons for this I can only guess at, but there are several likely scenarios. First of all I should say that in this peer response workshop I did not reiterate my specific demand that writers should write down questions to be answered about their pieces. In fact, I was interested in what happened at this stage when I removed a bit of pedagogical scaffolding; in other words, I wanted to see what sort of peer response process students created with minimal teacher intervention. The interesting thing is that all the students except Cassia and Mfixx3 used written questions to guide their peer response work; all the other students had internalized the scaffolding that I had provided to ensure writerly control of the agenda of peer response work.

I can't be certain why Mfixx3 and Cassia decided to forego this traditional bit of scaffolding, but I have at least one idea. I think that there was a certain degree of trust built up between Cassia and Mfixx3 over the course of the semester (they worked with each other more than with any other students), and at a certain point they felt that they had to some extent found what Don Murray refers to in conversations about writing as the "best readers." Mfixx3 trusted Cassia to be a good, responsible reader of her work, and Cassia expected the same thing of Mfixx3. I know that there's some truth in this because in her interview with me, Cassia said that she "trusted" Mfixx3 as a reader—in large part because she "noticed things" in Cassia's writing and generally paid close attention to what Cassia said, or intended to say (Cassia, "Interview") As for Mfixx3, I

can only hazard a guess based on the number of times she worked with Cassia—which outstripped the number of times she worked with other people in the class.¹²

Ultimately, I think that I can take some hope from the fact that Cassia and Mfixx3 did not feel the need to use the pedagogical scaffolding that I provided for them. In a sense it shows that, in this aspect of the writer self, they had moved past the need for specific instructions that would order their response; they had created their own strategies. In a sense, this is the moment that all teachers hope for: the moment when their students no longer really need them.

Mfixx3 and Cassia: Two Specific Oral Strategies

The final point that I want to make about Mfixx3 and Cassia's work on March 21, 2000 is that across all the performances of self they engaged in two specific oral strategies that seemed available to them only through talk: the use of a performative form of humor and, for lack of a better phrase, performances of other selves.

Performative Humor. Mfixx3 was the queen of using what I call performative humor, which is quite simply humor that literally makes use of other voices to create a comic effect. The difficult thing about defining humor in any sense is that humor itself invariably opens up and calls into question that definition. As Bakhtin noted in his theory of the grotesque, humor is often tied to the idea of an open, growing body, that can mock itself as well as other conceptions of the body, and that is exactly I'm facing as I try to define the particular type of humor I'm talking about (Bakhtin, "Rabelais" 19). In this particular case, perhaps an example can do the work of a definition.

¹² Mfixx3 did not name names in here interview—she talked more generally about the type of response she preferred to receive and give.

At the very beginning of the tape, Mfixx3 gives the following humorous performance:

Today is March 21st of the year 2001, a space odyssey. [Cassia laughs] I can only imagine when he goes home and listens to this, [in a different voice] “Oh my god, that psycho bitch. [Cassia laughs] Like what is wrong with her.” [Both laugh] When did they let her out of the asylum? What’s her curfew? [Mfixx3 laughs]

The two dimensional, black and white medium of paper doesn’t do justice to the following performance; however, let me try to explain what Mfixx3 did here. Mfixx3’s first comment “Today is March 21st of the year 2001, a space odyssey” was pronounced (and I use this verb advisedly) in a portentous sort of voice that one might associate with the narration of old Science Fiction B Movies. She then speaks in her “real” speaking voice until she takes on an incredulous sort of voice for “Oh my god, that psycho bitch.” She ends the exchange in her own voice—with her last utterance being of a nonverbal nature: a laugh.

This sort of performance, with its variety of voices (and I’m talking about literal voices here) interests me for a number of reasons. First of all it seems as if Mfixx3 is communicating not just with Cassia here, but with me—the researcher. In a way Mfixx3’s humor undermines, as good humor is supposed to, the distance between the researcher, myself, and Mfixx3, the subject of research. Mfixx3 is commenting on the act of me listening to tape she is co-creating with Cassia; in a sense, she is raising into view the invisible process of data-collection, and interesting she’s doing through humor.

Aside from this interesting methodological point, there is probably something else going on here: the sharing of laughter. In Cassia and Mfixx3’s work there was a great deal of laughter—throughout the whole of the piece. At times it was used to underscore

points that one or the other was making, at other points it was used to create a momentary community, and at other times it could be seen as a way to create distance.

Allow me to explain.

About halfway through their work on March 21st, Mfixx3 and Cassia engaged in a brief discussion about the difference between sarcasm and cynicism. At one point in the discussion the following brief exchange occurred:

Mfixx3: Yeah, like “What do you mean you believe in ghosts, what are ya nuts?”

Cassia: [Laughing] Jeesh.

It seems to me, and seems is the operative word, that Mfixx3 is using humor (again taking on a voice literally different from her own—a sort of sarcastic voice actually) to underscore a distinction that she’s trying to make between sarcastic and cynical behavior. Her humor, which Cassia connects with through a laughing “Jeesh,” is a way to further her point without hammering her point home. In a sense it’s possible to read this moment as Mfixx3 pursuing a point via humor, rather than being dogmatic.

Mfixx3’s humor in the above example seems, at least to me, fairly straightforward; however, there are some other examples of humor that are a little more complicated. In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin makes the point that laughter can be, particularly the laughter of the carnival, a shared experience in which “laughter is the laughter of all people” (11). Bakhtin sees an important philosophical and sociological truth that is encased in shared laughter: that community can be brought together, and simultaneously attacked, via laughter.

This philosophy of laughter provides a lens for talking about the last two related points I want to make about the use of humor and laughter in the peer response group work that I was witness to in Pam Oliver’s class. In a sense, humor and laughter allows

for the creation of community on the fly, and for the challenging of said community almost simultaneously. To show you what I mean I want to draw your attention back to Mfixx3's opening remarks. I would argue that not only do Mfixx3's comments allow her to communicate with me about methodology, they allow her to invite Cassia into a relationship that will revolve around humor; a invitation that Cassia accepts through her laughter at Mfixx3's comments.

This sort of preliminary joking, which Mfixx3 excelled at, was actually quite common in Pam's class. In fact, at one time or another every student that I worked with engaged in similar behavior at the beginning of group work, and I believe that they did so for the same reason that Mfixx3 does: to create a laughing community. My reason for this belief resides in the comments that a number of students made about the importance of humor in their peer group work. One student went as far as to say, during an oral feedback session about the response work the class had just done, that she and her partner used humor to "keep things light and enjoyable."

This comment strikes me as being rather telling for a couple of reasons. One is that it gets at the way that laughter and jokes create community, but it also gets at another aspect of humor as it was used in peer response work in Pam Oliver's class: humor as a means of distancing the writer from critique. An even better example of this can be seen in some of the work that Mfixx3 and Cassia did. Towards the middle of their work together on March 21st, Cassia and Mfixx3 had the following exchange:

Mfixx3: Oh Cassia. You had a great ending sentence here and you blew it with the last three words.

Cassia: So to speak?

Mfixx3: It is so not necessary to say that. I think that was an awesome ending.

Cassia: Okay [laughing]. So are you going to put in. . . [In funny high-pitched voice] Take it out, take it out.

At the end of this exchange Cassia breaks up, slipping into a funny voice while telling Mfixx3 to take out the “offending phrase.” This laughter is important.

The laughter is important because it can be read not only as Cassia’s acceptance of Mfixx3’s suggestion, but as a way of taking the suggestion and distancing herself from the suggestion simultaneously. What I mean by this is that Cassia softens, via her laughter, Mfixx3’s rather blunt judgment, “you blew it with the last three words.”

My reasons for privileging this particular reading of Cassia’s laughter are several. First it seems like an odd place to slip into performative humor of the sort I describe scant pages earlier. Earlier, when Mfixx3 offered to correct her grammar, Cassia’s only response was “Mmm, fine.” Why would her response to this sort of seeming surface correction be any different? I believe that one of the reasons could be that Cassia is using humor, a performative humor, to soften the blow of Mfixx3’s comment to her writerly face. As Goffman reminds us, face is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (“On Face Work” 5). By this Goffman means that face is the perception we wish to have others to have of us, and we maintain this face as “a condition of interaction” (“On Face Work” 12). When our face is threatened, even by small, unimportant seeming interactions we will attempt to defend our face—sometimes even through “jest” (“On Face Work” 20).

It is possible that this is what Cassia is doing here—softening the blow to her sense of herself as a writer. I cannot say this for sure (and Cassia might not even be able to articulate this); however, it is at least a likely possibility—particularly when we consider Cassia’s self effacing comments at the beginning of the interaction with Mfixx3

(“The starting sentence is good, and the rest just goes downhill”) and the uncertainty that she expresses about her writing in her interview and biography.

What I want to argue here is not that Cassia definitively made a face-saving gesture here, but that face-saving gestures via humor were a regular occurrence in Pam Oliver’s class, and I imagine that they would be in any class that made extensive use of oral discourse in peer group work.

Performances of Other Selves. As is probably evident from my discussion of the use of performative humor, students—particularly Mfixx3 and Cassia—were comfortable with taking on other roles in peer response, and for many of the reasons I discussed in my section on performative humor: reinforcing a comment, creating community, and creating distance and thus saving face. To this list I would add only one thing, and that is that orally students are able to become what Michael Kleine calls a “role playing audience” (224). According to Kleine, the role-playing audience is “aware of the text as a discourse between the writer and an audience not necessarily present in the circle of readership provided by the group” (224). At certain moments it seems that Cassia and Mfixx3, as well as other groups, used oral strategies of performance to get at these audience demands.

One of the best examples I can provide you of this work comes from Mfixx3 and Cassia’s work on March 21st. During a discussion of Cassia’s thesis, Mfixx3 brings up the following point:

How about, how about people today who think that “You know what. We’ve really out-grown this library. Was it worth it? For this guy who built it for his wife? To put all of these people out of their homes?”

My use of quotes is intended here to provide you with a moment where Mfixx3 attempts to reveal to Cassia a possible path for her to pursue, and she's doing it in a voice that is literally not her own. When Mfixx3 makes her point about how contemporaries would view the history of the library, with people being displaced so that it could be built, she takes on another voice to communicate another way that a reader, other than Mfixx3, might read Cassia's piece.

What is important here, aside from the rhetorical benefit to Cassia when Mfixx3 does this for her, is that Mfixx3 pitches her voice in a different way to play the role of the absent audience. This is the sort of performative move that one can easily, and with little thought, make via one's actual, physical voice. It seems to me that this is a much more involved, or even impossible, rhetorical move to make if one is communicating through handwriting or electronic discourse. And this leads quite nicely to the conclusion of this chapter: the overall importance of talk to electronic discourse, and the implications of thinking of electronic discourse as being caught up in a web of speech.

Talk and Typing: The Inter-relation of Speech and Electronic Discourse in Computer-

Aided Peer Response

When writers work together on their writing though speech and deft strokes on a keyboard, they are demonstrating the literate practice of the 21st century: multilayered literacy. As I hope Cassia and Mfixx3's work demonstrated, this work is a complex sort of performance of self for other selves, and it is a dialogic performance in which contingent conventions of spoken discourse work with, and sometimes counter, to the evolving and equally contingent conventions of electronic discourse.

However, there is, as Peter Mortensen reminds us, something missing from this dialogic sense of talk and electronic discourses consubstantiality, and that is “the subject—the speaking, writing, listening, reading subject” (118). This subject of speech and writing is, from my perspective, a self, and this self both makes, and is made, by the social environment that she inhabits. We should not however think of the social world that the self inhabits as being transcendent; they are in a sense intersubjective states that “are temporary, their existence contingent upon negotiating, utterance by utterance, the contours of the social world *they together inhabit*” (Mortensen 120).

The above italics are mine because they underline the ultimate point that I want to make not just about intersubjective states (“how individuals share a social space and draw from it common resources that enable them to communicate”), but about electronic and oral discourse (Mortensen 119). Oral and electronic discourse compliment and challenge each other moment by moment, and ultimately in the research that I’ve done in computer-aided peer revision much of the social work (to steal a phrase from Anne Dyson) that gets done happens through talk in front of, and not necessarily through, a computer (Dyson, “Social Worlds of Children” 12).

Pedagogical Implications

An Introduction

The previous section of text was in some way intensely theoretical. I want to be a little less theoretical in this section, but still pedagogical in the sense that pedagogy is both the practice and philosophy of education. To that end, I want to talk about some of the implications that this study could have in our schools, and by our schools I mean very

precisely our public schools in the United States of America—particularly first year college composition classrooms.

Traditional Classrooms

The traditional classroom is a classroom that is either doesn't have computers, or simply doesn't make use of them. In this classroom it would be hard, if not impossible to do the work that Cassia, Neo, Mfixx3, and Veruca did in Pam Oliver's class. The layering of literacies that Pam's students engaged in requires, in some sense, access to technology.

Access to technology is, however, a thorny problem in all classrooms—be they primary, secondary, or postsecondary classrooms. While 99% of K-12 teachers have access to computers in their schools (and at least 96.7 of full-time college teachers have access to the Internet), it is more difficult to have a class gain access to a facility that will allow students to engage in computer-aided peer response (United States Department of Education 172). I know that I personally struggled to gain access to a suitable computerized classroom at UNH and UNHM, and I can't imagine that my struggles were atypical. Despite these struggles, I think that there are reasons for teachers to consider playing, and I use this word purposefully, with computer-aided peer response.

As many of Pam's students indicated, they preferred to do the written work of peer response on a computer—for affective as well as aesthetic reasons. Also, the length, and to a certain degree students wrote more and better peer response comments using electronic medium rather than a paper and ink medium. In addition to this there is the future to think of.

In "Children, Computers and Life Online: Education in a Cyber-World" Pamela Curtin and Richard Smith argue that children in our contemporary culture are living in a media saturated world and that "conventional school curricula and pedagogical procedures are out of step with the cognitive and attitudinal organization of the young" (Smith 212). While there is room to disagree with a good deal of what Smith and Curtin claim (particularly ideas like "all but a few" children have "direct" access to computers or video games), it is hard to deny that students are increasingly becoming used to using computers as the principal technology of writing (Smith 217). At a certain point teachers are going to have to ask themselves if they are going to indeed try to create student centered classroom that make the best uses of technology to teach writing to students who possess and perform selves. This means that teachers will have to think deeply about the emerging technological needs of our students, and what those needs, wants and desires might mean to pedagogies that assume students should enter into a dialogue with self and other (Gradin 103).

Electronic Classrooms

In terms of implications, I think that my research in Pam's class probably poses more serious questions for electronic classrooms—particularly those where the whole of the class is conducted online. It seems to me that classes conducted entirely online might have as much, if not more of a problem, engaging in computer-aided peer response work.

Over the last decade an increasing number of first year composition classes have been conducted entirely online, and as of 1997-98 44% of all higher education institutions offered distance education classes, and of those institutions 60% were using asynchronous Internet-based technologies for the "delivery" of distance education (Lewis 68). This trend towards using asynchronous communication to do the work of education is particularly troubling viewed in light of the work that Pam's students did.

How is it possible, minus real-time interaction, to engage in the moment-to-moment interaction that makes computer-aided peer response work? How is it possible to perform a particular self for other selves if you don't have access to a repertoire of oral discursive strategies—such as the ones that Pam's students displayed?

I would argue that it's not, and that minus talk any type of multi-layered peer response activity is almost impossible. I realize that this is a substantial claim to make; however, I plan to substantiate this claim in my next chapter. I want to spend the next twenty pages explaining to you why talk is vital to any conception of a multilayered peer response—regardless of the technology involved.

Chapter VI

Peer Response in the 21st Century

An Introduction To A Conclusion

Now is the time that I try to wrap up, in as neat a package as possible, my little gift to you, my dear readers; here is the moment where I try to talk about some of the implications of the three interlocking research studies that make up the heart of this dissertation. I want to talk about what we can learn about peer response if we view it in terms of age, race, gender, and anonymity—particularly as it relates to pedagogical practice and further research. I also want to talk, briefly, about what it means to look at computer-aided and CMC peer response as part of a larger category: multilayered literacy. And finally, I want to end with a brief glimpse of what future literacies may look like.

I hope you enjoy my little gift to you.

Our Histories, Ourselves: An Argument For Thinking Critically About Issues of Age, Race, Gender, and Anonymity

In chapters four and five, I explored the way that students' conceptions of age, race, gender, and anonymity effected how students performed very particularly selves in the moment by moment play of peer response work. I now want to bring this discussion to some sort of provisional end by working through what I view as the three most

important pedagogical implications of my research—past what I’ve already said in chapters four and five. The three pedagogical implications that I want to briefly survey in this section of my dissertation are: the way that teachers might solicit information about students’ experiences with technology, the place that low-end asynchronous computer technologies might have in peer response work, and the sort of pedagogy that might assist teachers in shaping computer-aided and CMC peer response.

Soliciting Histories: Getting Students to Discuss their Experience of Peer Response

Over the course of my work in three classrooms, I tried to gain an understanding of student experiences with peer response and computers via interviews and CATs, and I did this because my research and reading led me to believe that students’ experiences with computers and peer response—which are often woven into a web made of students’ experiences with race, class, age, anonymity, and gender—are key factors in how students will go about doing peer response.

Also, I simply feel that any information you can gain about your students’ experiences with schooling, and its attendant technologies, helps you as a teacher. The more information you have about students’ experiences with peer response work and technology, the more likely you are to design peer response work that will be effective in facilitating what Karen Spear feels is one of the key reasons for engaging in peer response: to “bridge the gap between the ‘unreality’ that students often find in school” and “the vital and interesting realities that surround them out of school” (83).

To get at students' experiences with peer response, one could of course do as I did, interview students at length about their experiences with computers and peer response. This is, however, a time consuming affair—particularly if you transcribe your interviews with students, and as someone who taught in public schools of all kinds, I'm keenly aware that many teachers have little time to spend interviewing their students.

It seems to me that a more time efficient way of soliciting students' experiences with peer response work—be it traditional or computer-mediated—would be to use CATs. The CATs that I used were easy to construct, read, and incorporate into the ongoing work of the class.¹³ None of the CATs I used provided more than a half page of text, and when I responded to the text of CATs, I did it orally with the whole class. Thus, while CATs took some time to use, they took much less time than other more formal means of formative assessment. In a sense CATs are a perfect way for a busy teacher to leave a class with a textual trace about what actually happened in it. CATs, as Thomas Angelo and Patricia Cross point out, are an excellent way of surveying student comprehension class material, cluing teachers into what they are in fact are teaching, and, ultimately, a good way of engaging in what Angelo and Cross refer to as "Classroom Research" (382). Classroom research is research that allows teachers to "carefully and systematically" observe student learning in their classrooms (Angelo and Cross 381). Also it is an ongoing activity that allows teachers to not only modify their immediate pedagogical approach, but to also engage in "research on teaching and its application in the classroom" in a larger sense (Angelo and Cross 383).

¹³ See chapter three for a listing of the CAT questions I used.

This point, that one can use CATs to work through issues of classroom research, is the final point I want to make about how teachers might use the information that they acquire about students' experiences with peer response and computer use. Teachers can use CATs as a tool to improve learning and to engage in systematic research about deeper issues around peer response. CATs give a teacher text that they can use with students and other teachers, and their brief, easily administered nature might allow more teacher voices to enter into the ongoing discussion about what peer response might, and should, look like.

Ultimately, I think that CATs can not only give teachers an excellent snapshot of students' experiences with peer response and computers—they can give teachers ready made research materials that can contribute to an evolving web of meaning around issues of peer response. And we need as many voices as possible to join into what I view as a sort of choral, collaborative research on computer-assisted and CMC peer response. A research that acknowledges the particular way that selves perform in a variety of educational settings where peer response is practiced.

What this means is that research into peer response work, which is enormously variable, probably should be conducted on a small scale. Large-scale studies of peer response, in which a large number of research sites are combined into one set of research, are probably not going to be as useful as smaller studies. I say this because if one acknowledges the importance of the performance selves to peer response work, then to try to create larger studies that would look for general patterns at the expense of particular selves would do violence to the way that peer response happens. In a sense,

I'm arguing against the sort of call that some people make at the end of research studies: a call for larger studies.

It seems possible that larger studies, which might try to establish more universal patterns of peer response work, could in fact distort what happens when students engage in peer response—regardless of the technology involved. Larger studies of peer response might miss the particular way that selves are performed in the moment-to-moment work of computer-aided and CMC peer response. Also, I think that there is a value in having as many voices as possible enter into the choral, web-woven research around peer response. We need to understand how students perform the selves of peer response in a variety of settings—including, but not limited to, other college writing classrooms, secondary school classrooms, and even in the wider world past the doors of the classroom.

Thus, it is my hope that whatever research follows my work (and I'm certain that there will be research on CMC and computer-aided peer response past mine) will be particular, small scale research that pays careful attention to the classroom environment that it is interested in. My hope is that others will add their own strands to a web of meaning that already exists around issues of computer-aided and CMC peer response; a web that is made of strands of experience, previous research, and research yet to be done.

The Place Of Low-End Computer Technologies In Peer Response Work

Just as we need many voices involved in the research around computer-aided and CMC peer response, we need to involve as many computer technologies as possible in the work that we do with, and around, peer response. To that end, it's important that

teachers who make a commitment to working with computers during peer response not forget older, primarily asynchronous computer programs—such as word processors and email. There are of course excellent reasons to use synchronous CMC, but I think that there are equally compelling reasons for using the technologies that were the backbone of my work here: the web based OWL at WSU and the comment function in Microsoft Word.

These technologies require, in my experience, less time to accustom students to, and like MUDs, MOOs, and other synchronous technologies, they provide a way for students to create textual traces of their work with ease. Also, the technologies that I used are readily available to most computer users, and most computer users have at least a passing familiarity with the World Wide Web (which houses the WSU OWL) and word processing programs (such as Microsoft Word). Thus, the learning curve for using these technologies in a given class is not as large as it might be for other technologies that would be more novel, or more alien, to students and teachers.

Also, I believe that no computer technology can do the sort of work that talk does—not even MOOs and MUDs which purport to “textualize talk” (Holmevik and Haynes 11). As I will discuss later in this chapter, talk is essential to my conception of literate activity—including computer-aided and CMC peer response. Without access to conversation, there is no way that Mfixx3 could have pointed out to Cassia the importance of engaging in more research in her piece, there is no way that Veruca and Mfixx3 could have negotiated a moment of intimacy around Veruca’s experience in a family affected by alcoholism, and there is no way that Cassia and Neo could have attempted to work around complex issues of affiliation and identity.

However, ultimately I would argue that the technology that teachers use, while important, isn't as important as how it is used. Teachers in a class suffused with computer technology still have, as Tyack and Cuban pointed out, the responsibility to plan and make sense of computer activities, and when we take teachers out of the equation, and give too much credit to machines, we distort the way that students learn and teachers teach peer response (Tyack and Cuban 126).

A Possible Pedagogy for CMC and Computer-aided Peer Response

The way that teachers teach, and students learn, peer response is not through lecture and recitation—nor is it through discrete training sessions. As I have argued throughout my work here, teachers have to model response (such as Pam and I did with the “Pam and Chris Show”); give students response (as I did on many occasions during the conduct of class); and ask the students how the peer response sessions are going (which I did via post-response conversations and CATs). Teaching peer response with students is an ongoing process—not a one-time affair.

The sort of teaching that I did over the course of all of classes is a student-centered, indirect pedagogy, and it is, at least in part, a socially-expressive pedagogical approach. The social expressivism that I'm speaking of is a sense of a social self that Sherrie Gradin traces back to the British Romantics of the 19th century. According to Gradin,

Within the romantic enterprise, then, rest the undergirding for a rhetorical pedagogy based on the opposite of radical individualism. The subject, the self, is not a single definable entity that stands alone. The work of the romantic, or neo-romantic, subject is not merely for the individual as Berlin (1988) want to argue. The romantic subject

is defined only through the connections to other objects, subjects, and unless in the throes of a mystical experience, through language. (101)

For Gradin there is in ideas such as Keats “negative capability” and Blake’s idea of giving up the “self for another” a social lineage of self (101). Gradin then goes on to argue that composition theorists like Murray, Berthoff and Elbow have adapted this sense of a socialized self to the work that they wanted to do, starting in the 1960s, in writing classrooms (55). The importance of this, besides the fact that it responds to critiques of the expressivist position, is that social expressivism allows composition scholars to talk about the self and society simultaneously. Also, a social expressivism as Gradin sees it respects many different versions of the self: be they a more collective sense of self that is present in Chinese thought and writing or a self that is shaped by the silences and oppression associated with being raced or gendered in particular ways (Gradin 161-162).

Gradin’s capacious rendering of the socialized selves that can inhabit the classroom ties in quite well with the work I was witness to in my classroom in 1997, Warren’s class in 2000, and Pam Oliver’s classroom in 2001. The selves that the students performed were various, fluid, and highly dependent on a sense of self formed in dialogue with other selves.

In particular the peer response work that Helen, Dave, Rachel, Mfixx3, Veruca, Neo, and Cassia did involved performances of the self that varied greatly from moment to moment and from medium to medium. There were of course similarities among this diverse group, which is to be expected in any group that shares real physical space(s); however, the differences between students like Helen and Mfixx3 are as important as the similarities.

The import of social expressivism to the work of peer response is that it acknowledges, but does not divide, the social and personal nature peer response. When students engaged in peer response in my classroom, Warren's classroom, and Pam's classroom, they were constantly negotiating performances of selves for audiences of other selves. Social Expressivism, with its emphasis on the negotiation of self and other, seems a productive way of thinking about the way that one might teach students to engage in CMC and computer-aided peer response.

Of course one does not have to embrace social-expressivism or any other particular pedagogical stance to effectively teach computer-aided and CMC peer response; however, I think that one does have to acknowledge the social performances of selves that goes on during peer response—the complicated negotiations of self that students do while they write, talk, and type responses to other students' papers. Students have to be taught how to do this work via modeling and an on-going conversation about the process of peer response. Students cannot be "trained" to do this work; they have to learn it in the presence of other selves.

An Argument for Viewing Peer Response Through the Lens of Layers of Literacies

The selves that students perform in computer-aided peer response, these fluid and multiple selves, are in some way tied intimately to the work that happens through oral discourse. And, as a part of this connection to oral discourse, they are tied to a bodily self that is constructed in the moment-to-moment interaction of voices—voices that are housed in and produced by physical bodies.

In her introduction to *Voice and the Actor*, Cicely Berry talks about what a voice means to a person. According to Berry a person's own voice, and "own voice" is a key term here, is contingent on a person's environment, their "ear," physical agility, and personality (7-8). I say that the phrase "own voice" is key for Berry because the voice is a personal and social matter; however, there is a personal tie to a particular perception of a person's voice (Berry 8). And this tie is so strong that "criticism of your voice is very close to criticism of yourself, and can easily be destructive" (8).

From Berry's description of the voice, I take two ideas: that the voice is a physical attribute that is socially conditioned and that the perception of our voice is something that we all have a vested interest in. Berry also reminds us that voices, and all sound, interact with the space that surrounds them, so that "the emptier the space and the less porous the walls, the more it will be amplified" (9). For our purposes, this means that not only should we take into account the social, affective, and physical nature of the voice itself, but the way that the voice interacts with space and other voices.

The final point I want to bring up, before talking about the significance of all of this to multilayered peer response work, is that people learn to speak naturally as a result of social interaction—learning the grammar of their language through social interaction. Thus, spoken language is everyone's first language, written language perhaps our second, and electronic discourse at least the third language we acquire. Speech is the language of our and our students' home worlds, and I imagine that there could be a sense of bodily loss if we were to enter fully into a virtual, voiceless, electronic world with our students.

I bring this up because there is great enthusiasm in the world of computers and writing for voiceless, textually-based technologies. Almost by definition, the physical voice of a particular self is absent from many computer-based educational technologies, be they MOOs, MUDs, chatrooms, or asynchronous technologies like electronic bulletin boards. In a sense, text is king in the world of Computers and Writing, and I want to look at this fact for a minute. Specifically I want to look at the bodily discourse that surrounds the use of Educational MOOs—"a text-based, social reality" in which people use text to interact virtually with other people and virtual objects (Turkle ix).

In *High Wired: On the Design, Use, and Theory of Educational MOOs*, there are a number of articles that speak rather positively of the textual dominance, in terms of discourse, of MOOs. According to Jan Holmevik and Cynthia Haynes in their introduction to the collection, "the simple text itself" of MOOs makes them "intriguing and powerful" spaces for writing (4). Holmevik and Haynes later add that MOO text is "orality put into writing" (11). These claims are echoed throughout *High Wired*, and it is the claim that MOOs are "orality put into writing" (which I have heard from many teachers working with MOOs) that I want to focus on that for a moment.

I contend that the text of MOOs is not "orality put into writing" because it is orality minus the physically embodied voice. The physically embodied voice, and by extension oral language, are physical creations that need bodies and physical space (not virtual space) to live and thrive in. Even if technology were to improve so that streaming video and audio were readily available to all teachers and students, this still would not eliminate the need for real-time, oral conversation. As Cicely Berry reminds us, voices

interact with real space and real time, and minus this interaction they are not voices but only reproductions of voices.

Ultimately, I'm not arguing that MOOs and other electronic discourses have no place in computer-aided peer response work or other multi-layered literate activity—I'm simply saying that they cannot, and should not, be replacements for face-to-face oral interaction. The sort of work that students in Pam Oliver's class did, particular the work that Mfixx3 and Cassia did, could not have happened without students having access to their voices. The jokes, performative voicings, and other oral strategies that Cassia and Mfixx3 brought to bear would not have worked in a MOO, and there would have been a loss of sorts.

The loss that I'm speaking of is a loss of the voice, as well as the home language that voice speaks, and it is the loss of home language that disturbs me most about the sort of work that could happen in an "electronic" only class. Students arrive in our class speaking probably at least two languages: a language of home and hearth and the language of the schools. My question for those who might counsel us to work exclusively in MOOs and other arenas of pure electronic discourse is this: how can electronic spaces accommodate the oral language of home? I would argue that this is almost impossible to do this due to the overwhelmingly textual nature of most electronic discourse. And it seems to me that if we demand that students enter into electronic spaces to do the work of multilayered peer response, then we are attenuating not only the students' repertoire of discursive practices, but we may even be setting them up for a loss of home language. The sort of loss of a linguistic home that Richard Rodriguez speaks so eloquently of in *The Hunger for Memory*.

You may think that I'm overstating my case; after all, how many students will ever face a pedagogical space in which the music of voices is absent? However, the problem is that this is increasingly an issue. As I noted in chapter five, distance education is growing, with 44% of all postsecondary institutions offering distance education programs as of 1998, up from 33% in 1995 (*The Condition of Education*, 82). This presents a problem because one of the most popular forms of "delivery" (to use the term that is often used in distance education) for distance education in asynchronous computer-based communications—minus any sort of conversation (Lewis 68).

What this means is that a physically embodied self cannot exist in a distance education classroom, and this presents an interesting problem for any teacher who wishes her students to engage in multilayered peer response practices—such as what Mfixx3, Cassia, and company did. While one can make the argument, as many supporters of distance education do, that distance education is allowing students to attend school that perhaps couldn't before, it becomes more difficult in light of the research in chapter five to say that they do equivalent work in distance education classes. Students in a distance education class dominated by asynchronous computer-based instruction may get some interaction with other selves, be they teachers or peers, but it is unlikely that they will be able to draw upon the same sort of social and linguistic resources that students in a class like Pam Oliver's would. In a sense the full expression of their selves, and most importantly their ability to interact with other selves, would be in a sense stunted. Ultimately, I'm not arguing against distance education period; I am only saying that we need to acknowledge that with distance education there may come certain losses—losses associated with the selves of students and their home languages.

I am also arguing for a conception of peer response in which teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders in education acknowledge the way in which computer literacy is, like print-based literacy, enmeshed in a web of oral discursive practices. In chapter five, I showed the contours of this web—these layers of competencies in a particular setting. I now want to extend my argument just a little bit; I want to argue for a conception of multilayered literacies as a productive way of thinking about peer revision period.

If we think of computer-based literacies, and CMC and Computer-assisted peer response, as being multilayered literate activities we resist distorting what happens when students work together using computers as a, but not *the*, medium for communication. The students in Pam Oliver's class spoke, wrote, and typed their way through peer response, and to remove any of these competencies would have blunted the students' experiences of peer response. Students need textual traces of their work, and many prefer electronic traces, but they also need to have access to talk about writing—at least this was the case in Pam's class.

What I'm asking for from the wider field is this: that we think about all the ways that students come to learn how to engage in peer response and other multilayered literate activities. Conceiving of peer response as a multilayered literate activity allows us to not artificially separate out linguistic experiences and competencies that are, and must be, linked; however, at the same idea the metaphor of layered literacies allows us to think of some of the important differences between the competencies.

The metaphor I'm pushing (I guess I'm a metaphor pusher) is one in which we can think of literacies not in terms of a hierarchy (literacy vs. illiteracy) or separate

discrete categories (computer vs. textual literacy), but in terms of the ground that we walk on. The ground that we tread on is made of layers of rock and dirt covered by a thin veneer of vegetation, and this layer of plant life is slowly, and constantly, working itself back into the belly of the earth. There are of course layers of our soil (bedrock, subsoil, and soil), but ultimately all of these layers make up one thing: the ground on which we rest.

The literate foundation on which computer-aided peer response rests is analogous to the ground. It is layers of talk, writing, and electronic text, and walking on this ground are the selves that students perform. These selves need to have access to all layers of literacy, but particularly to the layer of talk that they move across. To remove talk from peer response is to make the ground of peer response unstable, and maybe even dangerous.

Reconfiguring Literacy: Layers of Literacy—Layers of Politics

At this point I want to close with a short meditation about the possibilities of multilayered literate practice in a larger sense. While the multilayered literate activity at the heart of my work here is computer-aided peer response, I think that the work I've done has something to say about the larger issue of literacy in general. And while I don't want to wallow in questions of literacy that are beyond the scope of this text, I do want to say a little something about the way that my research might have something to say—no matter how provisional—about the shape of literacies to come.

The acquisition of literacy has traditionally been read in terms of exposure to literacy and literate practices. For me, this initially involved doing nothing but breathing

in the air of my house—which was heavy with the dusty and particular scent of books. My parents modeled literacy to me (I had both Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer read to me before I was six), and I distinctly remember at four or five insisting to my parents that they let “me read” my favorite book, *The Color Kittens*, to them. Clearly, I was one of the lucky children who came into my first year of school with wide exposure to literate practices.

However, not all children are so lucky. In fact, if you want to believe some folks who see an on-going literacy crisis in our nation, you might think that few if any children get any exposure to books and reading prior to school. According to Edward Ziegler in his foreword to phonics-maven Rudolf Flesch’s book *Why Johnny Can’t Read and What You Can Do About It*, “Some 27 million American adults are functionally illiterate, and 45 million more are marginally literate” (viii). Even if you are, like me, suspicious of such statistics (Flesch gives no citation) you might be given pause when a calmer and more reliable scholar like Carl Kaestle writes that while maybe only one million people are illiterate, at least 20 to 30 percent of the population “has difficulty coping with common reading tasks and materials” (128). What are we to do about our literacy problem, and do computers provide us with a way of addressing the problems of low-literacy?

To answer this question it’s important that we understand the traditional response to the question of how to combat low-literacy and illiteracy. Over the course of the last 20 or so years, there has (as Tom Newkirk once told a class I was in) been an ongoing war in which opponents shoot at each other with “live ammo.” I’m referring to the whole language vs. phonics debate/war. The Pro-phonics movement, represented by writers like

Rudolf Flesch and commercial concerns like DISTAR, believe that students must acquire literacy through learning the sound system of the language and learning to sound out (via recognition of vowels, consonants, and blends) words. According to Flesch there are five steps:

Step One: The five short vowels and all consonants spelled by single letters.

Step Two: Consonants and consonant combinations spelled with two or three letters.

Step Three: Vowels and vowel combinations spelled with two or three letters.

Step Four: The five long vowels.

Step Five: Irregular spellings. (27)

This seems like a simple and direct way to help students gain access to literacy, and it is.

However, it is only (for most teachers) only part of the solution.

Many teachers feel that a whole language approach is a more appropriate way to approach language acquisition. As Kenneth Goodman puts it in "Who's Afraid of Whole Language? Politics, Paradigms, Pedagogy, and the Press,"

Whole language integrates scientific knowledge and an understanding of how humans use language to make sense—to express and to comprehend meaning in both oral and written language. It is built on a respect for what young learners have already accomplished in their use of oral language and their awareness of written language when they come to school. (3)

Clearly, there is little agreement about the teaching of students to acquire language; although I imagine that many teachers teach young children to read in the way my mother did during her 20 plus years as a first grade and Chapter One reading teacher: by combining phonics and whole language instruction. That said, I think that there still is considerable debate over the whole-language vs. phonics issue, and I think that the emerging computer literacy of the late 20th and early 21st centuries complicates this debate.

The current notions of literacy acquisition are complicated by issues that swirl around computer-based literacy, what Stephen Bernhardt calls “the texture of print on screens” (151). This is the literacy that I spoke of at length in chapter two, and rather than rehash my arguments here, I want to make two general points about current conceptions of computer-based literacy. One is that current conceptions of computer-based literacies emphasize the importance that visual signs, other than alphabetic literacy, play in decoding computer texts. The other point is one that comes to us via the work of Richard and Cynthia Selfe: that part of the work of teaching computer-based literacy is to help students critically explore the semiotic/political world of computer software, interfaces, and computer culture, so that they realize that the world of computers is often in cahoots with “corporate culture and the values of professionalism” (486).

The danger here to young readers, and to literacy education in general, is substantial. Part of an emerging literacy of computers and computer use has to account for the way in which computers replicate and affirm the unfair power structures of our culture. Part of literacy work in the new millennium will have to be work aimed at making students aware of the semiotic values encoded in computers, computer software, and computer use. And in this project, the Phonics vs. whole language debates seem less and less important as we enter into what George Landow tells us is the hypermedia age, or what Michael Joyce calls “the late age of print” (*Of Two Minds: Hypertext Pedagogy and Poetics*, 3). The conflating of the visual and the textual means that phonics and whole language could ultimately be only part of the discussion of literacy acquisition.

This brings me to the point that I want to make: definitions of literacy are further complicated by traditional and electronic literacies connections to speech. My contention

is that not merely do we need both mediums, oral and electronic, to do the work of peer response in a classroom; we need to think of the “social work” that happens in both environments, which happens primarily through speech (Dyson 12). According to Ann Dyson, social work is the work that she observed young students in a class she studied doing around the work of writing; social work involved students using their writing to “maintain and manipulate their relationship with peers” (12). For Dyson’s children this sort of work is more literal, with students becoming characters in the works themselves, but there is a key point to Dyson’s idea of social work that I want to use. Dyson says that when social work happens in a class the writing of students becomes “more embedded in their imagined, experience, and ongoing social worlds—in their ‘multiple worlds’” (12).

These multiple social worlds are the worlds of multilayered literacy, and they are what make up in large part Goffman’s front region—the region where performances of the self occur (Gray-Rosendale 71). Thus, not only do I want to talk about a definition of literacy that includes oral discourse, I want this definition to include one of the most important effects of oral discourse: the fact that oral discourse, and its fluid conventions, provide the psychic space for a variety of performances of the self. The sort of performances that Mfixx3, Cassia, Cornelius, Neo, Jdogg125, and Veruca all excelled at in Pam Oliver’s class.

Ultimately, my definition of multilayered literacy is a literacy that accounts not just for multiple mediums (oral, handwritten, and electronic) but also for multiple selves in multiple social settings. Multilayered literate practice cannot be defined solely by the technologies it avails itself upon—it has to be defined by the moment to moment play of

selves that make up computer-aided peer response and any other multilayered literate activity.

A Glimpse of the Future: The Look and Feel of Multilayered Literate Practice

That said, I have a small parting sample of what this process might look like-- what an enactment (but not the enactment) of multilayered literacies might look like. What I'm about to paint is a picture of what happened later on the day that Mfixx3 and Cassia did their work on March 21st. I want to take you back to the last few minutes of our time in the lab, then magically, through the use of rhetoric and the written word, teleport you to the small, high ceilinged classroom in UNHM.

In the last ten minutes of our time in the lab, I asked students if they would take some time and fill out an online CAT that I had put up on the web for them to fill out. This was a short CAT that asked students two basic questions. The first one was, "What do you do when you give response to a peer—generally?" and the second one was "What did you learn about your piece today?" The students filled out the CAT from, and then took a ten minute break, and since the results of the CAT were emailed to me, I decided to take a break with the students—grabbing a Coke from the vending machines and chatting with Pam about dogs, her daughter, and her upcoming conference paper on Charles Chestnut.

When we reconvened after our break, I asked everyone if we could spend about ten or fifteen minutes talking about the work that we just did, and specifically how the students saw their work in terms of interacting with other selves.

After a couple of minutes of idle banter and Monty Python references, we started class. I brought out a handout of all the performances of self I was coding for, a sample

of a transcript of an oral peer response session, and then I talked about the “stuff” I had just given the students. After about a three-minute monologue I spat out a rather ungainly question that was something like, “How do you think your idea of who you are, and who your partner in peer response is, affects peer response?”

There was a thunderous silence.

I let the silence hang for a moment, and rephrased slightly; saying something like, “Okay . . .um, does what you know about another person affect the way that you interact with them during peer response, like the stuff we just did in the lab?”

There were a few more awkward moments of silence, then a student named Jdogg125 said something about how working with another person “got him to write,” and how he found that you had to “watch where you step” at certain times in a conversation so as not to offend your peer response partner. After this, Mfixx3 chimed in and said that working with other people “reminds me of who my audience is.”

At this point more people joined the fray, with Cassia talking about how she needed written comments to figure out what was said, Mfixx3 adding that peer review was helpful because, “when you write you sometimes forget other people are going to be reading it,” and Jdogg125 ended our conversation (at least how I remember it) by saying something about the responsibility of engaging in oral peer response. Jdogg125 said that when doing peer response work, “You’ve got to keep feeding them.”

At around this point, I moved from the front of the class, back to my seat next to the window and let Pam do her thing. It seemed to me, in the moment, that we had a good discussion, but that nothing earth shaking had been said by the students and, more particularly, by me.

I now think that I was wrong.

I now realize that there was a certain pattern to our work that night. The students did their peer response work in the lab—using computers and their own voices to dance through a series of selves, and, in the dance, they also responded to their peers' papers. Next, they reviewed their performances via an email CAT. Then we talked about the work that had happened that night, but at a greater level of abstraction. With me putting forth my words, my research, and then adapting my words to the language that we all had to share in class.

Finally, and this is the really important part, I woke up the next day and read what the students had written about our work together, and interestingly enough what the students had said about their work together both mirrored and slightly differed from what they said during our discussion. Jdogg125 said in his CAT that, he offered his "opinion about how I liked/disliked the paper, paying careful attention to not offer direct insults by watching body language" (Jdogg125, "CAT"). It seems to me that this sentiment mirrored what he said about watching "where you step" when working with someone else, but actually his response was more elaborated in discussion.

With the other students it was much the same: their CATs were in some way a rehearsal for what they said during our brief discussion. But what was interesting for me was to look at the two competencies side by side.

You see, as I read Jdogg125's response to my CAT (as well as the responses written by other students) I was looking at my notes from the class discussion, which included my notes on what the students had said. I was reading page and screen simultaneously, and I was reading work that students had produced by drawing on oral

and electronic competencies. And, this is important, I was making this realization in a moment of reflection about student reflection.

In a sense I was swimming in my thoughts, the performed selves of Pam's students, and layers of literacy. I was doing the work that I hoped Pam's students would be able to do, and I was doing that work because of Pam's students. Ultimately, the man who wanted to research the performance of selves in computer-aided peer response, and its attendant multilayered literacy, had to do this with the help of others. My research, life, and sense of self were implicated not only in my work in Pam's class, but in the work that Pam's class did: the multilayered literate work of computer-aided peer response.

List of Works Cited

- Alexander, Bryan and James Crowley. "E-COMP: A Few Words About Teaching Writing with Computers." *The Journal* 25.2 (September 1997): 66-67. EBSCO host. Online. UNH Library Server. 1 April 1998.
- Angelo, Thomas and Patricia Cross. *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. New York, NY: Jossey-Bass, 1994.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- . "The Problem of Speech Genres." *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: UT Press, 1996.
- Ballenger, Bruce. *The Curious Researcher: A Guide To Writing Research Papers*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.
- Bernhardt, Stephen A. "The Shape of Text to Come: The Texture of Print on Screens." College Composition and Communication. 44 (May 1993): 151-175.
- Berry, Cicely. *Voice and the Actor*. New York: Collier Books, 1973.
- Bizzell, Patricia. *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992.
- Bleich, David. *Know and Tell: A Writing Pedagogy of Disclosure, Genre, and Membership*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998.
- Bokser, Julie A. "'Am I Really a Peer?' Dilemmas of Collaboration for the Tutor with Work Experience." *The Writing Lab Newsletter* 24.9 (May 2000): 5-9.
- Branaman, Ann. "Goffman's Social Theory." *The Goffman Reader*. Eds. Charles Lemert and Ann Branaman. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997. xiv-xliii.
- Brooke, Robert, Ruth Mirtz, and Rick Evans. *Small Groups in Writing Workshops*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1994.

- Brown, Jane Lightcap. "Emphasizing the 'What If?' of Revision: Serial Collaboration and Quasi-Hypertext." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 24.1 (Feb. 1997): 34-41.
- Bruffee, Kenneth. "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind.'" *College English* 46.7 (Nov. 1984): 635-652.
- . *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence and the Authority of Knowledge*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993
- . "Collaborative Learning: Some Practical Models." *College English* 34.5 (Feb. 1973): 634-643.
- . "Social Construction, Language and the Authority of Knowledge: A Bibliographic Essay." *Longman Resources for Instructors Teaching in Progress: Theories, Practices, and Scenarios*. Ed. Josephine Koster Tarvers. New York: Longman, 1998.
- . "The Way Out: A Critical Survey of Innovations in College Teaching, With Specific Reference to the December 1971 Issue of *College English*." *College English* 33.4 (Jan. 1972): 457-470.
- Burkowski, Gayle Frances. *A Description of Peer Interaction and Avoidance of Conflict in a First-Year College Composition Class Writing on Computers*. An Unpublished Dissertation, 1995.
- Cassia. "Biography." Email sent to author. 7 February 2001.
- . Personal Interview. 24 March 2001.
- . "Research Essay." 21 March 2001.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. Eds. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. Boston, MA: Bedford Books, 1990. 1232-1245.
- Connors, Robert J. *Composition-Rhetoric Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*. Pittsburgh, P.A.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997.
- Cornell, Cynthia and Robert Newton. "Collaborative Revision on a Computer." Paper Presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. EDRS (1988): ED 295 155, grids 1-27.
- Crenshaw, Carrie. "Resisting Whiteness' Rhetorical Silence." Western Journal of Communication 61.3 (Summer 1997): 253-279. EBSCO host. Online. UNH Library Server. 13 March 2001.

- Crump, Eric. "How Many Technoprovocateurs Does It Take to Create Intersivity?" *Taking Flight With OWLs: Examining Electronic Writing Center Work*. Eds. James A Inman and Donna N. Sewell. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2000.
- Cyganowski, Carol Klimick. "The Computer Classroom and Collaborative Learning: The Impact on Student Writers." *Computers and Community: Teaching Composition in the Twenty-first Century*. Ed. Carolyn Handa. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1990. 68-88.
- Danis, Francine. "Weaving the Web of Meaning: Interaction Patterns in Peer-Response Groups." Paper from the 1982 meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. EDRS (1993): ED 214 202, grids 1-14.
- Dave. "Biography." Christopher Dean's English 401 Homepage. <<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~cwdean/group6.html>> (14 May 1998).
- . Personal Interview. 20 April 1998.
- . "Researching On the Internet." The Washington State University On-line Writing Lab Writer's Exchange. <<http://owl.wsu.edu/shareview.asp?responding=n&subid=1296>> (April 21 1998).
- Day, Michael and Trent Batson. "The Network-based Writing Classroom: The ENFI Idea." *Computer Mediated Communication and the Online Writing Classroom Volume Two: Higher Education*. Eds. Marie Collins and Zane Berge. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1995. 25-46. Kairos 1.2. (11 June 2001) Online. 1 October, 2000 <<http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/1.2/coverweb/cmcmday.html>>.
- De Guerrero, María C.M. and Olga S. Villamil. "Activating the ZPD: Mutual Scaffolding in L2 Peer Revision." *The Modern Language Journal*. 84.1 (March 2000): 51-68.
- Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.
- DiPardo, Anne and Sarah Warshauer Freedman. "Technical Report Number Four. Historical Overview: Groups in the Writing Classroom." Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Writing, 1987. EDRS (1987): ED 282 229, grids 1-21.
- Dyson, Anne Haas. *Social Worlds of Children Learning to Write in an Urban Primary School*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1993.
- Ede, Lisa and Andrea Lunsford. *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1990.
- Elbow, Peter. *Writing Without Teachers*. New York: The Oxford UP, 1998.

- . *Sharing and Responding*. New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1989.
- and Pat Belanoff *A Community of Writers: A Workshop Course in Writing*. New York, New York: McGraw Hill, 2000.
- Eldred, Janet Carey and Gail E. Hawisher. "Researching Electronic Networks." Written Communication 12.3 (July 1995): 330-359. EBSCO host. Online. UNH Library Server. 11 November 1998.
- Emig, Janet A. *The Web of Meaning: Essays on Writing, Teaching, Learning and Thinking*. Eds. Dixie Goswami and Maureen Butler. Montclair, N.J.: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1983.
- English, Joel. "MOO-based Metacognition: Incorporating Online and Offline Reflection into the Writing Process" *Kairos* 3.1 (1998). Online. 13 November 2000 <<http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/3.1/features/english/bridge.html>>.
- Faigley, Lester, Roger D. Cherry, David A. Jolliffe, and Anna M. Skinner. *Assessing Writers' Knowledge and Processes of Composing*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1985.
- . *Fragments of Rationality*. Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press, 1992.
- . "Nonacademic Writing: The Social Perspective." *Writing in Nonacademic Settings*. Eds. Less Odell and Dixie Goswami. New York: Guilford Press, 1985. 231-340.
- Faulkner, Susan Lossen. *Computers and Freshman Composition Instruction: A Study of Faculty Preparation and Classroom Performance*. Unpublished Dissertation, 1992.
- Fey, Marion Harris. "Finding Voice Through Computer Communication: A New Venue for Collaboration." *Journal of Advanced Composition*. 14.1 (Winter 1994): 221-238.
- . "Reader Response, Collaborative Writing, and Computer Networking." Paper from the 1993 meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. EDRS (1993): ED 364 875, grids 1-22.
- . "Sharing Writing Through Computer Networking." Reading and Writing Quarterly 13.4 (September 1997): 383-388. EBSCO host. Online. UNH Library Server. 1 April 1998.
- Flesch, Rudolf Franz. *Why Johnny Can't Read : And What You Can Do About It*. New York: HarperCollins, 1986.

- Flower, Linda. "The Construction of Purpose in Writing and Reading." *College English* 50.5 (Sept. 1988): 528-550.
- Freedman, Sarah Warshauer. "Peer Response Groups in Two Ninth-Grade Classrooms, Technical Report No. 12." Center for the Study of Writing. EDRS (Oct. 1987): ED 287 171, grids 1-33.
- Gaillett, Lynée Lewis. "A Historical Perspective on Collaborative Learning." *Journal of Advanced Composition*. 14.1 (Winter 1994): 93-110. EBSCOhost. Online. UNH Library Server. 22 October 2000.
- Gere, Anne Ruggles. *Writing Groups: History, Theory and Implications*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987.
- and Robert D. Abbott. "Talking About Writing: The Language of Writing Groups." *Research in the Teaching of Writing* 19.4 (Dec. 1985): 362-381.
- Gillam, Alice, Susan Callaway, Katherine Hennessey Wikoff. "The Role of Authority and the Authority of Roles in Peer Writing Tutorials." *Journal of Teaching Writing* 12.2 (1994): 161-198.
- Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self In Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959.
- . "Interaction Ritual." *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behavior*. Erving Goffman. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967. 47-98.
- Gradin, Sherrie L. *Romancing Rhetorics: Social Expressivist Perspectives On The Teaching of Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 1995.
- Gray-Rosendale, Laura. *Rethinking Basic Writing: Exploring Identity, Politics, and Community in Interaction*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2000.
- Grow, Gerald. "Movies of the Mind." Online.
<<http://www.wvu.edu/~lawfac/jelkins/writeshop/movie.html>> 7 February 2001.
- Haas, Christina and Christine M. Neuwirth. "Writing the Technology that Writes Us: Research on Literacy and the Shape of Technology." *Literacy and Computers: The Complications of Teaching and Learning with Technology*. Eds. Cynthia Selfe and Susan Hilligoss. New York: MLA, 1994. 319-335.
- Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 149-81. Online.

<<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html> > (3 March 2000). Nodes 149-181.

- Hariston, Maxine. "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing." *College Composition and Communication*. 33.1 (1982): 76-88.
- Hawisher, Gail, Paul LeBlanc, Charles Moran, and Cynthia L. Selfe. *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979-1994: A History*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1996.
- . "The Effects of Word Processing on the Revision Strategies of College Students." Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. EDRS (April 1986): ED 268 546, grids 1-31.
- Healy, David. "Tutorial Role Conflict in the Writing Center." *The Writing Center Journal* 11.2 (Spr.-Sum. 1991): 41-50.
- Helen. "Biography." Christopher Dean's English 401 Homepage. <<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~cwdean/group8.html>> (27 November 1998).
- . "Did Lyndon Johnson Really Kill JFK." Final Draft of Research Paper. 13 May 1998.
- . Personal Interview. 20 April 1998.
- . "Response to 'Fridge'." Washington State University's On-line Writing Lab Writer's Exchange. <<http://owl.wsu.edu/shareview.asp?responding=n&subid=1412> > (4 May 1998).
- Hendrickson, Aletha S. "The Intimidation of Cyberspace: From Cyberphobe to Cybermaster." 1 Dec. 1996. Online. Rhetnet. Internet. 30 November 1997. Available: <<http://dewey.lc.missouri.edu/rhetnet/rdc/hendrickson.html>>
- Herrmann, Andrea. "Teaching Writing with Peer Response Groups." ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. EDRS (May 1989): ED 307 616, grids 1-5.
- Hewett, Beth. *The Characteristics and Effects of Oral and Computer-Mediated Peer Group Talk on the Argumentative Writing Process*. An Unpublished Dissertation, 1998.
- Huang, Su-Yueh. "A Study of Verbal Interaction in Discussion Groups in a Writing Class." Paper from the 1996 Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Language Center Seminar. EDRS (1996): ED 399 802, grids 1-24.

- Hutchby, Ian and Robin Wooffitt. *Conversation Analysis*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998.
- Hyland, Fiona. "ESL Writers and Feedback: Giving More Autonomy to Students." *Language Teaching Research*. 4.1 (January 2000): 33-54.
- Jdogg125. "CAT." Email sent to author. 21 March 2001.
- Johnson, Judith and Stephen J. Romanoff. "Higher Education Residential Learning Communities: What are the Implications for Student Success." *College Student Journal*. 33.3 (Sept. 1999): 385-399. EBSCOhost. Online. UNH Library Server. 15 June 2001.
- Joyce, Michael. Of Two Minds Hypertext Pedagogy and Poetics. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1998.
- Kaestle, Carl F. *Literacy in the United States : Readers and Reading Since 1880*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1993.
- Kleine, Michael. "What Freshman Say—and Might Say—to Each Other About Their Own Writing." *Journal of Teaching Writing*. 4.2 (Fall 1985): 216-233.
- Knapp, Stephen F. A Collaborative Research Report: The Status of Higher Education in New Hampshire. August 1997. Online. The New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies Webpage. Internet. 30 November 1998. Available: <http://www.unh.edu/nhcpps/highed/highed.html#nontrad>.
- Kress, Gunther. "Visual and Verbal Modes of Representation in Electronically Mediated Communication: the Potentials of New Forms of Text." *Page to Screen: Taking Literacy into the Electronic Era*. Ed. Ilana Snyder. New York: Routledge, 1998. 53-79.
- Kurth, Ruth J. "Using Word Processing to Enhance Revision Strategies During Student Composing." Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. EDRS (April 1986): ED 277 049, grids 1-22.
- LaCapra, Dominick. "From What Subject Position(s) Should One Address the Politics of Research?" *The Politics of Research*. Eds. E. Ann Kaplan and George Levine. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1997. 59-68.
- Lakoff, Robin. *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Octagon Books, 1976.
- Landow, George P. *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1997.

- Lawrence, Sandra M. and Elizabeth Sommers. "From the Park Bench to the (Writing) Workshop Table: Encouraging Collaboration Among Inexperienced Writers." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*. 23.2 (May 1996): 101-111.
- Leverenz, Carrie Shively. "Peer Response in the Multi-cultural Composition Classroom: Dissensus—A Dream (Deferred)" *The Journal of Advanced Composition*. 14.1. (Winter 1994): 167-185.
- Levine, Tamar, Smadar Donitsa-Schmidt, and Michael Zeller Mayer. "Student Perceptions of Classroom Climate in a Communicative and Computer-Supported Approach to Writing Instruction." *Journal of Research and Development in Education*. 29.2 (Winter 1996): 94-103.
- Lewis, Laurie, Kyle Snow, Elizabeth Farris Westat. *Distance Education at Postsecondary Education Institutions: 1997-98*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Washington: U.S. Department of Education, 1999.
- Maltz, Daniel N. and Ruth A. Borker. "A Cultural Approach to Male-Female Miscommunication." *Language and Gender: A Reader*. Ed. Jennifer Coates. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998. 417-434
- McCarthy, Lucille and Stephen Fishman. "A Text for Many Voices: Representing Diversity in Reports of Naturalistic Research." *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literature*. Eds. Peter Mortensen and Gesa Kirsch. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1996. 155-176.
- Mfixx3. "Biography." Email sent to author. 7 February 2001.
- . Personal Interview. 12 April 2001.
- . "Comments on Cassia's Paper." 21 March 2001.
- Montessori, Maria. *The Montessori method*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes and Company, 1912.
- Murray, Donald. *A Writer Teachers Writing—Second Edition*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.
- Neo. "Biography." Email sent to author. 7 February 2001.
- . "My Collage." Final draft. *Portfolio*. 9 May 2001.
- . "Drinking: A Love Story." First Draft. *Portfolio*. 9 May 2001.
- . "My Portfolio." *Portfolio*. 9 May 2001.

- Newburger, Eric C. "Computer Use in the United States: Population Characteristics." U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration. Washington: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999.
- Newkirk, Thomas. *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1997.
- . "Direction and Misdirection in Peer Response." *College Composition and Communication*. 35.3 (October 1984): 300-311.
- . "Seduction and Betrayal in Qualitative Research." *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literature*. Eds. Peter Mortensen and Gesa Kirsch. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1996. 3-16.
- North, Stephen. "Writing Center Research: Testing Our Assumptions." *Writing Centers: Theory and Administration*, Ed. Gary A. Olson. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1984. 24-35.
- Nystrand, Martin and Deborah Brandt. "Response to Writing as a Context for Learning to Write." *Writing and Response Theory, Practice and Research*. Ed. Chris M. Anson. Urbana, ILL: NCTE, 1989. EDRS (1989): ED 303 826, grids 210-231.
- Oliver, Pamela. Personal Interview. 17 March 2001.
- Owston, Ronald, Sharon Murphy and Herbert H. Wideman. "Technical Report 91-3. Effects of Word Processing on Student Writing in a High Computer Access Environment." York, Ontario: Center for the Study of Computers in Education, 1991. EDRS (1991): ED 341 365, grids 1-52.
- Perl, Sondra and Nancy Wilson. *Through Teacher' Eyes: Portraits of Writing Teachers at Work*. Portland, ME: Calendar Island Publishers, 1998.
- Rachel. "Biography." Christopher Dean's English 401 Homepage. <<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~cwdean/group1.html>> (14 May 1998).
- . "Missing Heritage: The Penobscots." Final Draft of Research Paper. 11 May 1998. 1-11.
- . "Response to 'Computers in Early Childhood Education.'" Washington State University's On-line Writing Lab Writer's Exchange. <<http://owl.wsu.edu/shareview.asp?responding=n&subid=1412> > (4 May 1998).
- . Personal Interview. 22 April 1998.
- Ray, Ruth. "Composition form the Teacher-Research Point of View" *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*. Eds. Gesa Kirsch and Patricia A. Sullivan. Carbondale, ILL: Southern Illinois UP, 1992. 172-189.

- Rice, Richard, Tiffany Werth, Jean Frankland, and Chris Dean. "Teaching Expanded Concepts of Literacy Through Multi-Geographic Virtual Communities." Conference Presentation at the 1998 OCCR Conference. <<http://www.bsu.edu/classes/rice/Presents/OCCR/abstract.htm>> (14 May 1998).
- Rothstein-Vandergriff, Joan and Joan Gilson. "Collaboration with Basic Writers in the Composition Classroom." Paper from the 1988 meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. EDRS (1988): ED 294 220, grids 1-16.
- Runciman, Lex. "Defining Ourselves: Do We Really Want to Use the Word Tutor?" *The Writing Center Journal* 11.1 (Fall/Winter 1990): 27-34.
- Selfe, Cinthia. "Computers in English Departments: The Rhetoric of Techno/Power." Computers and Writing: Theory Research, Practice. Eds. Deborah H. Holdstein and Cynthia L. Selfe. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1990. 95-103.
- . "Redefining Literacy: The Multilayered Grammars of Computers." Critical Perspectives On Computers and Composition Instruction. Ed. Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe. New York: Teachers College Press, 1989. 3-15.
- and Richard J. Selfe Jr. "The Politics of the Interface: Power and Its Exercise in Electronic Contact Zones." College Composition and Communication. 45 (December 1994): 480-502.
- Shor, Ira. *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*. Chicago, ILL: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Skubikowski, Kathleen and John Elder. "Computers and the Social Contexts of Writing." *Computers and Community Teaching Composition in the Twenty-first Century*. Ed. Carolyn Handa. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1990. 89-105.
- Smith, Richard and Pamela Curtin. "Children, Computers and Life Online: Education in a Cyber-world." *Page to Screen: Taking Literacy Into the Electronic Era*. Ed. Ilana Snyder. New York: Routledge, 1998. 211-233.
- Sommers, Elizabeth, and Sandra Lawrence. "Women's Ways of Talking in Teacher-Directed and Student-Directed Peer Response Groups." *Linguistics and Education An International Research Journal*. 4.1 (1992): 1-36.
- Spear, Karen. *Sharing Writing: Peer Response Groups in English Classes*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 1988.

- Sperling, Melanie. "Writing Tasks and Roles Students Play: The Case of Learning to Write in an Inner City Classroom." Paper Presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. EDRS (1994): ED 374 174, grids 1-59.
- Spigelman, Candace. "Habits of Mind: Historical Configurations of Textual Ownership in Peer Writing Groups." *College Composition and Communication* 49.2 (May 1998): 234-255
- Spitzer, Michael. "Computer Conferencing: An Emerging Technology." *Critical Perspectives on Computers and Composition Instruction*. Eds. Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe. New York: Teachers College Press, 1989. 187-200.
- St. John, Eric. "Roaring Up From Behind." *Black Issues in Higher Education*. 17.12 (3 Aug. 2000): 26-31. EBSCOhost. Online. UNH Library Server. 15 June 2001.
- Straub, Richard. "The Concept of Control in Teacher Response." *College Composition and Communication* 47.2 (May 1996): 223-51.
- Strickland, James. *From Disk to Hard Copy: Teaching Writing With Computers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1997.
- Styslinger, Mary E. "Mars and Venus in My Classroom: Men Go To Their Caves and Women Talk during Peer Revision." *The English Journal* 88.3 (Jan. 1999): 50-56.
- Suffredini, Jenny. "Defining the Tutor's role and Responsibilities in the Triangular Relationship of Student, Professor, and Tutor." *The Writing Lab Newsletter* 22.5 (Jan. 1998): 5-9.
- Sullivan, Patricia A. "Feminism and Methodology in Composition Studies." *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*. Eds. Gesa Kirsch and Patricia A. Sullivan. Carbondale, ILL: Southern Illinois UP, 1992. 37-61.
- . "Ethnography and the Problem of the 'Other.'" *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literature*. Eds. Peter Mortensen and Gesa Kirsch. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1996. 97-114.
- Tannacito, Terry Lynn. *Electronic Peer Response Groups: Cases Studies of Computer-Mediated Communication in a Composition Course*. Diss. Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1998. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1998. 9912826.
- Tannen, Deborah. *Gender and Discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Ten Have, Paul. *Doing Conversation Analysis: A Practical Guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 1999.

- Thayer, Paul B. "Retaining First Generation and Low Income Students." *Opportunity Outlook: A Journal of the Council for Opportunity in Education*. (May 2000): 2-8. EBSCOhost. Online. UNH Library Server. 15 June 2001.
- Tipper, Margaret and Martin Malone. "Conflicting Demands in Writing Response Groups." *The Writing Instructor* 14.2 (Winter 1995): 77-88.
- Trimbur, Jonathan. "Collaborative Learning and Teaching Writing." *Perspectives on Research and Scholarship in Composition*. Eds. Mc Clelland and Donovan. New York: MLA, 1985. 602-16.
- . "Peer Tutoring: A Contradiction in Terms?" *The Writing Center Journal* 7.2 (Spring/Summer 1987): 21-28.
- Turkle, Sherry. "Foreword." *High Wired: On the Design, Use, and Theory of Educational MOOs*. Eds. Cynthia Haynes and Jan Rune Holmevik. Ann Arbor, MI: UP of Michigan, 1998. ix-xix.
- Tyack, David and Larry Cuban. *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- UNHM General Information. Online. <<http://www.unh.edu/unhm/information.html>> 5 March 2001.
- United States. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. *The Condition of Education, 2001*. Washington: NCES, 2001.
- Varone, Sandy. "Voices from the Computer Classroom: Novice Writers and Peer Response to Writing." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*. 23.3 (Oct. 1996): 213-218.
- Warren Email Interview. 26 January 2001.
- Whitley, Bernard E., Jr. "Gender Differences in Computer-Related Attitudes and Behavior: A Meta-Analysis." *Computers in Human Behavior* 13.1 (January 1997): 1-22.
- Williams, Cassia. "Biography." Email sent to author. 7 February 2001.
- Winnicott, D.W. *Home is Where We Start From*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1986.

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Office of Sponsored Research
 Service Building
 51 College Road
 Durham, New Hampshire 03824-3585
 (603) 862-3564 FAX

LAST NAME	Dean	FIRST NAME	Christopher
DEPT	UNH Writing Center and WAC Program - Hamilton Smith	APP'L DATE	11/21/2000
		IRB #	2434
OFF-CAMPUS ADDRESS (if applicable)	UNH Writing Center and WAC Program Hamilton Smith Hall, Room 7	REVIEW LEVEL	EXP
		DATE OF NOTICE	11/22/2000
PROJECT TITLE	The Multilayered Literacies of Computer Mediated Peer Response		

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research has reviewed the protocol for your project as Expedited as described in Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46, Subsection 46.110 (b) (1), category 7.

Approval is granted for one year from the approval date above. At the end of the approval period you will be asked to submit a project report with regard to the involvement of human subjects. If your project is still active, you may apply for extension of IRB approval through this office.

The protection of human subjects in your study is an ongoing process for which you hold primary responsibility. In receiving IRB approval for your protocol, you agree to conduct the project in accordance with the ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects in research, as described in the following three reports: Belmont Report; Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46; and UNH's Multiple Project Assurance of Compliance. The full text of these documents is available on the OSR information server at http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/Regulatory_Compliance.html and by request from the Office of Sponsored Research.

Changes in your protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to their implementation. If you have questions or concerns about your project or this approval, please feel free to contact me directly at 862-2003.

Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this project. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,



Kathryn B. Cataneo
 Executive Director
 Office of Sponsored Research

cc: Thomas Newkirk, English Department

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Office of Sponsored Research
 Service Building
 51 College Road
 Durham, New Hampshire 03824-3585
 (603) 862-3564 FAX

PI LAST NAME Dean PI FIRST NAME Christopher

CO-INVEST or Thomas Newkirk, English Department
 ADVISOR

DEPT UNH Writing Center and WAC Program - Hamilton APPROVAL EXPIR. DATE 11/21/2001

OFF-CAMPUS UNH Writing Center and WAC Program IRB # 2434
 ADDRESS Hamilton Smith Hall, Room 7
 (if applicable)

REVIEW LEVEL EXP

TODAY'S DATE 1/26/2001

PROJECT TITLE The Multilayered Literacies of Computer Mediated Peer Response

SUBPROJECT OR INSTRUMENT TITLE: Research continuing with different instructor and class; extension of time of research beyond original request.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research has reviewed and approved your request for modification and/or addition to this protocol.

Approval for this protocol expires on the dated indicated above. At the end of the approval period you will be asked to submit a project report with regard to the involvement of human subjects. If your project is still active, you may apply for extension of IRB approval through this office.

The protection of human subjects in your study is an ongoing process for which you hold primary responsibility. **Changes in your protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to their implementation.** If you have questions or concerns about your project or this approval, please feel free to contact this office at 862-2003. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this project. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,


 Julie Simpson
 Regulatory Compliance Manager
 Office of Sponsored Research

cc: File

Modification entered:

1/26/2001

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Office of Sponsored Research
 Service Building
 51 College Road
 Durham, New Hampshire 03824-3585
 (603) 862-3564 FAX

LAST NAME	Dean	FIRST NAME	Christopher
DEPT	English - Hamilton Smith Hall	APP'L DATE	3/23/98
OFF-CAMPUS ADDRESS (if applicable)	67 Fifth Street #15 Dover, NH 03820	IRB #	1959
		REVIEW LEVEL	EXE
PROJECT TITLE	Do I Know You?		

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research has reviewed the protocol for your project as Exempt as described in Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46, Subsection 46.101 (b) (2), category 2 .

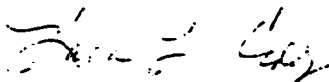
Approval is granted to conduct the project as described in your protocol. Changes in your protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to their implementation.

The protection of human subjects in your study is an ongoing process for which you hold primary responsibility. In receiving IRB approval for your protocol, you agree to conduct the project in accordance with the ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects in research, as described in the Belmont Report. The full text of the Belmont Report is available on the QSR information server at <http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/belmont.html> and by request from the Office of Sponsored Research.

There is no obligation for you to provide a report to the IRB upon project completion unless you experience any unusual or unanticipated results with regard to the participation of human subjects. Please report such events to this office promptly as they occur.

If you have questions or concerns about your project or this approval, please feel free to contact me directly at 862-2003. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this project. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,



Kara L. Eddy
 Regulatory Compliance Officer
 Office of Sponsored Research

cc: File

Tom Newtirk - English