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SOCIAL NETWORKING, THE WRITING PROCESS, AND COOPERATIVE
LEARNING: A THREE-STRATEGY APPROACH HELPING DEVELOPMENTAL
STUDENTS AND FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION STUDENTS PREWRITE

by

Brandi Leonard

A Dissertation

Submitted in the Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements of the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Major: Instruction & Curriculum Leadership

The University of Memphis

August 2012

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DEDICATION

To my family—

You have inspired me more than you will ever know. Thank you for being a constant reminder of the most important things in life.

Mari and Spencer, always remember, with Christ, nothing is impossible! I love you.

Maachah, I love you. Always.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is the author and finisher of my faith. I thank my family for putting up with long nights, frustrations, and set-backs during this long process. Without their patience, I would not have finished this degree. I thank my mother and father who always made me feel like a genius. I thank my Greater Shiloh church family, who has become an irreplaceable part of my life. Thank you for your prayers and love.

I thank my committee chair, Dr. Michael Grant, who tirelessly schooled me in the art of dissertation writing. Thank you, Dr. Grant, for making a difficult process seamless—even when it took me weeks, sometimes months, to complete my homework. Last, but not least, I thank my committee, Dr. Deborah Lowther, Dr. Trey Martindale, and Dr. Jerrie Scott, who have also guided me in this process. Your advice was extremely helpful.

ABSTRACT

Leonard, Brandi. EdD. The University of Memphis. August 2012. Social networking, the writing process, and cooperative learning: A three-strategy approach to helping developmental studies students and first-year composition students to prewrite. Major Professor: Michael M. Grant, PhD.

Students in developmental writing courses and first-year composition courses struggle with the writing process. Individual instructional strategies have been insufficient to engage these students or build their self-confidences for further writing courses. The purpose of this study was to understand how students perceive a combination of three strategies, social networking, the writing process, and cooperative learning may help students to be successful with the prewriting phase of the writing process. The three research questions were (1) what are students' perceptions of a social networking tool; (2) how do students perceive a social networking tool influences prewriting in cooperative groups; and (3) how do cooperative groups work together to prewrite? A combination of strategies together with a high level of student engagement may help to increase student success in developmental writing and first-year composition courses.

Nine students across four sections of writing courses agreed to participate in this qualitative inquiry. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews, social networking posts, observations, and a researcher-made handout, and data were analyzed using the constant comparative method. Three themes emerged: Students perceived *usefulness* related to using a social networking tool, their behaviors, and positive results. *Group interaction* reflected students' positive interdependence, individual accountability, group processing, social skills, and face-to-face interaction. Finally,

knowledge representation was evident as it encapsulated the participants' views on making their thinking visible and sharing ideas.

A discussion of the research questions integrated these findings. Students perceived a social networking tool to be valuable, beneficial to helping them learn, and an archive for their ideas. Students perceived a social networking tool to influence prewriting in cooperative groups by generating ideas, representing their contributions, and communications with group members. Finally, the participants' perceptions and observations revealed that working together in cooperative groups to prewrite reflected the five elements of cooperation. Implications for practice with writing instructions, limitations of the current study, and implications for further research about timeframes, participants, and challenges are provided.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Scope of the Problem

Currently, developmental writing is a high-risk course at MidSouth Community College (MSCC). Three hundred and thirty-five students enrolled in developmental studies writing (DSW 800) in the fall of 2010. Of that number of students enrolled in the course, the average GPA of the students entering the course was 2.09. The withdrawal rate for the course was 9.55%, and the overall failure rate was 42.39%. The total number of students who failed the course was 142 students out of 335 students who attempted the course.

The course was evaluated again in the following semester. The results were no better. With fewer students enrolled in the course, nearly the same number of students failed the course. Two hundred and eighty-six students attempted the course in the spring of 2011. The average GPA of students enrolled in the course was 1.91. The withdrawal rate nearly equaled the percentage of fall 2010 at 8.04%, and the total number of students who failed the course was one less than fall 2010 at 141 students. The statistics, however, do not report the number of students who repeated the course in spring 2011 after failing the course in fall 2010. Nonetheless, a logical assumption is that, of the 286 students enrolled in spring 2011, several of those students may have been repeating the course since DSW 800 is a gateway course, meaning that it is a prerequisite course for a number of college level general education courses at the community college and across the state school system. Similarly, former DSW 800 who pass to ENG 101, a freshman level composition course and the next writing course in the curriculum, sometimes find

themselves still struggling. Therefore, given the bleak results of the assessment report, administrators and faculty alike agree that effective interventions must be executed with expedience.

A governing body in the state determines a portion of funding for colleges and universities based on student performance via a state-mandated improvement act. As a part of a five-year initiative at MSCC, a student engagement survey was issued in the academic year 2010-2011. The survey measured responses in the following areas: active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners. Inasmuch, student engagement is important because students must accept a way of learning in order for a strategy to be successful (Hsuing, 2010; Munoz & Huser, 2008). Thus, student perception is a major factor in whether or not a strategy is successful (Speaker, 2004).

In comparison to peer colleges, MSCC seems to be on par. However, the report surveyed students across the board and did not single out any specific area of study at the college. The scores of the survey do not reflect DSW 800 outcomes since the failure rate is so high. Can students really be engaged when passing a course is difficult? Student engagement paired with student success in a course is of particular concern because course success is directly correlated to level of engagement (Koutselini, 2009; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2008).

Currently, the college is implementing combinations of experiential learning strategies to increase success rates and level of student engagement in DSW 800 and other high-risk courses. Of the eight strategies listed as avenues for improving student success, two strategies stand out as emergent. One, cooperative learning, and two,

technology to promote learning are two strategies that are listed as viable ways to enhance learner performance to combat the issue of high failure rates in high-risk a course like DSW 800. DSW 800 instructors currently use the writing process as a strategy. However, a combination of strategies may be more effective to address the high failure rates of students enrolled in the courses because instructors and students need more than one option to exhaust for instruction and learning that can reach diverse learning styles of students (Chaves, 2006).

Strategies to Engage Learners with the Writing Process

To help developmental writing students to be more successful in DSW 800 and in the next course ENG 101, social networking, the prewriting stage of the writing process, and cooperative learning may complement each other when the strategies are combined because each strategy is highly experiential in nature; therefore, these strategies together may create more chance for success when the characteristics are used correctly and synchronously within a lesson.

Social networking is defined as a “way of communicating with others through online communities” (McKenzie, 2009, p. 436). The elements of social networking relevant to this study are interaction, autonomy, self-regulation, and self-efficacy as these elements help make social networking and cooperative learning cohesive. Social networking itself is relevant to the study as a strategic way of using online communities to help aid the writing process.

The writing process is a step-by-step expert process that allows a novice writer to develop a final written work in stages (Marchisan & Alber, 2001). The stages of the writing process are prewriting, drafting, revising, and publishing (Marchisan & Alber,

2001). The prewriting stage is the focus of this study because it is the initial stage that helps students plan out essays.

Cooperative learning uses five basic elements to maximize group learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Additionally, these elements can be applied to prewriting when students work in groups of two or three to generate ideas, eliminate ideas, group ideas, and form ideas into thesis statement. The five basic elements of cooperative learning are positive interdependence, individual accountability, group processing, social skills, and face-to-face interaction. The basic premise of cooperative learning is that an individual should benefit from being in a group as well as the group benefits from the having the individual as a part of the group. Cooperative learning is relevant to the study as a strategic way of using groups to help students learn to prewrite.

Significance of the study

In order to fully understand the potential for social networking, the prewriting stage of the writing process, and cooperative learning to work well together for the writing classroom, one must understand why the strategies alone may not provide a platform for optimal success in this type of classroom. First, social networking alone may not remedy the problem of student inability to write well in a writing classroom. Texting, instant messaging, casual emails, and similar social networking contribute to students practicing non-standard English writing (Drouin, 2011). Non-standard English may be combined into composition that should be written in standard English. To combat the problem of colloquialisms infringing on usage of standard English, students may need a convergence of both “functional and critical literacies” (Reid, 2008, p.63). Moreover, using the computer or social networking for the sake of adding technology might not

enhance student writing capabilities, and educators may not be able to justify adding such technology if students are not achieving with the usage of the technology (Bacci, 2008).

Moreover, the prewriting stage of the writing process alone may not afford the students enough opportunities to interact with one another throughout the stage when the process during the stage is rigidly followed. Consequently, the entire writing process, which includes prewriting, drafting, editing, revision, and publishing could be a self-progressive process whereby prewriting, drafting, revision, and publishing can be completed without much interaction between peers in the classroom. Flower and Hayes (1981) describe the writing process as a cognitive process whereby much of the process is played out in private, individual thoughts. Moreover, in a developmental writing course or even a freshman level composition course, students may not have the cognitive skills to originate good ideas for sound writing on their own. In addition, a “learning-centered classroom” is maximizes learning when students are free to interact with their peers and the instructor (Boyd, 2008, p. 224).

Lastly, cooperative learning is a method that presupposes success based on five elements applied while students are writing in groups. In a writing classroom, many of the students may have difficulty with writing and may be hesitant to reach out in ways that cooperative learning groups require. Therefore, students may be hesitant and unenthusiastic in a writing class (Holmes, 2003). Moreover, grouping students in groups where there are high-skilled students who can mentor lower-skilled students can be problematic when many of the students may be low-skilled in the area of writing. Very rarely is there an anomaly whereby there are highly-skilled writers in a developmental

writing course since the nature of the developmental course is that the course's students are deficient or lacking skills in the content area (Taylor, 1985).

Purpose of the Study

The assumption of this study is that three instructional strategies combined will help students perceive their chances for success in a developmental writing course and freshman level composition course are greater. If students perceive that they have more a chance to do well in a course, then the students may in fact perform better in the course.

First, social networking also engages students through interaction but offers an innovative way of doing so. Social networking is a popular way of communicating on the web, and it is making its mark in the college classroom (Joyce & Brown, 2009). In addition, these applications are often free to use with purchased internet access, and they take little time to learn to use (Grant & Mims, 2009). Moreover, social networking can be used to help college students connect with one another, not only on a social level, but also on an educational level as social networks become a forum for sharing ideas. In a writing class, sharing ideas is necessary for students who struggle to make the initial step of inducing ideas.

Secondly, the writing process is considered by many to be the backbone of the writing class, itself. The method is strong and approved across the discipline. Also, the writing process is pliable, allowing variation of the characteristics where instructors see fit. The importance of the writing process to this study is that it is the foundation that is invoked whereby cooperative learning and social networking were applied during the prewriting stage of the writing process.

Thirdly, cooperative learning engages students through interaction with peers and the instructors. Interaction is significant in a writing classroom because students need to know that others like them in the class are struggling in the same area to give these students a more “sheltered context in which to try out their new understanding of how writing happens” (Read, 2010, p. 51). Also, developing a team attitude to tackle the task of understanding the concepts of the course provides motivation for completing the course successfully when individuals are part of a group that is interested in everyone in the group mastering the concepts (Nagel, 2008).

A combination of strategies together with a high level of student engagement may be the panacea that is needed to help increase student success in DSW 800 and freshman level composition courses. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand how students perceive a combination of three strategies, social networking, the writing process, and cooperative learning help them to be successful in DSW 800 and ENG 101 as well as discern how the combination of these strategies enhances student success.

The three research questions posed were:

1. What are students’ perceptions of a social networking tool?
2. How do students perceive a social networking tool influences prewriting in cooperative groups?
3. How do cooperative groups work together to prewrite?

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

To organize the review of literature for this study, the following research questions were used: (1) what are students' perceptions of a social networking tool; (2) how do students perceive a social networking tool influences prewriting in cooperative groups; and (3) how do cooperative groups work together to prewrite?

The sections of the literature review are divided into three parts. First is a discussion of social networking. Next is a discussion of the writing process with emphasis on the prewriting stage of the process. Last is a discussion of cooperative learning and as relevant to social networking and prewriting.

Methodology for the Literature Review

The methodology for the literature review was a three-part process. For each variable relevant to each research question, a database search was performed to find relevant literature.

Social networking searches. The next part of the research process involved searching the ERIC and Wilsonweb databases for sources relevant to the discussion on social networking. The following keywords were used in the searches: social [and] networking, social , networking [and] cooperative learning, Web 2.0, self-efficacy [and] social networking, self-efficacy, autonomy [and] learning, self-regulation [and] learning, social interaction [and] learning. Another strategy used gain resources was advisor consultation.

The writing process searches. The final part of the research process involved searching ERIC and Wilsonweb databases to gain sources relevant to the discussion on the writing process. The following keywords were used in searches: prewriting, writing [and] process, cooperative learning [and] essay writing, computers [and] writing, and theory [and] composition. Another strategy used was peer advising whereby a colleague in the field of composition provided leads to viable sources on theory and composition.

Cooperative learning searches. The first part of the process was a search of the databases ERIC and Wilsonweb to find sources relevant to the discussion of cooperative writing and cooperative learning. The following keywords were used in those searches: group [and] writing, cooperative [and] writing, cooperative learning, cooperative [and] learning, social [and] interaction, collaboration, completion [and] learning, five elements [and] cooperative learning, intrinsic [and] motivation, extrinsic [and] motivation, instructional strategies [and] cooperative learning, positive [and] interdependence, individual accountability [and] cooperative learning, feedback [and] cooperative learning, social skills [and] cooperative learning, self-efficacy [and] cooperative learning, conflict resolution [and] cooperative learning, and benefits [and] cooperative learning. In addition to the searches, resources were obtained from attending a week-long professional development cooperative learning workshop where books and learning materials were available.

Social Networking

Social networking, as a Web 2.0 application, is an innovative strategy that is fairly new to instruction when compared to the longevity of strategies like cooperative learning. However, social networking is quickly becoming a permanent part of the instructional

landscape as technology, specifically the Internet, already has given instructors ways to engage students in learning. The literature concerning social networking is a growing body; however, compared to the literature concerning cooperative learning, the literature concerning social networking is slim regarding instructional usage. A survey of the literature reveals evidence that social networking is a phenomenon that scholars are researching at length to pull together a working body of literature that helps readers to have a grounded definition of social networking as well as have examples of how social networking adds value to instruction and learning via many ways for using social networking as an instructional strategy.

For this study, social networking is examined through the lens of cooperative learning. First, a basic definition of social networking helps to illuminate basic elements, types, concepts, and distinctions relevant to cooperative learning. Next, a comparative and integrative examination of social networking and cooperative learning helps to show how the two strategies complement one another. Finally, the five basic elements of cooperative learning applied to social networking helps to show how the literature deals with combining the two strategies for cooperative learning social networking activities.

Definition of Social Networking

Social networking can be defined by examining its basic elements, concepts, and distinctiveness. There are several basic elements that help to describe the social networking features and how the features work. Moreover, the elements can be separated into two categories of concrete features and types of web applications.

Basic elements of social networking. First, social networking is defined as Web 2.0 (Dalsgaard & Paulsen, 2009; Hall, 2009; Huang & Behara, 2007; Joyce & Brown, 2009; Kist, 2008; Manzo, 2009). Secondly, both Joyce and Brown (2009) and Luo (2010) define social networking features as being public and semi-public. In addition, both Joyce and Brown (2009) and Luo (2010) also agree that social networking's concrete features include a list of shared users, shared connections, similar interfaces, and traverse connections with others. Moreover, social networking is interactive and requires membership to engage in interactions (Luo, 2010). Similarly, Luo (2010) and Ransdell (2009) point out that social networking applications feature conversations and postings. Additionally, social networking applications feature organization of activities and events (Luo, 2010).

Next, users of social networking applications are housed in virtual communities (Wandel, 2008) whereby the majority of the population of individuals in these communities are *millenials*, or the “younger generation” (Huang & Behara, 2007, p. 329), generally considered to be individuals born during the personal computer and internet age and who frequent social networking sites (Barrow & McKenzie, 2009; Wandel, 2008). Millenials tend to use social networking as a main method for communicating; hence, they are very knowledgeable on how to operate the applications. Joyce and Brown (2009) further reports that individuals age 18 to 34 most often have some type of online presence. In these communities, much of the population is indigenous to the digital culture whereby they use the Internet in many facets of their lives (Grant & Mims, 2009). Another feature that social networking users enjoy is that the applications boast instant features such as live chat, updates, feedback, and group discussions (Joyce & Brown,

2009). Moreover, stakeholders in academia, as well as the corporate sector, take advantage of the convenient features of social networking as marketing and collaboration tools (Barrow & McKenzie, 2009; Reid, 2008).

Finally, there are several types of social networking applications. Sixdegrees.com was the first social networking application (Joyce & Brown, 2009). Following sixdegrees.com were several similar applications. Myspace, Friendster, Facebook, and Ning all helped to enable users to network with a web of friends, colleagues, and peers. Another social networking application called LinkedIn caters to social networking in the corporate sector (Joyce & Brown, 2009). Finally, the social networking application Twitter offers social networking with a twist. Twitter is a social networking application that is considered to be a microblogging tool. Users can only post messages, or tweets, of 140 characters or less. A convenient perk of these applications is that they are free or they have little cost associated with usage (Grant & Mims, 2009).

Concepts relative to social networking. The concepts of social networking describe how the features can be applied instructionally. First, Huang and Behara (2007) define the concept of the learning outcomes, processes, and content associated with social networking. Outcomes are changed from knowledge acquisition to knowledge integration with the usage of social networking tools as students apply knowledge. For example, when a student uses a tool to compose ideas for an essay, the student is practicing essay writing skills. Next, the processes associated with social networking usage go from being traditional to experiential as students apply investigative knowledge to learn how to use the applications embedded within an activity. Finally, an online environment affords unlimited space for housing content. Housed content becomes a community of

knowledge from which participants in the community can receive knowledge and contribute knowledge; therefore, a community of individuals who share this repository is created (Nicholson, 2005). In each of these concepts, one can clearly see how social networking as an instructional strategy is opposite of lecture.

Self-efficacy as a relevant concept to social networking. Another concept relevant to social networking as an instructional strategy is self-efficacy. Bowers-Campbell (2008) mentions that social networking is a catalyst for self-efficacy because students have more autonomy with content in a social networking environment. Autonomy and self-efficacy are components of empowerment (Thorton et al., 2009). Moreover, Huang and Behara (2007) and Joyce and Brown (2009) point out that the outreach potential of students increases as resources are made more abundant and students have an increased sense of their social presence in the social networking learning environment. Similarly, students are able to set better goals with social networking tools that are structured for organizing materials (Luo, 2010). In addition, instructors are able to model effective learning strategies by using a social networking tool along with student users thereby aiding students in becoming more proficient in the usage of the social networking tool as well (Joyce & Brown, 2009). Becoming more proficient in the usage of the social networking tool enables self-efficacy in that students have more confident attempts at activities. Also, there is an increased sense of community (Nicholson, 2005). Additionally, rewards help students to be more confident as well (Joyce & Brown, 2009). Lastly, when students are more proficient, instructors have the opportunity to offer more challenging instruction and instructors can scaffold information (Joyce & Brown, 2009). In agreement, Mills and Tincher (2003) assert that technology

integration helps students to use multiple resources to construct knowledge. In further connection, Grant and Mims (2009) emphasize that low threshold tools, or tools that are easy to use, provide a quick catalyst for instructors and students to use a tool. Quick usage and understanding of a tool may build student confidence especially with those students who have a fear of technology.

Self-efficacy is increased in a social networking environment when instruction and peer feedback contain “attribution statements that help [students] connect their efforts with their growth [that] allays fears through profiles” (Huang & Behara, 2007, p. 79). Hall (2009) adds to this statement by asserting that this alleviating of fears in the learning environment builds students’ confidences and willingness to learn and produce. Lastly, the social capital theory (Dalsgaard & Paulsen, 2009) is relevant to self-efficacy in the social networking environment because the theory underscores the connection made between social individuals in the environment. Students being social in the environment perceive themselves to have an advantage of learning and interaction because they are connected to a larger social environment (Amory, 2010). In addition, when students feel competent and professional as a result of interacting in these communities, self-efficacy is achieved (Thorton et al., 2001). Also, students have an increased sense of individual accountability because they feel responsible for contributing and interacting with the social networking group to which they belong (Amory, 2010).

Autonomy and self-regulation as relevant concepts to social networking. Next autonomy and self-regulation, which are closely related to self-efficacy, are two concepts that can be applied to social networking. Autonomy is “the ability to exert control over one’s environment” (Thorton et al., 2001, p. 3). Self-regulation is akin to self-direction in

that students govern themselves in a studious and professional manner in an online atmosphere, as well as they are able to rely upon their experiences to draw knowledge (Chaves, 2006). Moreover, autonomy and self-regulation lend to the constructivist nature of social networking whereby students are enabled to be self-directed in building on skills and experiences (Chaves, 2006; Grant & Mims, 2009). Social networking in the classroom setting helps students to practice being responsible when they follow “netiquette” rules (Bowers-Campbell, 2008). In addition, instructors have an opportunity to guide students to be more responsible (Joyce & Brown, 2009). In addition, Bowers-Campbell (2008) emphasizes that students can practice autonomy and self-regulation through interface management. Hall (2009) asserts that students show autonomy and self-regulation by designing, developing, and regulating their social networks. These design and maintenance controls foster ownership, self-reliance, self-education, personalization, and personal mastery (Hall, 2009).

Interaction as a relevant concept to social networking. Lastly, interaction is a concept that is extremely relevant to social networking. Both Joyce and Brown (2009) and Bowers-Campbell (2008) agree that interaction in a social networking environment is immediate, frequent, and social. Moreover, social networking in the classroom setting is inclusive whereby students are more included during activities and exclusion is minimized. A community of students in a social networking environment affords an atmosphere where constructivism is a main strategy. Students are able to build communities through networking with other students inside and outside of the class. To this end, scaffolding content and community interactions are made possible (Nicholson,

2005). In addition, social networking within the classroom provides a learning space whereby multiple tools can be used to aid learning.

Another attribute of interaction is reciprocal determinism, which is an ideology that one affects his or her environment even as that environment affects the individual. Two premises define reciprocal determinism as is relevant to interaction in the social networking environment. First, Hall (2009) suggests that learning is “watching, thinking, and trying” (p. 33). Likewise, Joyce and Brown (2009) describe the concept of reciprocal determinism as management and uncertainty. There is constant change that coexists with maximized engagement (Joyce & Brown, 2009). In addition, the instability of spontaneity in the environment is a catalyst for continuous development and change in a social networking environment (Amory, 2010). In short, interaction is a catalyst for reciprocal action that involves learning and practice in a spontaneous, yet interactive, environment. When learning occurs in a spontaneous yet interactive environment, students are able to build on their learning because they are in an environment that fosters learning in an instantaneous and multifarious way (Mills & Tincher, 2003).

Finally, cooperative freedom is an attribute of interaction in the social networking environment. Cooperative freedom involves three characteristics. First, cooperative freedom occurs in interactive environments like the social networking environment when participation is voluntary but attractive. Secondly, cooperative freedom occurs when individuals can be flexible in the interactive environment. Lastly, cooperative freedom occurs in the interactive environment when students have an attraction to the learning community (Dalsgaard & Paulsen, 2009). Therefore, instructors must create opportunities for interaction (Nicholson, 2005).

Distinctiveness. Social networking is distinct in its own right when it is used as a non-traditional instructional method. As an opposite of traditional lecturing, social networking encourages community and sharing (Bowers-Campbell, 2009). In addition, social networking can be classified as experiential learning whereby it offers many ways to reach a goal via an abundance of resources (Huang & Behara, 2007). Social networking also gives instructors and students opportunities to extend physical class time since social networking applications can be accessed from any computer or mobile device (Huang & Behara, 2007). In addition, Huang and Behara (2007) point out that social networking as an experiential instructional method increases knowledge integration. Content knowledge is easily integrated with the activity. Moreover, Joyce and Brown (2009) add that content can be instant and frequent. Therefore, easy knowledge integration and increased content work together to offer students opportunities to learn more. Lastly, social networking as opposite of lecture allows more communication in a learning environment as students converse with one another, as well as the instructor in open dialogue. Therefore, instructors have the opportunity to maximize interaction with students by answering student's questions and communicating with students about coursework.

Next, social networking tools are distinctive as opposed to traditional classroom tools, such as digital presentations and other similar lecture materials. Social networking tools offer students the opportunity to participate as well as give and accept invitations (Bowers-Campbell, 2008). Similarly, Joyce and Brown (2009) points out that social networking tools encourage interaction. Moreover, over the duration of a class, interaction and participation increase. Increased interaction can also be attributed to

scaffolding tools that offer multiple devices that can be used at the same time to meet an objective or goal (Joyce & Brown, 2009). Therefore, students are able to maximize learning because they can learn to use multiple tools and think of multiple ways to reach their goals (Mills & Tincher, 2005).

Another reason social networking tools are distinctive is because of the population of people who are likely to use these tools in the college classroom. Traditional-aged college students are greatly familiar with social networking tools. In fact, both Joyce and Brown (2009) and Bowers-Campbell (2008) point out that millennials use their social networking applications for research, peer connections, instructor-student communication, self-profiling, and information checks.

Next, a social networking environment is distinctive, itself. Amory (2010) describes a social networking environment as immersive in that using social networking as an instructional strategy uses both real world and online interaction to solve problems. Additionally, Mills and Tincher (2003) assert that technology for learning purposes should be integrative such that students get extended use of the skills gained from the technology. Students should be able to practice the gained skills in other settings. Therefore, Amory (2010) goes on to define the environment as pervasive, meaning that the social networking environment is sometimes extended into the real world. Moreover, Grant and Mims (2009) assert that “real-world scenarios provide new experiences and encourage learners to use active techniques as they assimilate or accommodate new knowledge.” Lastly, Amory (2010) describes knowledge in the environment as an active tool of interaction and social reform. Thus, the more students know, the more they want

to be engaged in learning and interacting with their peers. The increase interaction with peers encourages acceptance of diversity.

Finally, the social networking environment is distinctive because it is collaborative. The social capital theory, describe more fully later in this chapter, encompasses the collaborative nature of the social networking environment. Amory (2010) points out that the social capital theory defines collaboration in the social networking environment as relational, cognitive, and structural. The environment is relational because student relationships are established and well-defined according to how the students interact with each other. Next, the environment is cognitive because it encourages knowledge acquisition and transferring of knowledge. Lastly, the environment is structural because it in encourages a pattern of communication and behaviors for communicating. Thus collaboration requires practical and cognitive activities where feedback is imminent and often (Ahlfeldt, Sudhir, & Sellnow, 2005). In addition, Dalsgaard and Paulsen (2009) describe a social networking environment's collaboration as defined by the social capital theory as valuable, transparent, and cooperatively free. The environment is valuable due to the wealth of resources and opportunities provided. Next, the environment is transparent because of the nature of visible communications and online presence. Lastly, the environment expresses cooperative freedom because it encourages interaction.

Critique of Social Networking Studies

Because social networking as an instructional strategy is relatively new when compared to the cooperative learning strategy, the field of studies is a growing body that has not yet gained a standard methodology by which social networking as a strategy

should be employed in any study. However, there are standards relevant to instructional practices that can be applied to the usage of the strategy. The experiential nature of using social networking as an instructional strategy classifies the strategy. Huang and Behara (2007) posit three attributes of experiential learning that can be applied to social networking as an instructional strategy. First, the strategy offers access to abundant resources. Second, the strategy offers a participatory experience. Third, the strategy offers an opportunity for knowledge integration.

Of the studies surveyed from the literature that used social networking as an instructional strategy, all used one or more of the aforementioned attributes of experiential learning applied to social networking as an instructional strategy. However, discussion on the importance of each attribute to the process and outcomes were limited. For example, Huang and Behara (2007) discussed the outcomes of using Web 2.0 tools for experiential learning in business education classes. While the discussion of outcomes included a synopsis of the benefits and challenges of using Web 2.0 tools to implement an experiential learning atmosphere, there was no attention given to participant feedback on the experience of using the Web 2.0 tools. Bowers-Campbell (2008) studied the usage of Facebook in a developmental studies reading course as a catalyst for motivation. The self-efficacy and self-regulation of the participants were monitored because the researcher found self-efficacy and self-regulation to be strong predictors of academic success. However, the study was limited in its discussion of how students perceive usage of Facebook motivated them to want to read more. Finally, Joyce and Brown (2009) focused on using social networking tools to improve online students social presence for the purpose of increasing perception of social connection. The main benefit of using

social networking, according to the study, is the enhancement of social interaction. As a result of enhanced social interaction, the researchers report that during an academic year, students become more connected to one another in their online class. This connection aids in retention in the online class. However, the limitation of the study was that none of the students' perceptions of how their enhanced connections helped them to perform in a class. Thus, more attention is needed in the area of determining whether or not the experiences of the students were meaningful enough to the students, themselves to contribute to progress and learning.

The Writing Process

The writing process is a strategy that is ever-evolving; however, most writers who have practiced writing for any sufficient length of time may agree on the basic parts of the strategy—the nomenclature of the parts is varied, but the basic ideas that support the premise are similar. The literature suggests that the basic parts of the writing process are established, however, not so much to the point that writers cannot maneuver the basic parts of the writing process to produce a final essay that is compositionally sound, as well as reflective of the writer's spirit. To this end, a survey of the literature reveals a basic working definition of the writing process whereby the parts of the process are established. For example, Marchisan and Alber (2001) report five stages of the writing process as prewriting, writing, revising, and publishing. These ideas, rather than the exact terms, are reflected throughout the literature in a similar order. Likewise Holmes (2003) reiterates prewriting as an initial step. Moreover, Flower and Hays (1981) emphasize critical thinking associated with drafting after the initial prewriting stage. In addition, Eberly and Trand (2010) report that “brainstorming, topic development, a peer review” are basic

activities in composition classes (p. 11). Lastly, Bacci (2008) uses the terms “inventing, organizing, developing, and drafting” to name the process (p. 80).

Stages of the Writing Process

In order to solidify a definition of the writing process, one must discuss the basic stages of the process. A survey of the literature about the writing process suggests four basic parts to the process, itself. These parts dictate events in the process whereby actions are taken to increase cognition as one writes a basic essay.

The first stage of the writing process is prewriting. Prewriting can be simply defined as thinking and planning (Jackson, 2009). Prewriting can be broken down into four significant parts or events. More emphasis is given to prewriting later in this chapter.

The next stage in the writing process is drafting. Jackson (2009) defines four different definitive elements of the drafting stage. First, drafting for a basic essay is linear. There is a main idea or thesis statement that is housed in the initial part of the essay or the introductory paragraph supported by ideas placed in sentences that support the thesis statement. The support ideas become the linear outline for each of the body paragraphs. Secondly, draft ideas can be hierarchical, presenting ideas in a fashion that logically leads to the conclusion. Thirdly, the generation of ideas while drafting is constant. The writer can draft and revise as drafting occurs. Lastly, a final essay solidifies ideas such that ideas are constricted or finalized.

The third stage of the writing process is the revision stage. Marchison and Alber (2001) and Jackson (2009) define revising as making changes based on evaluating. Flower and Hayes (1981) assert that during this stage, a writer may elect to recycle or regenerate ideas. In conjunction with this idea, Marchison and Alber (2001) suggest that ideas

should be effectively revised such that greater clarity and precision is gained in the final draft.

The fourth stage of the writing process is final drafting. During this stage, a writer should seek to further clarify ideas such that readability, cohesion, and logic are improved (Emig, 1977; Flower & Hayes, 1981). During this stage, the writer will present his or her work in publication by submitting a finalized product that adheres to the rules of set by the instructor or entity to which the draft will be submitted. Jackson (2009) also suggests that during the stage of the final draft, writers take pride in their final product.

Prewriting Stage of the Writing Process

Four events occur during the prewriting stage of the writing process. Initially during pre-writing, a rhetorical situation is presented to the writer. This situation may be simulated or problem-oriented (Jackson, 2009). Three more events follow the initial presentation of the rhetorical situation. The first of the three events is brainstorming. Flower and Hayes (1981) describe brainstorming as the “stage before words emerge on paper” (p. 367). Brainstorming can involve thinking out loud and investigative questioning (Jackson, 2009). However, during this process, the writer should not seek to elaborate on ideas or evaluate ideas (Eberly & Trand, 2010). In addition, Marchisan and Alber (2001) suggest that a more experienced writer model brainstorming, whereas Holmes (2003) asserts that instruction and practice on determining how ideas are organized are important to teaching brainstorming. Similar to determining organization of ideas, Holmes (2003) further adds that eliminating or electing ideas above others helps the writer to single out the most important and relevant thoughts. After ideas are eliminated or elected, a writer can move forward in the brainstorming event by

developing ideas. Both Eberly and Trand (2010) and Flower and Hayes (1981) agree that developing of ideas means refining ideas when brainstorming. The next event during pre-writing is clustering. Clustering is grouping ideas from the brainstorm (Marchisan & Alber, 2001). During clustering, further refining of ideas may take place. However, a writer can revisit the brainstorm of ideas to further solidify the ideas for the cluster. In addition, clustering sets the stage for the main idea of the essay to be formed (Jackson, 2009). The final event is transferability. During this time, ideas from the brainstorm and cluster take more of a basic essay format (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

Social Networking and the Writing Process

Using the computer to aid the writing process is not new. In fact, drafting at the computer may be more popular now than traditional drafting with paper and pencil. However, in order for social networking and writing to be different from any other computer assisted writing, usage of a social networking environment to execute the writing process must meet the criteria that emerge from the literature. Secondly, the social networking environment, itself must be critiqued to determine whether the environment is suitable to assist writers matriculating through the writing process. Finally, when criteria are met, benefits of using social networking environments to assist the stages of the writing process are evident for instruction and student learning.

First, two areas of criteria emerge from the literature as relevant to evaluating the value added of using a social networking environment to assist the stages of the writing process. Boyd (2008) asserts that computer assisted writing must significantly change or add to the writing process. Here, the term significantly implies that the events of the writing process should be enhanced to the extent that the practices are made more

understandable and practical without adulterating the systemic core principles of the process. The second area is addressed by Reid (2008) when he asserts the following:

Convergent media networks intensify the potential for interoperability that facilitate information sharing and through a participatory networked culture that offers compositional practices that differ from the traditional education emphasis on composition as an individual act. (p. 62)

Reid (2008) asserts in this statement that computer aided writing, or specifically for this study using a social networking environment to assist prewriting, becomes interoperable in an environment where several internet applications may be used to assist writing. In addition, idea sharing and opportunities for co-participation are maximized when social networking tools such as blog spaces and instant messaging are used. Thus, the second criterion is that social networking environments assisting the writing process should offer a variety of ways to matriculate through the writing process.

Next, according to Boyd (2008), computer usage, specifically social networking environment usage, should be evaluated and critiqued for suitability for sustaining the writing the process. First, the social networking environment becomes suitable when it is a catalyst for invention (Bacci, 2008). The level to which the environment encourages idea development is integral to measuring the value added of using such an environment to assist the writing process (Reid, 2008). Secondly, the environment should encourage organizational skills since the writing process is played out in stages, and the finished essay's coherency is largely dependent on the organization of ideas (Bacci, 2008; Boyd, 2008). Therefore, a social networking tool should help the user to generate ideas as well as organize those ideas. Thirdly, the environment should make developing ideas and putting those ideas together easier (Bacci, 2008). The ease-of-use makes the environment valuable to instruction and learning because the environment may offer an interface that

illuminates the process (Boyd, 2008; Reid, 2008). Next, functional and critical literacy should be gained whereby students gain an understanding of how to operate the tools of the social networking environment as well as continue to grasp the foundational tenets of composition (Bacci, 2008; Reid, 2008). Finally, the environment should promote non-threatening atmosphere where many ideas are welcome (Boyd, 2008).

Lastly, when the criteria for a social networking environment assisting the stages of the writing process are met, the benefits to instruction and learning are evident.

According to Reid (2008), the benefits to instruction and learning reflect back to the social networking tools as well as the actors, or people, using the environment. First, a convergent media network such as the social networking environment offers tools that have multiple functions that can assist teaching students to write as well as assist student writing. Secondly, multimedia tools can converge in an environment to aid the writing process by offering instructors and students several avenues to reach the final product of the essay. Lastly, interactions between people using the writing process are amplified because of the interactive nature of the environment.

Finally, for students, according to Reid (2008), the benefits of executing the writing process in a computer environment, specifically the prewriting stage of the writing process in a social networking environment, are evident. First, instructors and students as actors in the environment gain the abilities to direct the process through the various avenues that the environment provides. Secondly, both instructors and students gain the ability to move freely in the environment physically and within cyberspace. Social networking environments are not limited by mobility and the Internet is a vast space that can be explored as long as good connections make exploration possible.

Mobile networking and the Internet afford students matriculating through the writing process a vast variety of tools, such as online dictionaries and writing labs to make the matriculation easier when students can access these tools from any mobile device that connects to the Internet. Lastly, instructors and students experience the writing process as a more connected activity as a result of executing the process in a social networking environment that emphasizes interaction and networking.

Cooperative Learning

Definition of cooperative learning. Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (2008) defines cooperative learning as “the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (p. 5). In addition, Tran (2007) reports that cooperative learning is structured and success-oriented for each individual participating in a cooperative learning group. Likewise, Koutselini (2009) defines cooperative learning as “the teaching and learning situation that ensures coherence and positive interdependence among members of small groups and results in learning for each member of the group” (p. 34). Also, Nagel (2008) reports that cooperative learning is an “effective strategy that promotes a variety of positive, cognitive, affective, and social outcomes” (p. 364).

Finally, cooperative learning must be distinguished from collaborative learning. Although the terms are used interchangeably, cooperative learning and writing are instructor-led and facilitated whereas collaborative learning is more group-led whereby groups create their own goals and pathways to those goals (Berry, 2008). Likewise, Hutchinson (2007) makes the distinction between collaborative learning and cooperative learning in that with cooperative learning, the end product is teacher-directed learning;

however, with collaborative learning, the end product is group-directed learning that causes individuals of the group to rely more heavily on each other to complete the group-directed task. Therefore cooperative learning must also be teacher-directed and facilitated (Hutchinson, 2007). For this study, cooperative learning is being defined as a systematic way of grouping students to prewrite in groups such that social skills are used, course content is applied, and the individual perceives that he or she achieves mastery of content.

Learning Strategies and Theories Informing Cooperative Learning. Four learning strategies and theories emerge from the literature as informing cooperative learning and writing: social interdependence, constructivism, experiential learning, and active learning. Each of these is discussed below.

Social interdependence. The main theory that informs cooperative learning and writing is social interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Social interdependence occurs when individuals affect each other's outcomes. Two categories of interdependence comprise social interdependence. Mutual outcomes of the individuals are in the category of outcome interdependence. The effort to reach outcomes is categorized as means interdependence. This concept connects to cooperative learning because mutual benefit is an integral tenet of the strategy, encouraging students to contribute to the group while simultaneously gaining benefits from being in the group (Nagel, 2008).

Constructivism. Wu, Bieber, and Hiltz (2008) define constructivism as student-centered. Moreover, Vygotsky (1978) describes constructivism as students using social interaction with other individuals while actively engaging in the construction of their own cognition. Constructivism is relevant to cooperative learning because the strategy

encourages social interaction between individuals and that interaction helps individuals creatively build upon what they already know (Corcoran & Sim, 2009; Hutchinson, 2007).

Experiential learning. Munoz and Huser (2008) describe experiential learning as learning as learning that “requires students to draw on their direct experiences to reflect, test, and create new ideas” (p. 215). Using higher order thinking skills, students are able to improve their level of engagement and performance. Cooperative learning is categorized as experiential learning because the strategy allows students to use positive experiences to aid learning that stem from working in cooperative learning groups such as interpersonal skills and critical thinking skills (Ozkan, 2010).

Active learning. Berry (2008) defines active learning as combining lecture and interaction to better engage the learner. Four basic characteristics are the foundation for active learning: “(1) encouragement of critical thinking; (2) responsibility for learning placed on the learner; (3) engagement in open-ended activities; (4) organization of learning activities by the educator” (p. 150). Active learning informs cooperative learning because the strategy encourages thinking via students working together to culminate ideas for completing a task (Nagel, 2008). The strategy encourages the learner to shoulder responsibility for learning through individual accountability, which means that the student has a vital role in the cooperative learning group (Tran, 2007).

Five basic elements of cooperative learning informing prewriting. When the five basic elements of cooperative learning are applied to prewriting, the critical thinking practices involved in the writing process are enhanced. Cognition can be maximized because individuals are encouraged to share ideas rather than single-handedly produce

ideas. Idea sharing can be a catalyst for idea generation. Each element of cooperative learning encourages idea sharing in the pre-writing stage of the writing process.

Positive interdependence and prewriting. Two writing practices emerge from the literature as related positive interdependence. Since positive interdependence is based on mutual benefit, sharing ideas and tasks associated with writing is logical when applying positive interdependence to prewriting. The first connected practice is text sharing. Holmes (2003) suggests that text sharing is a viable way to generate ideas whereby individuals use pair thinking or the practice of bouncing ideas off one another in pairs. In addition, Marchisan and Alber (2001) suggest that students pair up on computers where text is more accessible to be shared. Beyond thinking of ideas for prewriting, individuals may be able to merge those ideas to coauthor essays. Coauthoring encourages and motivates novice writers to continue the process (Holmes, 2003). Also, stronger writers model good writing practices for weaker writers when coauthoring takes place (Holmes, 2003). Consequently, the mutual benefits are more idea development and practice of skills for both strong and weak writers.

The second connected practice is peer or group editing. During peer or group editing, the writer has an audience of his or her peers who understand the writing assignment and who usually are working on the same assignment. Here again, idea sharing is profitable and mutually beneficial to the editor and the writer in the group. Editors sharpen skills for writing and identifying problems whereas the writer gets practice with fixing problems (Holmes, 2003). Lastly, in order for peer or group editing to be successful, each member of the group must understand that the opinions of others is valuable and trustworthy as well as those giving opinions must understand that their

opinions should be accurate and relevant (Holmes, 2003). Peer or group editing is not a traditional event of the prewriting stage. However, the concepts can be applied during the elimination of ideas, which could take place during brainstorming or clustering. Also, groups can edit their final thesis statements by making sure that the group's ideas are accurately reflected.

Individual accountability and prewriting. Individual accountability influences the writing process at every stage of the process when the writer introspectively evaluates his or her contribution to the finished products of the essay especially when the essay is completed in a peer writing atmosphere where a group of writers have a common goal of producing one essay. During prewriting, individual accountability occurs as individuals who are accountable to the group help to generate, eliminate, and group ideas for a thesis statement. Flower and Hayes (1981) assert that writing is goal-directed; therefore, the final product is a reflection of the writer's goals and developed ideas. Moreover, Flower and Hayes (1981) assert that coming up with a complete thought involves introspective analysis whereby the writer goes through an internal thought process to think of ideas. This introspective analyses starts when the rhetorical situation is presented to the writer during the prewriting stage. In addition, Jackson (2009) suggests that in order for individuals to be accountable for producing a solid writing product, an attitude of intrinsic motivation must be established whereby student writers write towards a goal of a good writing product rather than just a grade.

Group processing and prewriting. Group processing as one of the five basic elements of cooperative learning includes the practices of goal setting and feedback for groups. Groups set goals based on feedback from a facilitator or instructor. With

prewriting goal setting and feedback are integral. Flower and Hayes (1981) suggest that goal setting should be a part of pre-writing. To add, Marchisan and Alber (2001) suggest that reviewing or feedback be given at each stage of the writing process. Also, Marchisan and Alber (2001) suggest that writers should constantly evaluate their own writing and also set goals of timing to determine how long each phase of the writing process should take. These practices could be played out in a group setting by allowing groups to make decisions during prewriting and giving each other feedback during prewriting. Lastly, Marchisan and Alber (2001) suggest that instructors process writers through conferencing, writing support, encouraging and motivating feedback, and facilitating during peer editing so that students have several avenues for motivation and feedback during the writing process to maximize critical thinking skills and interaction. During prewriting, instructors should check and give feedback at each event starting at brainstorming.

Social skills and prewriting. When considering how social skills impact prewriting, one should largely consider the role of the instructor. Instructor modeling is extremely important to helping students to practice and exhibit good social skills that are gained as a result of matriculating through the writing process. Holmes (2003) suggests that instructors model good writing skills by co-writing. Moreover, while co-writing, the instructor is able to model social skills such as leadership and professionalism. In addition, Holmes (2003) asserts that instructors should also model thinking when prewriting, which in turn translates to students gaining helper skills when students understand how to critically think through idea development. To add, Marchisan and Alber (2001) suggest that instructor encouragement be a part of modeling good writing

skills. Instructors can encourage when they motivate students to develop ideas during prewriting. Instructors should also praise students for improvement. Lastly, both Marchisan and Alber (2001) and Holmes (2003) agree that instructors need to establish an atmosphere of trust and cooperation by training peer groups to give constructive feedback to one another. To establish this atmosphere, Jackson (2009) suggests that instructors make role play a part of the writing process whereby student take turns in different writing roles to prepare them for real-world teamwork.

Face-to-face interaction and prewriting. Face-to-face interaction during the writing process may be implemented during any phase of the process. When students work side-by-side or face-to-face, they are able to share ideas and feedback easily through comments, gestures, and facial expressions. Working side-by-side and face-to-face while prewriting in groups is integral so that students can interpret their group members' contributions better. Holmes (2003) suggests that peer group editing be intimate in the aspect of allowing writers to share paper or a computer screen to do editing. Theoretically, by working in close proximity to one another, peer writers are able to co-author an essay better. However, face-to-face interaction can be successfully achieved in an online environment as well when factors such as social interaction and online perception are enhanced such that students are free to interact and they perceive the online environment to be positive and non-threatening. Bacci (2008) posits that "electronic environments stimulate invention" (p. 76). In addition, Boyd (2008) posits that "interaction as a method for learning is a core principle" (p. 226). Boyd (2008) also suggests that perceptions of the online environment as friendly and non-hostile is important to the frequency and meaningfulness of student interactions, which are

important in assessing whether face-to-face interaction is simulated well in the environment.

Characteristics That Inform the Five Basic Elements

Other characteristics that make cooperative learning and writing unique are cooperation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and structure.

Cooperation. Cooperation is the practice whereby individuals contribute to a group as well as benefit from a group. Johnson and Johnson (1989) defines cooperation as individuals “working together to accomplish shared goals” (p. 2). Two concepts that are opposite of cooperation are competition and collaboration. The distinction amongst these three concepts, however, will be discussed later in this chapter.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation informs the five elements of cooperative learning by defining how students in groups are motivated to succeed. Intrinsic motivation is internal motivation that stems from a desire to learn or achieve for the purpose of increasing knowledge and skill (Salinas & Garr, 2009). Extrinsic motivation is external motivation that stems from a desire to win or gain outside reward (Berry, 2008). While both types of motivation can be integral to cooperative learning, intrinsic motivation is more prevalent as individuals become more interested in learning, “getting meaningful feedback, and benefiting others” (Johnson & Johnson, 1989 p.78). Thus, students should perceive that their contributions matter (Ozkan, 2010).

Structure. Structure is important to the five elements of cooperative learning because cooperative learning tasks must be structure and preplanned. Pre-instructional decisions help an educator to use the five elements more effectively because these types of decisions enable the educator to plan objectives and goals for the group, create tasks

for the group that underscore the goals, and create instructional strategies to teach groups what they need to know to reach goals and complete tasks (Johnson et al., 2008).

Therefore, in order for cooperative learning to be effective, the strategy must provide a challenge, encourage creativity, and enlist higher order thinking skills (Nagel, 2008).

Opposites of Cooperative Learning Groups

Cooperative learning groups are distinct in that they are opposite of lecture, collaboration, competition, and group work as busy work. First, lecture can be described as a long and auditory presentation of uninterrupted information (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2006). In addition, the information given is usually in final form (Berry, 2008). Therefore cooperative learning differs because the learners should be targeted in specific groups to personalize instruction (Knight, Gašević, & Richards, 2006). Moreover, cooperative learning allows practical application of the content (Ahlfeldt et al., 2005). Next, collaborative learning is a group strategy that sometimes is used synonymously with cooperative learning (Hutchinson, 2007). However, collaborative learning is more student-directed whereas cooperative learning is more instructor-led to focus more on student-centered needs (Berry, 2008; Hutchinson, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008). Both Berry (2008) and Hutchinson (2007) agree in collaborative learning and cooperative learning, students work together; however, students decide how to work together to reach a goal in collaborative learning (Hutchinson, 2007) whereas instructors make pre-instructional decisions on how students work together with cooperative learning (Berry, 2008; Johnson et al., 2008).

Thirdly, competition is defined by Johnson and Johnson (1989) as persons “working against one another to achieve a goal that only a few can achieve (p.4).

Moreover, Johnson, et al. (2006) define competitive learning as “the focusing of student effort on performing faster and more accurately than classmates” (p. 2). Cooperative writing instead focuses on the combine efforts of students in a group to complete a writing assignment (Dishaw, Eierman, Iversen, & Philip, 2011). Still, Johnson et al. (2008) asserts that competition is a good pair with positive goal interdependence to motivate students to retain information as well as increase group solidarity. Nonetheless, competition by itself can stimulate individualism to the extent that negative interdependence is created (Koutselini, 2009). Negative interdependence is when there is no mutual reward or benefit; in fact, individuals compete against one another to reach a goal (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Individualism in groups that should act cooperatively is dysfunctional. Dysfunction creates an environment where students are not motivated to be involved (Hsiung, 2010). When individuals are in competitive mode, they lose opportunities to practice positive interpersonal skills as well as group processing time, which includes valuable reflections and goal planning that occurs with cooperative learning.

Lastly, basic group work differs from cooperative learning because it does not apply all of the five basic elements. Group work mostly involves the physical placement of students in a group. It is individualistic in nature because it does not require students to use positive interdependence (Johnson et al., 2008). There may be some collaboration within a group during group work, but that collaboration may not include cooperation (Koutselini, 2009). Without cooperation, students miss opportunities to maximize interaction.

Cooperative Learning and Social Networking

Understanding the similarities between cooperative writing groups and social networking is integral to this study in that the two strategies together help to reinforce cooperation, interaction, and collaboration in the classroom in order to encourage student engagement. The areas of similarity include self-efficacy, social interaction, and activities.

Self-efficacy. First, the elements of self-efficacy are similar for the cooperative writing and social networking. Cooperative learning encourages autonomy coexisting with choices whereby making choices requires students to engage in cognitive activities (Ozkan, 2010). Cooperative learning is also a learning-centered instructional strategy whereby instructors create the cooperative learning activities that are opposite of lecture practices (Berry, 2008). From these activities, students gain confidence in writing. This confidence supports self-efficacy, which has the characteristics of positive thinking, leadership, and comfort (Thorton et al., 2001). When students are confident about writing cooperatively, they have positive thoughts about themselves and their peers within the cooperative environment (Ozkan, 2010). Confidence helps students to assume more leadership roles from initiating communication (Munoz & Huser, 2008). Confidence also leads to comfort in the environment as students become more familiar with their peers in an environment that is friendly and welcoming (Corcoran & Sim, 2009). Therefore, during the prewriting stage, cooperative learning helps students to be comfortable with generating ideas with one another in a group.

Social networking helps students raise their level of self-efficacy because the characteristics of social networking are reflective of cooperative learning. Similar to

cooperative learning, social networking helps students to hone their skills. In the case of social networking, students increase their level of expertise with the computer. This increase in expertise lends itself to confidence in the social networking environment. Students take ownership in areas where they are most capable (Dalsgaard & Paulsen, 2009). Next, students become more confident because of superlatives in the social networking environment. Superlatives are rewards recognitions within social networking environment (Dalsgaard & Paulsen, 2009). Rewards are an important aspect of motivating students when using cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 2008). Congratulatory messages or icons in the environment sends a message to students to show that the student is doing well in participating, which in turn motivates confidence to continue participating (Dalsgaard & Paulsen, 2009). Thorton et al. (2001) assert that “the better individuals feel about their abilities, the better they will perform” (p. 63). For example, instructors may opt to participate in the social networking environment by posting congratulatory or positive feedback. A final area of confidence that encourages strong self-efficacy is interaction in an instant community (Nicholson, 2005). The instant sense of community sparks confidence and generates feelings of connectedness (Dalsgaard & Paulsen, 2009). Membership in a social networking environment encourages self-regulation in order to remain as a connected member of the community (Bowers-Campbell, 2008).

Social interaction. The second area of similarity between cooperative learning and social networking is social interaction. For cooperative learning and social networking, social interaction is integral (Johnson et al., 2008). For both cooperative learning and social networking, social interaction encourages a sense of community,

which is the nucleus of both strategies. For example, a cooperative writing group will produce a product that belongs to the group, thus establishing a sense of ownership in the group (Dishaw et al., 2011). In the social networking environment, the usage of the Internet helps students to publish, share, and discuss information within their social network groups (Ozkan, 2010). Secondly, cooperation is integral to social interaction in the social networking environment just as these characteristics are most important for cooperative writing as an appendage of cooperative learning (Ozkan, 2010). With the usage of collaboration and cooperation, retention efforts are aided because students are more motivated to remain in a class or program if they are receiving help from a group of their peers (Ozkan, 2010). Therefore, learning becomes meaningful because of the interaction and meaningful learning encourages intrinsic motivation (Thorton et al., 2001). Lastly, social interaction supports transparency in the social networking environment whereby posts are instantly seen and shared within the community (Berry, 2008; Ozkan, 2010). In short, Barrow and McKenzie (2009), Joyce and Brown (2009), Luo (2010), and Ransdell (2009) all agree that students have a heightened sense of social connection in the social networking environment whereby tools enable that heightened sense of social connection (Dalsgaard & Paulsen, 2009).

Social capital theory. Another theory associated with social networking connected to cooperative writing as an appendage cooperative learning is the social capital theory. The social capital theory is the idea that individuals gain capital or incentive in an interactive environment when interaction maximized. Amory (2010) describes how this capital is gained. First, social capital is gained when there is a pattern of social interactions between actors in the interactive environment. Next, social capital is

gained when there is an established relationship between actors based on several interactions within the interactive environment. Lastly, social capital is gained when actors share presentations, interpretations, and meaning within the interactive environment. Thus, social networking reflects cooperative writing in the characteristic of the social capital theory in that cooperative learning similarly requires its actors to gain incentive or capital from working in groups and incentive in the form of intrinsic motivation is maximize when social interaction is at its peak. For example, cooperative prewriting group members have the incentive of having others to help them get ideas and form ideas into thesis statements that are reflective of each member's input.

Activities. The last area of similarity between cooperative learning and social networking are activities. Activities in the social networking environment can be influenced by cooperative learning. Both cooperative learning, and social networking activities are instructor facilitated (Hall, 2009; Johnson et al., 2008). In addition instructors must carefully design activities to be active learning (Berry, 2008; Wu, et al., 2008). To create good cooperative writing social networking activities, the five basic elements must be used to make the strategies active and experiential (Bowers-Campbell, 2008; Joyce & Brown, 2009). Therefore, cooperative writing and social networking activities motivate students to participate and interact (Berry, 2008; Dishaw et al., 2011). Moreover, with motivation to participate, students make choices.

Additionally, higher order thinking skills are a by-product of activities planned in a cooperative writing activity in a social networking environment. Students practice critical thinking and problem solving with cooperative activities (Berry, 2008; Hutchinson, 2007; Nagel, 2008; Ozkan, 2010). Moreover, cooperative activities,

specifically those played out in the social networking environment, move students from a static environment like the lecture environment to an active or interactive environment like the social networking environment (Munoz & Huser, 2008). Lastly, cooperative writing affords an opportunity for instructors to scaffold information in the social networking environment by using social networking tools as these tools supply increased access to and use of information (Dishaw et al., 2011; Ozkan, 2010).

Best Practices for Cooperative Learning Groups

Cooperative learning is a widely practiced strategy that is a great way to engage students. When cooperative learning is merge with writing students are engaged by working together to complete the stages of the writing process (Dishaw et al., 2011). This engaging of students means that students are privy to several benefits that encourage deep involvement in the learning activities. When applied using the best practices available, the cooperative writing is highly effective. The aforementioned five basic elements must be used to establish cooperative writing; however, other practices used help writing instructors maximize the cooperative writing. These practices include instructor professional development, pre-instructional decisions, planning and instructional decisions, and conflict resolution.

Instructor professional development. First, instructor professional development in the area of cooperative learning is a practice that is best for helping the educator gain knowledge about cooperative learning. Instructors need pre training to understand the concepts and practice applying these concepts (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Koutselini, 2009). Moreover, training itself needs to be cooperative in nature (Wepner, Bowes, & Serotkin, 2007). Koutselini (2009) further asserts that many educators do not have the

chance to apply cooperative learning strategies when they are getting their degrees. Therefore, Nagel (2008) points out that vertical cooperative learning is necessary whereby instructors from different curricula can train together in a cooperative setting. Cooperative learning can be maximized at the professional level when instructors write lessons and research together. Lastly, post-training is needed to help educators revisit and reflect on the practices (Koutselini, 2009; Nagel, 2008; Wepner et al., 2007). Moreover, post-training helps to “institutionalize cooperative learning as standard instructional practice” (Koutselini, 2009, p. 35). Thus, cooperative learning becomes a part of the arsenal that instructors can use to fight apathy, rugged individualism, and ineffective ways of retaining knowledge in their classes. Cooperative writing helps writing instructors to further engage students to help these students understand the concepts of writing (Dishaw et al., 2011).

Pre-instructional decisions. In addition to instructor training, best practices applied in the classroom involves practices for making pre-instructional decisions about forming groups, creating cooperative learning activities, creating cooperative learning post activities, and providing conflict resolution. First, instructors need to think about how they will form their groups to maximize the cooperative learning experience for their students. Randomization is the most basic way to assign students to groups (Johnson et al., 2008; Nagel, 2008). Johnson et al. (2008) and Koutselini (2009) agree that group size should be small with no more than two to three students per group. Larger groups make apathy easier (Nagel, 2008). In addition, Berry (2008) asserts that team equity is a necessity whereby students are grouped by skill level. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2008) point out students can be group according to similarities and differences. However, both

Berry (2008) and Johnson et al. (2008) agree that students should be strategically grouped heterogeneously with various types of skill level. Lastly, classroom arrangement of groups is important. Groups placed according to the identity of the group or in a special way have stronger interdependence (Johnson et al., 2008). In addition, students should be placed where they can sit knee-to-knee and face-to-face (Johnson et al., 2008). In an online environment, specific tools should be used to bring students together to interact through multiple opportunities to dialogue (Ozkan, 2010). More attention is given to the discussion of online interaction in the next section.

Planning and instructional decisions. Next, best practices involve careful planning and making instructional decisions. Again, pre-instructional strategies involves the process of deciding how to implement the five basic elements of cooperative learning in a lesson (Berry, 2008; Johnson et al., 2008). An integral step in making pre-instructional decisions is that instructors outline objectives and goals, which are for the purpose of communicating the learning activities that will engage students (Wu et al., 2008). Another integral step in making pre-instructional decisions is deciding group size. Koutselini (2009) and Johnson et al. (2008) agree that group sizes need to be small. In fact, according to Johnson et al. (2008), an optimal group is a pair and a group larger than four is too large. After deciding group size, instructors need to decide on the method for assigning groups. Instructors can group students randomly or by similarities or differences.

Moreover, instructors need to make decisions on creating the actual activity, which should involve roles for students, room arrangement, and materials to be used (Johnson et al., 2008). Moreover, the activity itself should include the five basic elements

(Nagel, 2008). In addition, a clear explanation of what is expected in the activity and clearly outlined criteria for success is paramount (Berry, 2008; Johnson et al., 2008; Koutselini, 2009). A post activity should be included to help monitor students' success and provide opportunities for intervention when students need help (Johnson et al., 2008). Moreover, the practice of monitoring and intervening should produce measurable results. Measurable results include the effectiveness of self-participation, the effectiveness of group performance, the perception of learning, and opinions on group improvement (Johnson et al., 2008; Nagel, 2008). Students measure the aforementioned qualities; however, some instructor-led evaluations include feedback, individual grades, students' notable practice of social skills (Hutchinson, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008). Lastly, as a part of the post activity, giving out rewards and allowing time for celebration is integral to building interdependence and student positive perception of the learning strategy (Johnson et al., 2008).

Conflict resolution. The last area of best practices discussed in the literature is the best practices that help instructors to resolve conflicts in groups. The first step in resolving conflicts is to identify possible dysfunction (Hsuing, 2010). Both Hsuing (2010) and Johnson et al. (2008) agree that identifying conflicts starts with instructors monitoring groups for off-task behaviors, disagreements, student absences, and low achievement. Moreover, understanding the students beforehand helps instructors to resolve or alleviate conflicts. Knowledge of students' previous learning experiences, interests, current skills and knowledge, and culture are all integral characteristics that instructors should know to avoid problems (Hutchinson, 2007).

Another aspect of avoiding conflicts involves conflict barrier groups (Corcoran & Sim, 2009). These types of groups are created to possibly withstand conflict. To make group possible conflict resistant, instructors should use small groups and randomly assign group members. In addition, using positive interdependence strengthens group cohesion (Johnson et al., 2008). Johnson et al. (2008) and Nagel (2008) both echo the idea of structuring positive interdependence so that groups are poised for avoiding conflict. The most important best practice in conflict resolution, however, is that instructors try to avoid splitting dysfunctional groups (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2006). In order to avoid splitting groups that are having problems, instructors can help groups negotiate agreements on working, and instructors can hold student mediation meetings to help students work out their differences amicably and professionally.

Benefits of Cooperative Learning Groups

The benefits of cooperative learning are heavily outlined in Johnson et al. (2008). The first benefit from the literature is that cooperative learning increases productivity as students work harder to reach a goal. This increase in productivity leads to increased intrinsic motivation. In fact, Johnson et al. (2008) and Salinas and Garr (2009) agree with that increased intrinsic motivation may increase a student's interest in learning. In addition, Koutselini (2009) agrees with Johnson et al. (2008) that cooperative learning fosters higher level thinking skills in students. The most specific skill that is encouraged is creative thinking. Finally, Salinas and Garr (2009) agrees with Johnson et al. (2008) that encouraging groups to set learning goals is a major predictor of success. Thus, individual in groups are more self-regulated as a result of leaning to set goals within their groups (Cocoran & Sim, 2009).

The next benefit of cooperative learning stems from increasing positive relationships amongst students in groups. There is a higher morale in groups where students feel that they receive personal and academic support from their instructor and group peers (Thorton et al., 2001). In groups, good personal and academic support helps students to unify in their groups, which in turn may help students to accept and value diversity. Johnson et al. (2008) agrees Salinas and Garr (2009) with that learner-centered strategies like cooperative learning are linked to a decreased level of peer rejection and an increased level of tolerance and acceptance of diversity and multiculturalism.

Finally, cooperative learning benefits stable psychological health in students. Students are helped in their psychological adjustment cognitively and metacognitively (Salinas & Garr, 2009). These cognitive and metacognitive qualities involve students in understanding the learning process, valuing helping others, and becoming aware of thinking and learning. Next, students are helped psychologically in areas of the self. Cooperative learning helps students' self-confidence, self-esteem, self-identity, social development, and social competence (Salinas & Garr, 2009). In addition, this self-knowledge encourages coping mechanisms for the anxieties and fears that students may encounter in the learning environment.

Chapter Summary

This chapter features a discussion of literature relevant to social networking, the writing process, and cooperative learning groups. First, a section on social networking features a definition of social networking, a discussion of the five basic elements in a cooperative learning social networking environment, and a critique of social networking studies. Next, a discussion of the writing process features a section on the definition of

the writing process, a section on cooperative learning elements and the writing process, and a section of social networking elements and the writing process. In the discussion of cooperative learning groups, the main areas featured are a definition of cooperative learning, components of cooperative learning, opposites of cooperative learning, best practices of cooperative learning, benefits, and a critique of cooperative learning studies.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The methodology for this study contains the following sections. First, a discussion of the methodology design outlines the strategies used for collecting and analyzing data. Second, a discussion of the context describes the setting where the study took place. Third, a description of the participants is provided. Next, is a description of a pilot study. Following are descriptions of the data collection and data analysis. Then, trustworthiness and rigor is discussed. Finally, reflexivity is discussed.

Design

Four distinct characteristics emerge from Merriam (1998) that define and categorize basic qualitative studies and thus categorize this study as such. First, researchers who attempt basic qualitative study patterns are interested in understanding “perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (p. 11). This particular study concerns student perceptions of how a social networking tool helps them pre-write in groups to maximize ideas for an essay. As a basic qualitative study, the methodological design hinges on the outcome of understanding perspective of the participants in groups. Second, two common methods of data collection for basic qualitative studies are interviewing and document analysis. This study uses both methods via semi-structured interviewing of the participants in groups and analyzing the transcripts from writing samples, interviews, the tool posts, and the final essay. Third, themes or patterns were established as a result of document analysis. This study uses a general qualitative analysis process by conducting two rounds of open coding. Likewise, tool posts, group observations, and the clusters and thesis statements were analyzed to establish further

connection of the groups' uses of the posts to help them cluster and create thesis statements individually and as a group. Fourth, basic qualitative studies use themes to further illuminate a process. The analysis for this study aids in the understanding cooperative learning groups perceive a social networking tool aids them in the prewriting process.

Context

The study took place at one of two satellite locations affiliated with MSCC. The satellite campus is situated in the rural South. The particular satellite location in this study offers both developmental and general education courses that transfer to most four-year institutions within the state college system. The community college grants the associate of science degree, the associate of arts degree, and several certificates. All students who are enrolled must take and pass general education courses before obtaining a degree or certificate; however, not all students are seeking admittance to a four-year institution upon completion of the requirements.

The satellite location offers all of the amenities to help students with their professional and educational goals. The location houses a student support services office, a Learning Resource Center (LRC) complete with a computer lab, computer labs for classes and testing, faculty offices, tutorial areas, commons area, and administrative offices. Both full time faculty and adjunct faculty support the general education of the satellite location. The satellite location alone serves over one-thousand full and part-time students. Day, evening, and weekend courses are offered to accommodate scheduling. Moreover, a semester system (3 months of instruction), continuing-education system (length varies by course curricula), module system or accelerated schedule (6-8 weeks of

instruction), and online education system (parallel to any of the aforementioned schedules) offers more choices for students to satisfy requirements. Lastly, the college is an accredited state facility.

Participants

Nine participants were selected from two sections of DSW 800 and ENG 101. The course DSW 800 was the focus course for the study; however, some students enrolled in ENG 101 are former DSW 800 students who still need help with generating ideas to create essays. The participants were identified by their instructors as students who would be motivated to participate in the study to receive extra help with prewriting. In addition, criterion-based sampling is defined as a procedure whereby all of the individuals chosen to participate in the study meet set criteria (Creswell, 2003). Each of the participants met the criterion of being enrolled in a developmental English course (DSW 800) or freshman level composition (ENG 101) at the satellite location.

A description of the participants of the study involves describing the participants' student status, pseudonyms, and course group. Students at the satellite location of community college can both be categorized as traditional and non-traditional with a greater number of the students being categorized as non-traditional or adult learners. Traditional students are considered those students who are categorized as being "full-time post-secondary students between the ages of 18 and 24" while non-traditional students are categorized as "those who do not fit [the aforementioned] definition" (Andres & Carpenter 1997, p. 5). Of the nine participants, three are considered traditional students. The other six participants were non-traditional students. The participants were asked to participate, and they signed consent forms. Then, they were given the following

pseudonyms and group assignments. Chris, Lisa, and Keisha were assigned to the group DSW 800 1. Beth and Sally were assigned to the group DSW 800 2. Ebony and Molly were assigned to the group ENG 101 1. Kevin and Tameka were assigned to the group ENG 101 2. Table 1 depicts the participant characteristics.

Table 1

Participants' Groups, Number in Groups, Ages of Participants, and Pseudonyms

Group	Number in Group	Ages	Pseudonyms
DSW 800 1	3	19, 55, 28	Chris, Lisa, & Keisha
DSW 800 2	2	32, 38	Beth & Sally
ENG 101 1	2	19, 37	Ebony & Molly
ENGL 101 2	2	19, 32	Kevin & Tameka

Pilot Study

The pilot study was performed by the researcher one year prior to this study. The pilot study helped the researcher to observe how the usage of a social networking tool might influence writing in cooperative groups.

Study. The pilot study examined the effectiveness of using a social networking tool to prewrite and how using the tool to prewrite affected the entire writing process. The results of the study were used to make changes in the methods for an actual study concerning the usage of a social networking tool to aid the writing process.

Context. The setting of the pilot study was a freshman English composition class at a community college in the rural South. The class contained approximately 24 students and met for 55 minutes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for 15 weeks during the fall semester.

Participants. All of the students taking the course were first-year college students. The participants consisted of racial make-up of Caucasian and African Americans. Also, the gender ratio in the class was 18 women to 6 men.

Method. The pilot study was separated into three phases: pre-teaching, which included teaching about the writing process and training on the use of the social networking tool; the activity, which included the academic task of using microblogging and the writing process to produce a product of an essay; and post interviews, which included questions related to the use of the social networking tool, cooperative groups, and the writing process.

After pre-teaching and training and before the activity, students were placed into cooperative learning groups of three. The students were grouped into threes according to alphabetical order on the class roster. The social networking tool used was Hootcourse, which is a microblogging tool that allows people to post and tag ideas online.

During the pre-teaching segment, the basic elements of the writing process were taught. Brainstorming, clustering, the thesis statement, introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and conclusion were taught. This segment took approximately 2 weeks in a 55-minute Monday, Wednesday, Friday class.

Simultaneously, training on using Hootcourse happened. After the participants were trained, they were given time to practice using Hootcourse to communicate with one another. Training occurred in two of the class periods during the 2-week pre-teaching segment.

After teaching and training occurred, students were given an activity. Topics were provided for essay choices. Students were instructed to post ideas about their topic to the

people in their groups. Students were also encouraged to dialogue further about their ideas and tag the ideas that belonged to their group. As added assistance, students were encouraged to view other tweets from other groups. This process of tweeting was the brainstorming segment of the writing process. After posting and collecting ideas, students were responsible for meeting to cluster ideas by grouping like ideas and eliminating irrelevant ideas. After clustering, students worked together in to create a thesis statement that represented the group ideas from the cluster. After devising a thesis, groups worked together to come up with three sentences of support for the thesis. These sentences together with the thesis became the introductory paragraph for the essay. Each group member then chose a sentence of support to develop into a paragraph. Groups then reconvened to put the paragraphs together. Lastly, using the ideas from the introductory paragraph, the groups worked together to create a conclusion for the essay.

Once the activity was completed, post interviews were conducted from an interview protocol that contained potential questions for the final study. A copy of the initial interview protocol is posted in Appendix A. Each of the groups was interviewed with three or more questions from each of the protocol questions relevant to the actual study until all of the questions were asked. In addition, faculty/ advisor recommendations were sought.

Changes. The changes made to the planning of the current study involved the interview protocol questions, Hootcourse usage, the addition of an initial writing sample, and the course level. As a result of trying out a large number of questions from the initial interview protocol, the interview protocol for the current study was edited for questions that would produce a clearer picture of student perceptions. Secondly, Hootcourse usage

in the pilot study was limited to using the tool posts for the prewriting stage of the essay process. For the current study, Hootcourse posts were referenced throughout the process rather than only during the initial stage. Faculty/ advisor input recommended a writing sample prior to applying the strategies to further observe the treatment of the strategies. Lastly, the strategies were applied to DSW 800 students, who were enrolled in a prerequisite level of composition and ENG 101 students, who had taken DSW 800 and who were struggling with the prewriting stage of the writing process.

Data Collection

The data collected from this study were gathered from the following: (1) posts from a social networking tool called Hootcourse, (2) cluster and thesis statements, (3) semi-structured interviews of cooperative writing groups, and (4) observations of groups during face-to-face interaction. Each of these is described below.

Hootcourse posts. Hootcourse is a client application for Twitter, which is a social networking tool that allows only 140 characters of type per post (Barrow & McKenzie, 2009; Manzo, 2009). This tool was chosen because it provides an online classroom setting for social networking. Each participant had his or her own user ID and password to post individually within a group. All of the posted ideas together served as one brainstorm for the group. Screen captures of the Hootcourse interface and posts are housed in Appendix B.

Cluster and thesis statement. Following the steps in prewriting, the student participants would move from brainstorming to developing cluster maps to writing thesis statements (Jackson, 2009). To help document this process, the researcher created a handout to guide students in developing a cluster map and provides a space for thesis statements to be recorded. These artifacts were used with the Hootcourse posts in order

to depict the individual and group processes for prewriting. A copy of the handout is posted in Appendix C. In addition, a copy of a participant's completed handout is posted in Appendix D.

Semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are interviews that allow the researcher to follow an interview protocol as well as interject other subsequent questions as necessary (Creswell, 2003). The importance of using semi-structure interviews is that these types of interviews allow the researcher to have a structured, organized approach to interviewing. However, these interviews can be altered and tailored to each interview situation (Patton, 1990). Both the participants' words and written notes served as data collected from the interviews. Each interview was transcribed and pseudonyms were assigned on the transcripts.

The interview protocol for this study featured three sets of eight questions each corresponding with the research questions for the study. The interview protocol was aligned to the three primary research questions. All of the questions listed on the interview protocol were open-ended. Table 2 shows a summary of each interview protocol question aligned with the research questions addressed.

Table 2

Research Questions and Interview Protocol Questions

Research Questions	Semi-structured Interview	Data Sources and Artifacts	Data Analysis
1. How do students perceive a social networking tool influences prewriting in cooperative groups?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe how you felt when you've worked in groups before now? 2. In what ways did the tool change or maintain your attitudes about working in groups? 3. In what ways did the tool help you to agree on ideas in your group? 4. In what ways did the tool make sharing ideas convenient? 5. In what ways did the tool help you to fulfill your responsibility to the group? 6. In what ways did the tool help you to have organization of your ideas as a group? 7. In what ways did the tool make your face-to-face meetings easier? 8. In what ways did the tool encourage you to cooperate? 	1. Semi-structured interviews	Constant comparative method to discern codes, categories, and themes

(Table Continues)

Table 2 (continued)

Research Questions and Interview Protocol Questions

Research Questions	Semi Structured Interview	Data Sources and Artifacts	Data Analysis
2. What are students' perceptions of a social networking tool?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what ways would you use the tool in your personal life? 2. In what ways did the tool make working convenient? 3. In what ways did the tool help you to think? 4. In what ways did the tool help you to communicate? 5. What things would you change about the tool? 6. What other tools did you use to help you use the tool? 7. What were some ways you used the tool for other purposes? 8. What are some recommendations you might give for using the tool in other classes? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transcripts 2. Social networking tool posts, clusters, and thesis statements 3. Observation notes 	Constant comparative method to discern codes, categories, and themes

(Table Continues)

Table 2 (continued)

Research Questions and Interview Protocol Questions

Research Questions	Semi-Structured Interview	Data Sources and Artifacts	Data Analysis
3. How do cooperative groups work together to prewrite?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe how you felt when you've worked in groups before now? 2. In what ways did the tool change or maintain your attitudes about working in groups? 3. In what ways did the tool help you to agree on ideas in your group? 4. In what ways did the tool make sharing ideas convenient? 5. In what ways did the tool help you to fulfill your responsibility to the group? 6. In what ways did the tool help you to have organization of your ideas as a group? 7. In what ways did the tool make your face-to-face meetings easier? 8. In what ways did the tool encourage you to cooperate? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transcripts 2. Social networking tool posts, clusters, and thesis statements 3. Observation notes 	Constant comparative method to discern codes, categories, and themes

Observations. Data collected from observations included memos and notes written during the face-to-face meetings of the participants. The purpose of observing the participants was important to allow the researcher to examine the participants' behaviors in a natural setting so that further analysis beyond the interview could reveal more understanding of the participants' experiences (Patton, 1990). The observations helped identify the five basic elements as these characteristics are underscored by Johnson et al. (2008) as integral to cooperative group success. An example of researcher notes is housed in Appendix E.

Procedures

To collect the data, participants were solicited from three sections of DSW 800 and two sections of ENG 101. The participants were identified by the instructors of the courses as students who were motivated by receiving help with prewriting. Two groups were formed from the DSW sections and two groups were formed from the ENG 101 sections. Three students were placed in DSW 800 1. Two students were placed in DSW 800 2. Two students were placed in both ENG 101 1 and ENG 101 2. The students for each group came from the same classes. Each participant signed a consent form to participate in the study, and the participants were provided an incentive for participation at the end of each interview.

The study took place over a 6-week period. Each group met a total of three to four times with a final individual or group meeting of interviewing included. The initial meeting consisted of logging into the tool and a lesson on brainstorming, clustering, and thesis statements. A handout was given at the first meeting that included the lesson and subsequent activities. The participants completed the handout when they completed the

brainstorms, cluster concept map, and group thesis statement. The procedures for posting to Hootcourse and completing the handout are described next.

During the first meeting, the participants were allowed to post brainstorming ideas on one of the following topics of choosing a career, becoming an adult, being successful, or overcoming a challenge. At the end of the first meeting, the participants were given an assignment to post more brainstorms or tweets to the tool. The participants were encouraged to use other devices such as phones to post to the tool. In the next meeting, the groups clustered on the concept map those ideas from the tweets by making decisions together on the ideas that the group felt was best for creating a thesis statement on the handout. The group chose up to ten ideas. The groups then eliminated those ideas down to four by deciding together which ideas seemed best for a thesis statement. After narrowing ideas down to four, the groups place the ideas on a handout where a cluster diagram was provided. After clustering the ideas on the concept map, each participant examined the cluster concept map to create an individual thesis statement. Once the participants created their own thesis statements, they worked together in their groups to create one group thesis statement from the individual preliminary thesis statements.

Each group was observed during face-to-face meetings, and I wrote observational notes shortly after each meeting. To observe the groups, I sat at a short distance watching the groups interact and recording their actions. I only interacted when the participants' asked questions or needed clarity for the activities during the face-to-face meetings.

After the completion of the prewriting activities, participants were interviewed individually or in groups as a result of scheduling conflicts with group members. Chris and Keisha of group DSW 800 1 were interviewed individually. Lisa of group DSW 800

1 interview with Beth of group DSW 800 2. Sally of group DSW 800 2 interviewed individually. Molly and Ebony of group ENG 101 1 interviewed together. Kevin and Tameka of group ENG 101 2 interviewed individually. The interviews were approximately 1 hour, and the interviews were recorded and transcribed. A final segment of the study included member checks. No changes were made as a result of the member checks. Table 3 depicts the weeks of the study.

Table 3

Weeks of Research, Meetings, Activities and Duration

Week	Meeting	Activity	Duration
Weeks 1-5	Group meetings as scheduled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent forms • Grouping participants • Log into tool • Prewriting lesson • Groups post to tool • Groups post overnight to tool • Groups refer to tweets to cluster • Participants create individual thesis statements • Groups create a thesis statement • Groups, partial groups, or individuals meet for interviews 	1 hour per meeting
Week 6	Transcriptions and Member Checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcriptions emailed to interview participants 	1 week

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, this study required a general qualitative analysis process (Creswell, 2003). The data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993) to define specific categories of data. The constant comparative method involves the researcher in a process of data collection and category development, which includes interviewing, note-taking, analyzing, and categorizing data by themes and codes, which allow the researcher to establish a connection amongst the various areas of data.

The analysis for this study concerns using a social networking tool to prewrite in cooperative groups. Two rounds of coding were conducted to establish themes and codes. The first round of coding was open coding, which allows the research to discern hierarchical themes or categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). From the transcriptions, the actual words of the participants were categorized from reoccurring concepts. Each similar concept was highlighted in the same color. A second round of coding combined codes to create categories. Next, each of the color-coded concept categories was grouped on separate sheets of paper where the data were reduced by combining like words under forming categories. The words or concepts that appear the most in each category became the theme of the category. A copy of the coding is posted in Appendix F. Notes were taken to record prevalence of similar concepts, and an audit trail was kept to record events as they occur during the study. The tool posts were also examined for tweet characteristics. The clusters, individual thesis statements, and group thesis statements were examined to find a pattern of ideas generated from the tweets. Table 4 summarizes the alignment of the research questions, data sources, and methods of analysis. Also,

Table 5 summarizes the prewriting stages, tool usage, and effects of tool usage on prewriting.

Table 4

Research Questions, Data Sources, and Analysis Methods

Research Questions	Variables	Data Sources	Data Analysis
1 What are students' perceptions of a social networking tool?	1. Social networking	1. Transcripts 2. Social networking tool posts, clusters, and thesis statements 3. Observation notes	Constant comparative method to discern codes, categories, and themes
2 How do students perceive a social networking tool influences prewriting in cooperative groups?	2. The writing process		
3 How do cooperative writing groups work together to prewrite?	3. Cooperative learning		

Table 5

Prewriting Stages, Tool Usage, and Effects of Tool Usage on Prewriting

Prewriting stages	Tool Usage	Effects
1. Introduction of the rhetorical situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topic for brainstorming, clustering, and the thesis statement is introduced 	None
2. Brainstorming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tool used to post brainstorms and tag similar ideas Tool used as repository of ideas; students refer back to ideas 	Tool posts serve as a record of ideas for more clarity and consistency during drafting
3. Clustering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tool used as repository of ideas; students refer back to ideas 	Tool posts serve as a record of ideas for more clarity and consistency during revising
4. Thesis statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tool used as repository of ideas; students refer back to ideas 	Final thesis statement reflect group's ideas from the tool posts

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To establish trustworthiness and rigor, researchers should use many methods to create strength and credibility for the research (Merriam, 1998). Triangulation, a term often used in qualitative study, is a concept whereby multiple data sources and methods are used to establish support for findings. The word triangulation implies the strength of

geometric stability and thus promotes the image of strong, trustworthy findings (Patton, 2002). The multiple data sources that were used to corroborate findings are the group interview transcriptions, researcher notes, the tool posts entries, clusters, and thesis statements serve as multiple data sources that strengthened the study. First, the tool posts were analyzed to find patterns of tweet characteristics. Next, the interview transcripts were analyzed to find patterns of perceptions. Finally, the clusters, individual thesis statements, and group thesis statements were analyzed to find patterns of ideas generated from the tool posts that subsisted through the clusters, individual thesis statements, and the group thesis statements.

Other methods ensued to establish trustworthiness and rigor was the keeping of an audit trail, member checking, advisor debriefing, and thick, rich description. An audit trail is a paper trail that includes notes, raw data, and any other document or process that aids in the research decisions for the progression of the study (Halpern, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail of the notes, coding, posts, clusters, and thesis statements were kept. Member checking, which involves participants getting a chance to view the results and comment on the results (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998), helped to solidify confidence that the results were accurately portrayed. Member checks were performed during week six of the study. The participants had time to read the transcription from their group interviews to allow them a chance to change or clarify any information from the interviews.

During the course of the study, an advisor aided the processes of correction and decision-making. The advisor is a university professor in the school's college of

education and department of instruction and curriculum leadership. The advisor checked the research and provided feedback during debriefing sessions.

Lastly, Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Merriam (1988) define rich, thick descriptions. In short, rich, thick descriptions are intricate depictions that enable the reader to make comparison and analyses when there are overlapping characteristics. In this study, the participants' comments from the interview transcriptions, their tool posts, clusters, thesis statements, and interactions during group prewriting were analyzed and are described in detail to illuminate the perceptions of the students and reveal changes in cognitive processes as a result of using a social networking tool for prewriting.

Reflexivity

This subject of study is of great importance to me as an instructor of community college composition and literature. As a teacher who has taught the areas of writing from developmental writing to senior level undergraduate writing in both four-year institutions and a two-year institution, I have been privy to follow several of my students from developmental writing to senior level undergraduate writing. Some students seem to overcome their deficiencies rather quickly while others leave college and still have the same deficiencies in writing. Understanding how cooperative learning and social networking help students write better enables me to examine the effects of trying strategies like cooperative learning and social networking that are not readily ensued in the developmental and college-level writing classrooms.

Although I am not currently teaching development writing courses, and I have not taught a developmental writing course recently, this study is relevant to me as a writing

instructor because development students eventually reach college level composition. Oftentimes, these post-developmental writing students come to college level composition developmental studies class. Therefore, my interest is in understanding how strategies might help these students, who are usually new to college writing, understand their own perceptions of the strategies that are used on them and for them as well as help me to understand how students perceive these strategies to be effective in determining if the strategies are effective. I believe that when both the students and instructors understand how strategies are perceived, both parties become more adept at getting to the core of individual writing issues that students have.

My hope is that the pairing of cooperative learning and social networking helps students to understand the writing process better, which in turn may lead to better essays. However, I am biased toward the belief that using cooperative learning and social networking, separately or together, works in any setting because both make use of social interaction, which makes learning student-centered. This bias affects this study because I am more invested in making these tactics work than finding that the strategies together do not help students to deem their writing skills as positively affected as a result of cooperative learning groups and social networking. Nonetheless, whether or not the strategies improve student writing or even the perception of progress is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is to better understand how students think about and practice writing to benefit the community of instructors who teach writing at the college level by contributing to the on-going conversation on how we get our students to write better essays.

CHAPTER 4

Findings and Interpretations

Three themes emerged as evidence of the participants' experiences during the study. The themes are represented in the order of each group of interview protocol questions corresponding with each research question. First, the theme of *usefulness* represented useful tool, behaviors, and results. Next, the theme of *group interaction* reflected positive interdependence, individual accountability, group processing, social skills, and face-to-face interaction. Finally, the theme of *knowledge representation* encapsulated the participants' views on making thinking visible and sharing ideas. Throughout this chapter, the names of the student participants have all been removed from the data and have been given pseudonyms. Quotations used indicate verbatim remarks by the participants. Few grammar and spelling edits have been made to the participants' quotes in order to most accurately represent their views, as well as depict their voices. Also, the featured participants' statements are representative of the overall perceptions of each participant.

Usefulness

Usefulness as a theme is defined as how well the participants deemed the activity to be helpful for learning to prewrite, as well as how well the participants perceived that help was available for completing the activity. Three categories comprise the theme of usefulness. First is the category of useful tools. Second is category of useful behaviors. Last is the category of useful results.

Useful tool. Hootcourse was useful because the participants perceived that it helped them to generate ideas. Codes that convey the participants' attitudes about the

usefulness of Hootcourse support the participants' perceptions of how the activity was useful for learning to prewrite. The participants felt that Hootcourse aided rather than inhibited generating ideas. The participants perceived Hootcourse to be useful because it was "convenient" and user-friendly. Acquiring or generating ideas because the tool is easy to use encouraged students to use additional tools to acquire or generate information, which helped them to maximize the potential for ideas (Mills & Tincher, 2003).

Convenient and user-friendly. Convenience and user-friendliness of Hootcourse is important because technology that aids learning has to be easily adaptable to facilitate the learning rather than block learning (Joyce & Brown, 2009). The participants felt the convenience and ease contributed to their uses and helpfulness in learning to prewrite. The participants' perceptions about the convenience and user-friendliness of Hootcourse were similar. For example, Kevin and Tameka said the following:

Kevin: I found [the tool] to be very convenient because you can take time and come up with ideas, and your other group partner posts ideas and you can mix their ideas with your ideas which might make you very successful at writing a paragraph.

Tameka: [The tool] was convenient and fun, so I was anxious to put something on there, and then the fact that you could see what somebody else was writing.

Molly's words conveyed convenience because she used the word anytime to show that the tool allowed her to be flexible time-wise. She said, "Yeah. And you can go back and add more [to the tool] anytime you want to. And if you even have to you can even change it." Lisa went on to express how liked the easiness of using Hootcourse because she did not have to use many words to post an idea. She did not feel inhibited because she was only allowed to post a few words. Lisa said, "It's very good that it doesn't allow you to use a lot of words." Since the participants' words conveyed that the tool was convenient

and user-friendly, the tool could be considered as a low threshold tool, which provided the user with a quick and easy learning curve for using the tool (Grant & Mims, 2009).

Confidence and motivation. The participants' perceptions that they gained confidence and motivation are important because these concepts are linked to the participants using the tool frequently to generate more ideas. When the participants were confident and motivated about their ideas, they were poised to engage in more opportunities where ideas are contributed and shared. Their perceptions about being confident and motivated resonated in each interview. In one of the focus group interviews, the participants were asked about how using the tool helped them to prewrite:

Researcher: How did the tool help you to generate ideas?

Ebony: I think it helped me really get started.

Molly: Yeah cause we were throwing stuff in there constantly, and then you can always go back and see what you've written, throw some more and see what other people write. It starts you.

Ebony and Molly conveyed that they were confident and motivated because they both had positive attitudes about how the tool helped them to generate ideas. Likewise, Lisa, revealed a positive attitude in her interview when she said, "I also liked it because it helped me to share ideas and improve and expand my knowledge, to be able to do more." When Lisa revealed that she was able to do more, she had to be confident and motivated to want to continue generating ideas. The frequency of her posts revealed that she was confident, motivated, and poised to engage more with her group members. Likewise Kevin expressed words that actually conveyed the spirit of this category when he said the following:

Kevin: If the group is posting different ideas, each individual posts ideas, everyone could come together; be better motivated, lots of folks like to post, you

might be able to get more people involved... The tool encouraged me by looking at [my partner's] ideas and my ideas—our ideas were similar so we could work it out to come up with a thesis statement.

Kevin using the words *motivated* and *encouraged* conveyed confidence and motivation

because he was motivated to post because he was familiar with posting, which in turn

made him confident to post more and encouraged because his partner was posting, too.

Moreover, confidence and motivation are useful for helping to increase a student's

perceived level of successfulness (Keller, 2000).

Accessibility. The accessibility of Hootcourse was assessed when the participants felt they were able to use additional tools to post to Hootcourse. Multiple tools are useful for extending time for acquiring and generating ideas since social networking applications can be accessed from any computer or mobile device (Huang & Behara, 2007). Molly conveyed accessibility of Hootcourse was useful when she said, "I could do it in my car if I wanted to; with my cell phone." Likewise Ebony expressed, "Yeah anywhere." Because both Molly and Ebony expressed that they were able to access Hootcourse with other devices and in places other than a computer lab, their words were interpreted as distinguishing the tool as accessible. In addition in two separate interviews, Tameka and Beth conveyed the following:

Tameka: I used my phone. I actually went on twitter and posted from twitter...I could pull out my phone and post whatever was on my mind.

Beth: I used both a home computer and the phone. Both were very easy at your service pretty much. Very convenient.

Again, both Tameka and Beth's words were interpreted as distinguishing Hootcourse as accessible because they both were able to access the tool from other devices. Beth, specifically, added an underscore to accessibility when she said that using her home computer and phone made Hootcourse convenient. When opportunities to contribute

ideas are maximized content knowledge is easily integrated with the activity making ideas instant and frequent (Joyce & Brown, 2009). Therefore in connection with the literature, both Joyce and Brown (2009) and Bowers-Campbell (2008) assert that interaction in a social networking environment is immediate, frequent, and social. In addition participants posting immediate, frequent, and social posts demonstrate social networking lingo by abbreviating words, using text lingo, and posting sentence fragments. The following posts are examples of both on-topic posts and off-topic social posts:

Chris [on-topic post]: im a good cook as well

Keisha [on-topic post]: Great with children

Lisa [on-topic post]: married

Chris [off-topic, social post]: [You're a] nut.

Chris [off-topic, social post]: love to try new things with Keisha in art class.

Molly of group ENG 101 1 posted thirteen posts. The following are some examples of her on-topic posts on the topic of choosing a career.

Molly [on-topic post example 1]: What brings out ur abilities

Molly [on-topic post example 2]: What are ur likes/dislikes

Molly [on-topic post example 3]: What are your talents

Molly [on-topic post example 4]: Good benefits

Kevin of group ENG 101 2 posted the most of any participant in the study with sixteen posts on the topic of becoming an adult.

Kevin [on-topic post example 1]: taking care of his or her household

Kevin [on-topic post example 2]: important decisions

Kevin [on-topic post example 3]: stressful life situations

Kevin [on-topic post example 4]: business, paying bills, have a job

When a student is able to contribute to the social networking environment in immediate, frequent, and social ways, a sense of community is established, and interaction is enhanced (Nicholson, 2005).

Useful results. Useful results were the effects of the participants perceptions of Hootcourse as useful and their useful behaviors during prewriting. The participants' words in each interview revealed that the results that occurred when they used Hootcourse and engaged in useful behaviors were meaningful enough to make the participants feel as though they had achieved success. The participants emphasized in each of their interviews that they felt that they were able to do more or know more as a result of using Hootcourse and as a result of engaging in useful behaviors. For example, three participants, Lisa, Kevin, and Tameka revealed that they were able to do more or know more as a result of using the tool and engaging in useful behaviors. First, Lisa said, "Well, for me we were are all working towards one goal and we got it." Lisa's words revealed that she was able to do more in that she felt she was working toward one goal with her group. Next, Kevin said, "Kevin: I kinda looked at my partner's ideas and looked at my ideas and noticed a lot of similarities that would help us come up with a thesis statement for our topic." Unlike Lisa, Kevin's words seemed to mean that he was able to know more since he recognized similarities between his and his partner's ideas. Last, Tameka, Kevin's partner, said the following:

Tameka: The part where you brainstorming, I liked that and I think I want to use that for future essays, and then I love to write don't get me wrong, but when you're starting off you don't know where to start. When you look on Hootcourse it gives me a start and I can add [ideas].

Tameka was able to add more ideas as a result of using Hootcourse. Developed and organize ideas were useful results for the participants because writing process, specifically the prewriting stage, is enhanced when students are able to use a social networking tool helps develop and organize ideas (Bacci, 2008; Boyd, 2008; Reid, 2008). Moreover, interaction is enhanced when the environment is non-threatening (Boyd, 2008).

Group Interaction

Group interaction as a theme was defined as how well the participants perceived their group experiences regarding their interaction with their groups and their contributions to their groups. Five categories comprised the theme: (1) positive interdependence; (2) individual accountability; (3) third is group processing; (4) social skills; and (5) face-to-face interaction.

Positive Interdependence. The definition of positive interdependence is that it is a group atmosphere whereby the individual benefits from participating in the group, and the group benefits from the individual participating in the group (Johnson et al., 2008). Positive interdependence is relevant to group interaction because positive interdependence requires that group members rely on one another to complete a task by interacting with one another. The participants' responses in each interview revealed that positive interdependence occurred when they said that they worked together and shared ideas. The literature supports that positive interdependence occurs when individuals work together in a goal-oriented way (Nagel, 2008).

Working together and sharing ideas. The participants' perceptions conveyed that working together and sharing ideas are relevant to positive interdependence because

mutual goals, joint rewards, shared resources, and assigned roles are integral (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2008) to maximizing interaction. For example, Sally said the following of her experiences: “I think it is more interesting to work in groups, you might learn a lot better. You’d want to make sure that [everyone was participating].” Sally’s words reveal that positive interdependence occurred in her group because she conveyed that she had an interest in everyone participating. Likewise, an interview with Chris revealed enthusiasm for participating in a group. His words revealed that positive interdependence occurred in his group because he had a positive attitude about working in the group, and he felt that working in a group helped him to generate ideas:

Researcher: Ok so, I’m safe in saying that you would choose to prewrite again as a group?

Chris: Yes mam.

Researcher: Ok, why?

Chris: Umm, it made it easier to come up with ideas; it was fun to do.

Lisa also she said the following about her experiences:

Lisa: I could. Well it’s like a group of people talking together not the whole world—you two have a conversation that you might not be together [physically] but you are together.

Positive interdependence is evident in her words because her ideas about using the tool and working in a group were that she emphasized the intimacy of her experience. Lisa and her group members Chris and Keisha were a small group of three. Small groups are necessary to make positive interdependence thrive. In addition, Beth, from another small group of two, revealed the following about her group experience:

Beth: I think it gives you a little more brain power so-to-speak. There is more than one person. Two heads are always better than one.

Beth's words exhibit that positive interdependence occurred in her group because she relied on her partner to help her as well as she contribute to the group to help her partner. Observations of the groups working face-to-face reveal evidence of positive interdependence as well. The following is one example of my observation of group DSW 800 1 that shows evidence of positive interdependence in the groups.

During the three meetings, the participants were observed to find evidence for their interactions as a cooperative learning group. During their interactions, the participants seemed to communicate well. Each participant took turns talking, which is evidence of good communication. Also another sign of good communication is eye contact. The participants frequently made eye contact with one another as they communicated about their posts, cluster, and thesis statements. Moreover, the group seemed to work well together as there were moments of silence as they were concentrating on selecting ideas. Most often Keisha was the first to speak after the moments of deliberation over ideas. However, Lisa chimed in ideas frequently. These two were the most vocal during the meetings. More evidence of the participants working well together is that they seem to enjoy working together. There were frequent periods of down time when the participants were really playful.

Positive interdependence can be seen in this observation because the participants were not in conflict as they work. The observation conveys a positive group atmosphere because the participants listened and communicated amicably with one another. When the individuals in the group perceive that sharing their ideas meet the expected outcomes positive interdependence is achieved (Koutselini, 2009).

Individual accountability. Individual accountability is defined as the environment within a group whereby individuals are responsible for contributing in order to help the group reach its goals (Nagel, 2008). Also, individual accountability is relevant to group interaction in that individuals must feel accountable and responsible for interacting with the group (Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, 2008). Individual accountability occurred with the participants because they individually contributed to the group. In an

interview with Tameka, I found that she was moved to add more ideas for her partner in hopes that adding ideas would trigger ideas for him:

Researcher: In what ways do you feel that Hootcourse helped you to fulfill your responsibility to your partner?

Tameka: He was able to look on my page, and look and see what I put on there. Anything that I put on there that might have triggered ideas for him, I could add ideas for him and he could add to.

Similarly, an interview with Kevin, he considered ways to plan for the final thesis statement prior to their meeting:

Researcher: So, would you say that Hootcourse made your face-to-face meetings a little easier?

Kevin: Yes mam, cause I had already looked at her ideas and then I looked at my ideas, so when I saw [my partner] face-to-face, I already knew what her thinking process [was]. And I knew how to plan.

Molly, in another interview expressed a good example of individual accountability when she said the following:

Molly: You're really doing it individually but then you talk amongst yourselves and then I can see what you're doing on your side and we can look together and talk about it.

Her words revealed individual accountability because she recognized that there was an individual component to the group process at large. Each of these participants' words revealed that individual accountability occurred in their groups because each individual enacted some individual responsibility to their groups. Therefore, the participants' perceptions of their group experiences regarding interaction with their groups and their contributions to their groups in that individual accountability defines the individual who is motivated to contribute to the group because the individual feels responsible and accountable to the group.

Group processing. Group processing means that groups set goals, make decisions, get feedback, and implement and follow a system of checks and balances (Johnson et al., 2008). Group processing is related to group interaction in that groups interact through communicating with one another to make decisions, give feedback, and set goals. The participants' responses reveal that they were reflective during the activity because they monitored the tool for posts, compared ideas after posting, and made decisions for next steps. In an interview with Molly and Ebony, words that revealed group processing came from both participants.

Researcher: How did Hootcourse help you to agree on ideas?

Molly: We just went through and talked to each other, deciding which one was good.

Researcher: How did you choose the ones that worked the best?

Ebony: We just took it step-by-step.

Molly: But then we had to make it flow.

Ebony: Yeah put it together.

An observation of the group revealed group processing as well. The group discussed the elimination of ideas for the cluster. The thesis statement planning involved much communication. Similarly, their words express a plan to reach a goal, which is a trait of group processing because during the process of planning they were reflective and goal-oriented (Hutchinson, 2007; Nagel, 2008).

Social skills. Social skills support the participants' perceptions of their group experiences regarding interaction with their groups and their contributions to their groups because group members who practice good social skills within a group help encourage other members of the group to participate. Four social skills relevant to the literature were demonstrated in the groups. The participants demonstrated forming skills that were the

basic social skills for the group (Ozkan, 2010). Forming skills are the basic normal behaviors for the group. My observations for group ENG 101 1 reveal their forming skills habits:

ENG 101 1: During the meetings, the observations of the participants revealed that the group had a great rapport. One example of the group's rapport was that the participants were very talkative with one another. They talked during the group posting about their ideas. They also discussed the elimination of ideas for the cluster. The thesis statement planning involved much communication. Another example of the group's great rapport was eye contact. During times of communicating, both participants were careful listeners, making eye contact as each other were communicating. A third example of the group's rapport is that the participants were very respectful of one another. They were careful not to interrupt one another when communicating. Also, during times of deliberation over ideas, the participants each waited until the other seemed to finish thinking about their ideas.

The observation reveals forming skills when the group had a good rapport with one another. Talking with each other demonstrated a forming skill because communication was initiated. Second, the participants demonstrated functioning skills that helped them maintain work relationships (Johnson et al., 2008).

Keisha: [Working in a group] helped me because a lot of times I may have an idea, but listening to another person's point-of-view is helpful. It was a lot better listening to their examples.

Keisha's words convey functioning skills because she talked about listening to others, which definitely helped her maintain a work relationship with her group members.

Likewise, Sally revealed that she used functioning skills when she realized that working with other people in group helped her to practicing functioning in future groups. She said, "umm, it was pretty interesting to work with other people; it may make me learn a lot better to work with other people." In addition, both Chris and Lisa revealed that they used functioning skills because of their perceptions of how their groups worked together. In Chris' response, he realized that working in a group was initially difficult, but in order for

the group to function, there had to be an initial start before the group could function.

Inasmuch, his words are relevant to forming skills as well. Lisa, on the other hand, revealed that the group was able to function because there was no conflict. They said the following:

Chris: Umm at first it was kinda hard for all of us to join ideas, what we all thought. Then when we started, it got easier for all of us.

Lisa: [Our team members] took [everyone's feedback] politely and respectfully. We shared and we laughed and we had a little bit of everyone putting it together and it worked. There wasn't any fussing about it.

Similarly, Molly and Ebony in another interview revealed that they used functioning skills because they maintained a working relationship with constant interaction.

Researcher: How did you ensure that both of your voices were heard?

Ebony: Umm, making eye contact—look at each other

Molly: Then I'd look at what she wrote

Ebony: Yeah and we'd talk back and forth.

Next, the participants demonstrated formulating skills during their face-to-face meetings that allowed them to perform the task (Ozkan, 2010). For example, Tameka and Kevin from group ENG 101 2 demonstrated that formulating skills were used when they said the following:

Tameka: I put it... organized [the ideas] by what would fit the [topic]. I grouped my ideas by ranking them. What went together what would make a better paragraph.

Kevin: I look at [my partner's] idea and then I looked at mine; the ideas just came together, the ideas were similar and we were basically looking at the topic together, so we basically combined our ideas together to create one thesis statement.

In Tameka's response, she talked about grouping and ranking ideas, which reveals that she performed tasks toward completing the final thesis statement. Likewise, Kevin, her partner, responded that he analyzed ideas by comparing his ideas to Tameka's ideas. He also helped combine ideas. Another good example of formulating skills in is Keisha's response.

Keisha: I wasn't just doing [prewriting] myself; I was posting and I could see somebody else's thoughts—and I thought 'ooh I could help them with that [idea]'.

Keisha, in her response, revealed that she posted, observed ideas, and was moved to further act by helping her group members. Lastly, the participants demonstrated fermenting skills that allowed them to develop and solidify skills (Munoz & Huser, 2008). Two participants Lisa and Beth revealed that they used fermenting skills when they talked about sustaining skills beyond the activity.

Researcher: What recommendations would you give for using a tool like this in another class?

Lisa: I think it would be great because there is someone to assist you. You can keep carrying on discussion and knowledge and applying it.

Beth : Yes I agree. It gives you ideas for knowledge you may not have.

An interview with Molly and Ebony revealed that they used fermenting skills when they talked about how they could use the tool in another class. They were thinking beyond the activity to imagine using Hootcourse in other ways.

Researcher: And, if we were to use Hootcourse in another class, what would be some recommendations?

Molly: It would benefit all of us especially as a group.

Ebony: Yeah.

Molly: If [other] class had the chance to use it, they would like it too. Getting ideas from everyone

Molly: Yeah, it should be used for [posting] homework, anything.

Ebony: It would definitely make [me] a better writer. We could list things as a group.

In addition, Tameka and Kevin used fermenting skills because, like Molly and Ebony, they were thinking of how the experience of the activity could be replicated.

Researcher: Would you choose to prewrite in a group or with a partner again?

Tameka: Yes, because somebody can have a better idea than you, and they can give you different ideas—something that you would have never thought of.

Researcher: In what ways did Hootcourse help you to think?

Kevin: Basically by coming up with ideas towards the topic and I can sit down and think and I can write it, I can go back and post another thought. And I can check back on my thoughts by going back on Hootcourse to look at my ideas.

Researcher: What are some recommendations for using Hootcourse in your class?

Similarly in an interview with Keisha, her words demonstrate that she understood how to use the tool enough to posit ways to use the tool in other classes. She said, “I would recommend that before class opens and we start talking about the thesis statements and things that we could do [Hootcourse] to get ideas going.” To conclude, students must use good social skills within a cooperative learning group to encourage positive interaction. When students practice good social skills interaction is made more meaningful and members of the group cooperate better (Hutchinson, 2007; Koutselini, 2009; Nagel, 2008).

Face-to-face interaction. Recommended by Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (2008), face-to-face interactions means that group members meet in an environment where they can make eye contact and communicate in person. The participants’ responses revealed in each interview that they demonstrated good face-to-face interaction in that they used body language, eye contact, and encouragement that allowed the activity to be

more active and open. Observations of the participants working together in their groups reveal how they interacted in face-to-face environment:

DSW 800 1: During their interactions, the participants seemed to communicate well. Each participant took turns talking, which is evidence of good communication. Also another sign of good communication is eye contact. The participants frequently made eye contact with one another as they communicated about their posts, cluster, and thesis statements. Moreover, the group seemed to work well together as there were moments of silence as they were concentrating on selecting ideas.

For group DSW 800 1, face-to-face interaction was positive. The group communicated well, and the participants made eye contact with one another as one talked and the others listened. Also, during moments of thinking, the participants seemed in accordance as they were silent and not distracting during times when they were thinking about ideas.

However, group DSW 800 2 experienced face-to-face interaction quite differently.

ENG 101 2: Much of the time deliberating over their posts was silent; however, the participants made frequent eye contact and nodded their heads in agreement when one or the other mentioned including an idea in the cluster. When the participants communicated, they both took turns listening to the other person talk.

Although group ENG 101 2 was not as verbally interactive as group DSW 800 1, their observation was interpreted to be positive because both participants were in agreement.

They worked diligently together in silence, talking very little. Moreover, during the interviews, Kevin and Tameka said the following:

Researcher: So, would you say that Hootcourse made your face-to-face meetings a little easier?

Kevin: Yes mam, cause I had already looked at her ideas and then I looked at my ideas, so when I saw [my partner] face-to-face, I already knew what her thinking process [was]; and I knew how to plan.

Researcher: How did you ensure that both of your voices were heard?

Tameka: We took turns talking, like I said our ideas were similar it wasn't hard at all, and he was respectful

Researcher: Give me some feedback on what your face-to-face meetings were like.

Tameka: It was fun. Because we never met, but just to have similar ideas and click like we did it was easy.

Researcher: Would you choose to prewrite in a group or with a partner again?

Tameka: Yes, because somebody can have a better idea than you, and they can give you different ideas—something that you would have never thought of.

Researcher: did you learn anything from your partner?

Tameka: Yeah.

Researcher: What did you learn?

Tameka: How to relax, he's so calm. He didn't make [me] nervous. He was laid back.

To conclude, the participants' responses reveal that face-to-face interaction can be positive, even when there is not much verbal communication. Group interaction is made stronger when face-to-face interaction physical interaction confirms and underscores a positive group environment.

Knowledge Representation

Knowledge representation as a theme is defined as how the participants perceived they were able to generate ideas for prewriting and how they perceived their ideas were useful to the group for prewriting. Two categories comprise the theme. The first category is visible thinking, which means evidence of the participants' thought processes were revealed in their Hootcourse posts, researcher observations, and interviews. The second category is sharing ideas, which relates to participants showing evidence of sharing ideas through their interview responses.

Visible thinking. Visible thinking as a category that supports knowledge representation conveys individual action that spurs cognition. The participants in each

group discussed their processes for generating ideas that they deemed successful. In order to generate ideas, the participants needed a goal (Flower & Hayes, 1981), and in this prewriting task, the goal was to generate ideas for a thesis statement that would ultimately be shared. However, prior to sharing ideas, the participants had to engage in individual cognition whereby they were motivated to post the results of such cognition (Jackson, 2009). The participants' Hootcourse posts revealed visible thinking because the posts were their brainstormed ideas.

There were examples of visible thinking for each group since each participant posted to Hootcourse. A good example of visible thinking was group DSW 800 1. DSW 800 1 posted ideas about self-descriptive characteristics. The group posted several multiple word posts. Keisha, Chris, and Lisa posted brief characteristics of themselves in order to create a descriptive thesis statement. The following posts show the groups thinking patterns.

Keisha [post example 1]: adapt well

Keisha [post example 2]: lovable

Keisha [post example 3]: outgoing, friendly, and caring

Keisha's posts reveal an adjective thought pattern. The following posts for Chris are slightly different.

Chris [post example 1]: im a good cook as well

Chris [post example 2]: 1. Nice 2. Faithful 3. Gamer

Chris' posts are more developed. The posts for Lisa were also different from Keisha and Chris' posts.

Lisa [post example 1]: married

Lisa [post example 2]: takes time to improve relationships

Similarly, my observations for Keisha, Chris, and Lisa's group revealed visible thinking in that their posts were varied. At times, the posts were single word posts whereas other times the posts were multiple word posts. The variation in posts revealed a working thought process as ideas are multifarious and random in the beginning stages of idea development (Flower & Hayes, 1981). The following is one of my observations for group DSW 800 1:

Posting their ideas was the brainstorming stage of the prewriting process. Their posts on day one revealed that the participants posted more multiple word posts rather than single word posts. However, the most multiple word posts came from Chris, the traditional-aged student of the group, who also posted the most. Moreover, the majority of posts from the participants were on topic. Chris, having posted the most, posted equally on topic and off topic. Keisha posted twice as much on topic as off topic. Lisa, however, posted only on topic. At the end of day one, the group was given an assignment to add more posts before the next meeting. On the next day, each participant had added more posts, and the group examined their posts to select ideas for clustering. The group decided on ten ideas from the posts for potential clustering. The group then eliminated ideas by agreeing together on three ideas for the cluster. After clustering, the participants worked to write their own thesis statements separately. The next meeting involved the participants comparing their separate thesis statements and referring to their posts in order to cooperatively decide on how they would combine their ideas to

make one final thesis statement. The group's final thesis statement reflected three ideas from their cluster that each member agreed upon.

In separate interviews, each participant discussed their thinking patterns:

Researcher: How did working in a group help you to understand prewriting?

Keisha: It helped me because a lot of times I may have an idea, but listening to another person's point-of-view is helpful. It was a lot better listening to their examples.

Researcher: Did you ask questions to get people to talk to you?

Chris: Yes mam

Researcher: Ok, umm, tell me what that was like.

Chris: Umm at first it was kinda hard for all of us to join ideas, what we all thought. Then when we started, it got easier for all of us.

Researcher: The first thing I want to ask you about are your experiences working in groups. In what ways did the group prewriting help you to understand prewriting?

Lisa: I also liked it because it helped me to share ideas and improve and expand my knowledge, to be able to do more.

Each participant in the group exhibited visible thinking in different ways. Keisha revealed that she thinks visibly by listening. Chris, however, revealed that his visible thinking comes with interaction and a slow-starting progression of ideas. Lisa also reveals visible thinking by interacting and using that interaction to scaffold her knowledge. Each way that visible thinking was conveyed by Keisha, Chris, and Lisa was a way that knowledge was represented.

Sharing ideas. Sharing ideas as a category that supports knowledge representation conveys group action that spurs cognition. The participants in each group described how they were each successful in generating ideas to bring to the group and that these ideas were meaningful. Beth perceived her ideas to be valuable for sharing:

Researcher: So how did the tool help you to think?

Beth: Once they tweeted something, it kinda put another thought in your head. It was kinda a back and forth type scenario to where I have an idea, maybe they stem from my idea, and then I have one that stems from theirs—like branching out.

Beth's response can be interpreted as supportive of sharing ideas because she perceived that using the tool in groups to prewrite was a give and take experience. Her words "back and forth scenario" and "branching out" supports the interpretation. In an interview with Tameka, idea sharing was revealed in a similar way.

Researcher: In what ways did group prewriting help you to understand prewriting?

Tameka: It was easier, I actually enjoyed it cause the brainstorm part didn't take all my energy. Then it was easy working with him because we thought alike.

Researcher: Tell me about how you communicated in your group. Was it easy or difficult? What was it like?

Tameka: It was easy because we had similar ideas, and I didn't even know him.

Researcher: How did your thesis statement represent or reflect both of you?

Tameka: We said the same things, but I worded mine differently, it meant the same thing.

Tameka recognized that her ideas were similar to her partner's. Inasmuch, she was motivated to share ideas because of the task-sharing. In Kevin's interview, he revealed a similar sentiment:

Researcher: Tell me about how you communicated with your partner.

Kevin: I communicated with my partner with tweets on Hootcourse with different ideas; I noticed our ideas were similar, our thoughts were similar based on the topic

Researcher: Was it easier to communicate with your partner having the Hootcourse tweets.

Kevin: Yeah, it was way more easier.

Researcher: How did your thesis statement represent or reflect both of you?

Kevin: We had similar ideas when it came down to representing in the thesis statement

Both Tameka and Kevin's responses reveal that the participants posted their ideas in an effort to share ideas; however, the confirmation of their thinking was affirmed by the similarities of their ideas. Their knowledge or know-how was represented in their thinking patterns exhibited in their responses. To conclude, Holmes (2003) posits that text sharing is an integral way to generate ideas. In addition, text sharing on a computer makes generating shared ideas easier and more accessible (Marchisan & Alber, 2001). Holmes (2003) also suggests that coauthoring makes writers stronger.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reveals three themes that convey the consensus of ideas from the participants' interview responses, their tool posts, and researcher observations of the groups. First a theme of usefulness branched out into three sub-categories, which were useful tools, useful behaviors, and useful results. Next, a theme of group interaction branched out into five sub-categories based on Johnson et al. (2008) five essential elements of cooperative learning, which were positive interdependence, individual accountability, group processing, social skills, and face-to-face interaction. Lastly, a theme of knowledge representation branched out into two sub-categories of visible thinking and sharing ideas.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of DSW 800 and ENG 101 students concerning the use of a social networking tool to prewrite in cooperative learning groups. Three research questions were the crux of the study. To address these questions, participants in this study used a social networking tool to prewrite in cooperative learning groups. During the activity, the groups were observed for behaviors that defined their group atmosphere. After the activity, the participants were interviewed during audio-recorded semi-structured interviews. Two rounds of analysis were performed on the transcripts from the interviews whereby codes, categories, and themes were derived from the participants' actual words. In addition, observational notes, the tool posts, and the evidence of prewriting helped to form a portrayal of the participants' perceptions and experiences. This chapter features a discussion of how the participants' perceptions and experiences, including the aggregated findings from Chapter 4, answer each of the research questions.

Research Question 1: What Are Students' Perceptions of a Social Networking Tool?

In order to understand how students perceive a social networking tool, two areas define the findings. First, one must understand how using the tool to aid instruction is beneficial. Lastly, one must consider how students' perceptions show that they value the tool and believe that it is beneficial for helping them to learn. From the literature, social networking tools become purposeful to the writing process because they significantly change and add to the process itself (Boyd, 2008). Regarding prewriting, the use of the social networking tool Hootcourse changed and added to the process. The tool was used asynchronously to post brainstorm. Asynchronous online posting significantly changes

the brainstorming stage of prewriting because students can post at any time and their posts can be viewed by others. Therefore, asynchronous online posting adds to the brainstorming and prewriting processes because students can share each other's ideas and gain direction for their own ideas from the posts. For example, students responded that "you can mix their ideas with your ideas" and "you look on Hootcourse it gives me a start and I can add [ideas]." The theme "Usefulness" is supported by these statements because they show that using the tool was useful to the students to help them interact and progress.

In addition, Hootcourse also served as an archive of the ideas, a cyber-record. Participants contributing to and drawing from a repository of ideas add to a community of knowledge (Nicholson, 2005). The value of the archive was evident from the students' comments within the theme "Usefulness." This is exemplified by some of the participants' comments in that "you can go back, " "you can always go back and see what you've written, " and "you can see what someone else is writing." As long as students have access to a computer, they can have access to their initial ideas. This access serves as beneficial to instruction in that students are able to return to their ideas frequently throughout the writing process. Consequently, a writer may recycle or regenerate ideas and ideas should be revisited throughout the writing process to be revised for clarity (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Marchisan & Alber, 2001).

When the tool is beneficial to instruction and students agree that the tool is beneficial, their perceptions of the tool are positive. The participants in this study perceived the tool to be useful and valuable. Their responses revealed that they liked Hootcourse and believe it could be used for class for other purposes besides posting

brainstorming ideas for an essay. For example, when asked about the usefulness of the tools, the student participants responded that using the social media tool was “convenient” and “straightforward.” Moreover, they felt integrating others’ ideas helped them to learn. For example, one student said, “You can mix their ideas with your ideas.” Another student felt that reviewing the groups’ posts helped her group to “come up with a thesis statement” while another student felt she was “able to do more.” These statements reflect positive perceptions of the tool and its value because collectively the statements convey that the tool helped the students to produce ideas.

Because the participants valued Hootcourse and deemed it to be useful, engagement in the activity was high. Student engagement hinges on the success of the learning strategy to help students learn (Koutselini, 2009). Students’ posts were both on-topic and social; they posted in class and after class; and they posted through computers and their phones. In addition, two participants could be considered as non-traditional students because of their low comfort level using technology although individuals age 18 to 34 most often have some type of online presence (Joyce & Brown, 2009). However, the overall perceptions of all of the participants were that the tool was useful, which resulted in usefulness becoming a theme.

Research Question 2: How Do Students Perceive a Social Networking Tool Influences Prewriting in Cooperative Groups?

Three considerations define the findings on the participants' perceptions of using a tool to prewrite in cooperative groups. First is how Hootcourse helped the participants to generate ideas in their groups. Second is how Hootcourse helped each participant represent their contributions to prewriting in their groups. Last is how Hootcourse helped participants to communicate in their groups.

Generating ideas. Regarding generating ideas, three interpretations convey the findings for this study. First, a summary of the participants' responses revealed that the participants felt they were freer to post ideas because they did not have to produce ideas in a face-to-face setting initially. There was no initial pressure to produce ideas in a face-to-face situation, which made the participants feel less nervous. For example, students responded "you can take time and come up with ideas" and "I could pull out my phone and post whatever was on my mind." The statements are reflective of the convenience and accessibility of Hootcourse. Another student said "I think it would be great because there is someone to assist you. You can keep carrying on discussion and knowledge and applying it." These statements collectively convey that students felt at ease with using the tool. When students are comfortable in the learning environment, their confidence and willingness to learn and produce are increased (Hall, 2009).

Another interpretation of the participants' perceptions is that they felt at ease with generating ideas because the tool allowed them to post asynchronously. The participants were able to elect to post when they desired, which stimulated autonomy and self-regulation. For example, the participants described during interviews that they were able

to review posts from their group members and “add ideas.” In some cases, they felt they “already knew ...[a group member’s] thinking process.” Self-regulation and autonomy occurred because the participants governed themselves in a studious and professional manner with the social networking tool by contributing and drawing ideas from the tool posts (Chaves, 2006). The participants were able to be self-directed in building on skills and experiences, which evokes constructivism (Chaves, 2006; Grant & Mims, 2009).

A last interpretation of the evidence revealed in the findings is that the use of the tool greatly aided the prewriting process outside of the face-to-face meetings. The participants posted to Hootcourse between meetings and expected to see ideas posted from their group members. Giving and receiving posts solidified the online community. Participation in an online social environment helps students to perceive themselves to have an advantage of learning and interaction because they are connected to a larger social environment (Amory, 2010).

Representing their contributions. The next consideration that defines the findings is that the participants were able to represent themselves in the online environment with their posts. These posts presented other group members with a portrayal of the person who posted. As mentioned previously, both the social posts and the on-task posts depicted and made visible to others a group member’s thinking. The cyber-self representative of the individual is transparent when posts are instantly seen and shared within the community, which makes students have an increased sense of individual accountability because they feel responsible for contributing and interacting (Amory, 2010; Berry, 2008; Ozkan, 2010). Tella (2003) argued that increasing group interactions and tasks, such as through social media, requires increased personal

responsibility. The reciprocal nature of social networks is founded on an individual's willingness to share in others' social construction of knowledge.

Communicating in groups. The final consideration that defines the finding is that the participants felt that Hootcourse helped them to communicate in their groups. Three characteristics of Hootcourse aiding communication were revealed from across the findings. First, Hootcourse made communicating possible without a face-to-face meeting. The Internet helps students to publish, share, and discuss information within their social network groups (Ozkan, 2010). The students felt the continuity of easily publishing to a space, reflecting, and posting "another thought" was valuable to working within their group. In addition, they mentioned some activities could occur before a face-to-face meeting, which suggests they were comfortable working outside of class and felt they could meaningfully use this time to learn.

Second, the frequency of posts helped facilitate discussion amongst the group members. Cooperation is integral to social interaction in the social networking environment (Ozkan, 2010). Because the group members had contributed ideas and posts inside of class time and outside of class, the other group members had reviewed the posts. This helped to present another group member's "point of view" and advance the discussion for prewriting. Moreover, interaction in a social networking environment is immediate, frequent, and social (Bowers-Campbell, 2008; Joyce & Brown, 2009).

Third, as mentioned previously, Hootcourse facilitated communication because it served as archive of ideas that the participants could refer to as often as they needed. Housed content becomes a community of knowledge from which participants in the community can receive knowledge and contribute knowledge; therefore, a community of

individuals who share this repository is created (Nicholson, 2005). Thus, the environment is structural because it encourages a pattern of communication and behaviors for communicating and cooperating requiring practical and cognitive activities where feedback is imminent and often (Ahlfeldt et al., 2005).

Research Question 3: How Do Cooperative Groups Work Together to Prewrite?

The observations of the groups during the study revealed five elements of cooperation as defined by Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (2008). The five areas are positive interdependence, individual accountability, group processing, social skills, and face-to-face interaction. These elements coincided with prewriting.

First, the interpretation of the group observations concerning positive interdependence is that the groups shared their ideas by looking at the posts. The participants communicated about the ideas during face-to-face meetings. Participants contributed their ideas that became a part of a pool of ideas. For example during observations of the groups, I noticed that the students showed evidence of communicating by talking about the posts they made prior to meeting. The students also showed evidence of listening through eye contact and nodding as other group members talked. The posts that the students discussed during their face-to-face meetings served as a repository of ideas that each student could refer to when communicating with their partners. Text sharing is a viable way to generate ideas whereby individuals use pair thinking or the practice of bouncing ideas off one another in pairs or small groups (Holmes, 2003). Inasmuch, the groups negotiated to select and eliminate ideas for their clusters and thesis statements as a consensus. For example during observations, I noticed that when deliberating about which ideas to select, there were moments of silence as the

students considered the posted ideas. When someone had a comment about the ideas, that student spoke his or her opinion while the rest of the group listened and then responded. Each group member referred back to the Hootcourse repository of ideas to help make selections of ideas. When students pair up on computers where text is more accessible to be shared, they are encouraged and motivated to coauthor and help each other (Holmes, 2003; Marchisan & Alber, 2001). Consequently, stronger writers model good writing practices for weaker writers when coauthoring takes place (Holmes, 2003).

Second, the interpretation of the Hootcourse posts and group observations concerning individual accountability is that the participants elected to share ideas by posting and serving the group during the group negotiation of ideas. In order to elect to post, the participants had to think of ideas and then make an attempt to post them to the tool so that others in the group could see the posted ideas. Brainstorming took place individually prior to brainstorming with the group. Coming up with a complete thought involves introspective analysis whereby the writer goes through an internal thought process to think of ideas (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In addition to each participant being individually accountable to the group by posting to the tool, the participants were observed for individual accountability characteristics during their face-to-face meetings. For example, I noticed in multiple groups and sessions that students posted ideas prior to meeting face-to-face. I noticed that students made efforts to communicate about the ideas. During the meetings, the participants helped make decisions about ideas to select and eliminate. These decisions required the input of each individual group member. I noticed that deliberating about ideas and writing the final thesis statement was a joint effort whereby each student participated by giving his or her opinion about which ideas were

best for the final thesis statement. Because the groups were small, two or three individuals per group, each participant had an opportunity to contribute. Johnson et al. (2008) recommend group size should be small with no more than two to three students per group so that apathy is avoided (Koutselini, 2009; Nagel, 2008).

Third, the interpretation of the observations of the groups concerning group processing is that the participants gave each other feedback and they set goals during face-to-face meetings. After the participants posted ideas, they met together in groups to come to an agreement on the ideas that eventually would be the foundation of the group thesis statement. Goal setting is a necessary part of pre-writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981). During this study the overall goals were set for the students in that they had to follow the prewriting steps of brainstorming, clustering, and thesis statement. However, the students in their groups decided when they were ready to move to each new step. They set goals by selecting ideas from the brainstorm for the cluster and then from the cluster to the thesis statement. With each step, the students referred to a repository of ideas to evaluate each idea for its potential in creating the final thesis statement. Students should constantly evaluate their own writing and also set goals of timing to predetermine the timeframe for prewriting (Marchisan & Alber, 2001).

Next, the interpretation of the Hootcourse posts and the observations of the groups concerning social skills is that the participants practiced positive social skills with Hootcourse and during their face-to-face meetings. The participants revealed that their positive experiences during the study were due in part to the welcoming attitudes of their group members. The rules for structuring social skills into the cooperative learning lesson involves being specific about expected behaviors, limiting group size, and making group

interaction student-centered (Ozkan, 2010). Because the group sizes were limited to no more than three participants per group and the groups interacted via their posts and during face-to-face meetings, there were many opportunities for the participants to practice good social skills. In addition, the activity was structured such that four levels of social skills were enlisted: (1) forming, or basic normal behaviors, (2) functioning to maintain work relationship, (3) formulating to finish the task, and (4) fermenting to solidify the skills gained during the activity. While observing the groups, the students used forming skills. First, I noticed that the students were courteous to one another, careful not to interrupt. Also, I noticed that the students asked each other questions to elicit opinions on which ideas would be used. Moreover during the activity, the participants were required to post specific information and use the tool for communicating with their group members. The participants had to make decisions together, which enlisted both functioning and formulating skills. During observations, I noticed that each student considered his or her group members' ideas in order to agree or disagree. Mostly, the students agreed with others' opinions about selecting ideas, which demonstrated functioning skills. If the students did not completely agree with an idea as it was worded in the posting, they negotiated with each other on how the wording would be revised to be more suitable for the final thesis statement, thus demonstrating formulating skills. Lastly, the participants were required to show evidence of creating a thesis statement alone as well as cooperatively with their groups, which enlisted fermenting skills.

Lastly, the interpretation of the observations regarding face-to-face interaction within the groups is that participants had positive face-to-face interactions. Each group

was required to meet face-to-face in order to discuss the ideas they posted. During these face-to-face meetings, the participants made eye contact as they talked. Also, they were able to see facial expressions and gestures. Similarly, for those non-traditional students who were not as comfortable with the computer, face-to-face interaction established a familiarity to working with a group. Consequently, by working in close proximity to one another the participants were able to co-author during prewriting. Therefore, face-to-face interaction was valuable to encourage social interaction in that the participants were able to help each other, share ideas, and motivate one another with helpful words, eye contact, and body language so that the activity could be open-ended (Berry, 2008).

Chapter Summary

Three research questions were defined in this chapter. The first research question to be defined dealt with students' perceptions of a social networking tool. The interpretation was that students perceived a social networking tool to be valuable and beneficial for prewriting. The second research question to be defined dealt with students' perceptions of how a social networking tool influences prewriting in groups. The interpretation was that students perceive a social networking tool to be helpful for interaction and developing ideas. The third research question to be defined dealt with students' perceptions of prewriting in groups. The interpretation was that students perceive prewriting in groups to be beneficial and helpful for generating ideas.

CHAPTER 6

Implications for Practice, Limitations, and Implications for Research

As with all qualitative research, the extent to which the results can be applied in other contexts is situated with the reader. Three research questions framed this study. First was a question concerning students' perceptions of a social networking tool. Second was a question of how students perceive a social networking tool influenced prewriting in cooperative groups. Third was a question of how cooperative groups worked together to prewrite. The findings for this study were that students have positive perceptions of using a social networking tool in cooperative learning groups to prewrite and that cooperative groups benefit students during prewriting. Therefore to further help the reader, implications for practice, limitations, and implications for research are provided.

Implications for Practice

Two implications for practice are relevant to writing instructors wanting to use these three strategies successfully together to help students in developmental and first-year composition courses. First, instructors should manipulate the distinctive characteristics of each strategy to clearly accompany one another. Secondly, instructors should make efforts to receive feedback from the students about their perceptions of how the strategies together add value and benefit to the students' learning experiences. Each of these is explained below.

Distinct qualities of each strategy. The distinctive qualities of social networking make it experiential. First, social networking can be used asynchronously, instantly, and frequently (Joyce & Brown, 2009). Second, social networking applications are widely accessible from any computer or mobile device (Huang & Behara, 2007), and social

networking allows individuals to digitally represent themselves (Luo, 2010). Social networking can be used for real-world scenarios and problem solving (Amory, 2010; Grant & Mims, 2009). Finally, social networking is active, collaborative, and promoting of diversity (Amory, 2010; Dalsgaard & Paulsen, 2009). For developmental students and first-year composition students learning to write, each of these characteristics is beneficial because they offer multiple ways for students to generate ideas. When students have multiple ways to generate ideas during prewriting, students are greatly assisted in developing a full essay because they have a stronger foundation on which they can rely (Boyd, 2008). As a result, students are not limited to idea production and sharing in the physical classroom neither do they have to develop ideas alone as social networking tools encourage interaction (Reid, 2008).

The distinct qualities of the writing process concern the stages of the writing process. The first stage of the writing process is prewriting, which involves writers producing, selecting, eliminating, and organizing ideas (Jackson, 2009). Next, the drafting stage involves further development of the organized ideas from prewriting so that those ideas develop into paragraphs in essay format (Jackson, 2009). The third stage is revising whereby changes are made based on evaluating logic, structure, and mechanics (Marchisan & Alber, 2001). Lastly, final drafting is when writers seek to further clarify ideas to improve them (Emig, 1977). The emphasis for this study was the prewriting stage. Prewriting is the foundational stage of the writing process whereby students generate ideas and organize them for paragraphing (Holmes, 2003). For developmental and first-year composition students, idea generation and organization is difficult (Eberly & Trand, 2010). The findings in this study are viable for helping writing

instructors consider ways to strengthen development during the prewriting stage of the writing process so that the process itself is better sustained. While not specifically part of the data collection here, it became evident to me that the participants were more motivated to use Hootcourse for prewriting in cooperative groups. In my experiences as a teacher of development writing, I have observed students struggle with using technology, generating ideas, and working in groups. The students in this study were able to easily use Hootcourse, generate ideas, and work cooperatively. This experience is different than what I have experienced before.

The distinct qualities of cooperative learning are the five basic elements proposed by Johnson et al. (2008). First, positive interdependence establishes group interaction. Next, individual accountability establishes individual responsibility to the group. Third, group processing establishes feedback and goal setting for the group. Fourth, social skills establish behavior protocol for the group. Finally, face-to-face interaction establishes guidelines for face-to-face meeting. The findings for this study were that students had positive perceptions about prewriting in cooperative learning groups. Additionally, students viewed prewriting in cooperative learning groups to be beneficial because they were able to rely on others to help generate ideas. Usage of the five basic elements makes prewriting more student-centered and interactive (Ozkan, 2010). The observations of the students in this study revealed that the students were able to teach and learn from one another in their groups, which stimulates learning (Salinas & Garr, 2009).

The combination of distinct qualities can be accomplished when instructors link the qualities in ways that retain the distinctiveness of the qualities while combining the qualities to complement each other. For example, this study used the social networking

qualities of asynchronous, instant, and frequent posting within the brainstorming stage of prewriting. This merger retained the distinct qualities of social networking and prewriting by allowing students to post their brainstorming ideas at their convenience, instantly, and as frequently as they desired from any mobile or stationery device that could access the internet. Reid (2008) suggests multiple tools and multiple functions can assist teaching students to write, as well as assist student writing. In addition, a social networking tool should make developing ideas easier (Bacci, 2008). The students in this study were not constrained to a classroom setting. They could continue developing ideas after the meetings with their groups were over. In addition, the students were able to view ideas from their group partners. A finding in the study was that students perceived being able to view others' ideas as beneficial for generating ideas.

Another example of combination involved prewriting in cooperative groups whereby the stages of prewriting occurred while the elements of cooperative learning and social networking were enlisted. During prewriting, students interacted by sharing and discussing ideas online and face-to-face. They also gave each other feedback and set goals, and students were observed for social behaviors within their groups. Corcoran and Sims (2006) assert that cooperative learning fosters a supportive rather than individualized environment that is conducive to learning as students help each other to reach goals and complete tasks. Moreover, cooperative learning makes the learning experience active for students (Koutselini, 2009). The collective perception of students in this study was that generating ideas in cooperative groups was positive, encouraging, and stimulating.

Use student feedback to inform teaching. Secondly, writing instructors should make efforts to receive feedback from students about their perceptions of how the strategies together add value and benefit to the students' learning experience. Writing instructors give feedback through conferencing, writing support, and encouraging and motivating comments (Marchisan & Alber, 2001). During these times of giving feedback, writing instructors should seek a reciprocal relationship with their students in order to understand how instructional strategies are being used and impacting learning. Writing instructors can receive feedback from students by asking the students questions about their experiences. This study sought the perceptions of students in order to understand how the strategies help students to perform a task. I conducted semi-structured interviews tailored with questions that supported research questions about the students' perceptions. I also observed the groups in action to understand how they interacted to complete the activity. However, in a classroom setting, writing instructors may not be able to conduct interviews or observe every time there is an activity as most classrooms are comprised of many students at once. Therefore, post activity debriefs should be included to help monitor students' success and provide opportunities for intervention when students need help (Johnson et al., 2008). Opportunities for students to voice their opinions about the activity can also be a part of the post activity debrief. Understanding whether students perceive the activity to be beneficial and valuable can be gained by assessing the amount of participation, group performance, attitudes toward learning, and student opinions on group improvement (Johnson et al., 2008; Nagel, 2008). In this study, during both the observations and the interviews, it became evident that the student participants used the out-of-class time to contribute to the group brainstorm. In addition, during the face-to-

face time the groups used the archive of their Hootcourse posts in order to inform and spur their discussions. By seeing the students use the tools and asking them how they used the tools, the process as suggested by Johnson et al. (2008) was improved. Johnson et al. (2008) recommend that face-to-face time is critical to the success of cooperative groups. This study supports the value of face-to-face time for cooperative groups but also suggests that asynchronous postings and individual contributions can advance these face-to-face sessions. This may especially be beneficial to developmental writing students because they may need extra time to process the tasks of prewriting and they may benefit from the extended time for sharing ideas from others. Also, instructor-led evaluations may include feedback from the students about their individual grades and experiences during the activity (Hutchinson, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008).

Limitations

Methodological limitations associated with study are those associated with all qualitative research. The small sample size prevents generalizability of the findings, and the reader should contextualize the findings for him or herself. Although the study took place over a 6-week period, timing was limited in that more observations could have revealed even deeper analyses of the participants working together in their groups. For example, I could have given the students a series of topics escalating in level of difficulty to prewrite on in cooperative groups. I would then be able to observe them working together to generate ideas in different prewriting scenarios. Also with a longer study, participants could post more and have an opportunity to revisit the tool posts more to develop their ideas for a complete essay. Creswell (2003) suggests that longer timeframes help the researcher to reveal more verisimilitude about the story he or she is trying to

illustrate. A longer duration for this could have been a semester to capture a more real timeframe in which students attempt to generate ideas and complete writing assignments in developmental and freshman level composition courses.

Implications for Research

Three sections outline the implications for research. First is a section on considering the writing process as a whole. Next, is a section on developmental studies students' needs. Last, is a section on implementing challenges of using social networking with curriculum.

Considering the writing process as a whole. This study was a microcosm, only observing and documenting prewriting. Further research is needed to understand how posting in groups affects the entire writing process, as well as individual writing skills. There is research in the area of using computers to aid the writing process, and there is research in the area of group writing. For example, Abuseileek (2012) studied the effects of computer assistance on cooperative groups of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' writing. Also, Holschun and Caverly (2010) discuss cloud computing, which is a concept that omnipresent information can be used as a constant resource for students. With cloud computing resources, developmental students can collaboratively write and communicate online where resources are constantly available. My study joins the conversation that these studies are engaged in that emphasis was placed on social networking in the form of Twittering, cooperative learning, and the impact these concepts have on prewriting.

Writing an essay is a cognitive process that involves revisiting ideas on several occasions throughout the writing process (Flower & Hayes, 1981). This assertion

assumes that the evaluative process of writing an essay is lengthy. Therefore since the writing process plays out in four stages, the end result is an evolution of ideas that can be followed so that the researcher can record how the ideas evolve over the four stages of the writing process within (Marchisan & Alber, 2001). Boas (2011) suggests that stages of the writing processes should be repeated to make the writer analyze ideas and development more closely, studying a group of writers over a year. Another study used a process similar to the writing process to help first-year composition students to analyze their writing (Ernest, Johnson, & Kelly-Riley, 2011). This study is linked to my study in that it underscores the importance of analysis for each stage of the writing process. During my study, students reviewed ideas before each prewriting step.

To better understand how the three strategies coalesce over a longer period of time, observation and documentation could be completed before, during, and after the activity to get a clearer picture of the participants' perceptions. For example, Grant (2011; Grant & Branch, 2005) followed students through a technology-supported learning task to document their process and perceptions, using multiple interviews over time to capture changes over time. The suggested length of time is a semester for evaluating the entire writing process when using a merger of the three strategies. Eberly and Trand (2010) posit that research needs to capture the current authenticity of a course. Inasmuch, Creswell (2003) sustains that researchers must capture what is significant to accurately conveying the experiences of the participants.

Developmental students' needs. Because developmental and first-year composition students will attempt other classes where they will be expected to write for specific disciplines, more research can be done in the area of how these students use the

writing skills they gain in their developmental and first-year composition courses in other classes. The *National Center for Postsecondary Research* (2012) studied the effects of learning communities on developmental students' writing. In these learning communities students were required to write for discipline specific college level courses while enrolled in those courses concurrently with the developmental writing course. A similar study used a ten-week intervention method to strengthen developmental students' cross-discipline writing in science by requiring students to use summarization skills after reading science textbook chapters (*Community College Research Center*, 2011).

Another area of research might take a closer consideration of the role the writing instructor plays as facilitator of the classroom instruction. Pre-assessment of writing is an area that begs further empirical evidence in order to diagnose writing issues prior to the first assignment (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011). Also the how the writing instructor disseminates instruction is a topic of discussion that is a direction for research (*Policy Analysis for California Education*, 2011). A similar study addressed instructor expectations, timeframe, and flexibility in the writing classroom whereby these themes emerged as a result of analyzing the writing instructor's level of practical knowledge and experience in teaching developmental writing (Stallings, 2010).

Challenges with using social networking. Kist (2008) discussed challenges of using social networking in curriculum as fearful for the instructor. Posting presents the problems of students ignoring netiquette and legalities stemming from plagiarism, pirating, and cyber-bullying. Also, some educators feel that social networking is too far removed from valid, logical educational goals to be included as a part of serious instruction (Bowers-Campbell, 2008). In this study, the student participants believed

social networking to be “easy” and “convenient.” They also valued being able to see others ideas, which helped them stimulate their own ideas.

In addition, boundaries between what is considered academic work and socializing may be blurred (Hall, 2009). However, research is expanding to include more studies that convey positive findings for using social networking as a part of curriculum. Boas (2011) asserts that social networking affords great assistance to the writing process as its characteristics such as asynchronous and frequent usage. As with all technology usage in the classroom, there must be an organized framework and consistent and effective monitoring for activities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine student perceptions of using a social networking tool to prewrite in cooperative groups. Three research questions outlined the interests of the study. First, knowing how students perceive the social networking tool was important for understanding whether students perceive a social networking tool to be valuable and necessary for learning. Second, how students perceive the social networking tool influenced prewriting in cooperative groups was paramount in that students would assess whether the tool and cooperative learning helped them to prewrite better. Lastly, understanding how students worked together to prewrite in cooperative groups helped to uncover whether the elements merged with prewriting help during the initial stage of the writing process.

Overall, the research questions helped to frame answers that are definitive regarding how developmental students and first-year composition students perceive experiential instructional strategies help them to achieve in writing classes. The summation of the study that reveals answers for how students perceive a social

networking tool is that students, based on the perceptions of both developmental and first-year composition students during this study, perceive social networking tools to be valuable and necessary for keeping instruction fresh and for engaging students so that learning increases. The summation of the study that reveals answers for how students perceive a social networking tool influences prewriting in cooperative groups is that students, based on the perceptions of the participants in this study, perceive that a social networking tool makes prewriting interactive, engaging, transparent, and motivating. These perceptions stem from the participants' responses during the interviews, the observations of the groups, and the tool posts and final thesis statements. Lastly, the summation of the study that reveals answers for how students work together to prewrite in cooperative groups is that students, based on the observations and perceptions of the participants in this study, perceive that prewriting is greatly facilitated with cooperative learning. The observations reveal that cooperative learning aids interaction amongst students in small groups by enlisting five elements that are well-researched and proven. The participants' responses reveal that interaction because of the use of cooperative learning elements helps mitigate group dynamics so that the activity could be easily completed.

To conclude, more research is needed to shed more light on the conversation of how different experiential strategies meld together to reach the educational needs of students. However, this study uncovers evidence that social networking, the writing process, and cooperative learning work well together because the elements of each strategy complement one another. Inasmuch, trends in instruction beg further analysis of how these strategies work together to aid diverse learning styles. Nonetheless, in an effort

to add to the conversation on pedagogy, this study seeks to make a contribution to the canon of research that recognizes the paradigm shift that is occurring as newer methods accompany older methods to give birth to innovative ways to address student deficiencies and strengths. In the twenty-first century classroom, change is definitely inevitable. As educators and practitioners, we are compelled to embrace change and harness the momentum it brings.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research question 1: What are students' perceptions of a social networking tool?

1. In what ways would you use the tool in your personal life?
2. In what ways did the tool make working convenient?
3. In what ways did the tool help you to think?
4. In what ways did the tool help you to communicate?
5. What things would you change about the tool?
6. What other tools did you use to help you use the tool?
7. What were some ways you used the tool for other purposes?
8. What are some recommendations you might give for using the tool in other classes?

Research question 2: How do students perceive a social networking tool influences prewriting in cooperative groups?

1. Describe how you felt when you've worked in groups before now?
2. In what ways did the tool change or maintain your attitudes about working in groups?
3. In what ways did the tool help you to agree on ideas in your group?
4. In what ways did the tool make sharing ideas convenient?
5. In what ways did the tool help you to fulfill your responsibility to the group?
6. In what ways did the tool help you to have organization of your ideas as a group?
7. In what ways did the tool make your face-to-face meetings easier?
8. In what ways did the tool encourage you to cooperate?

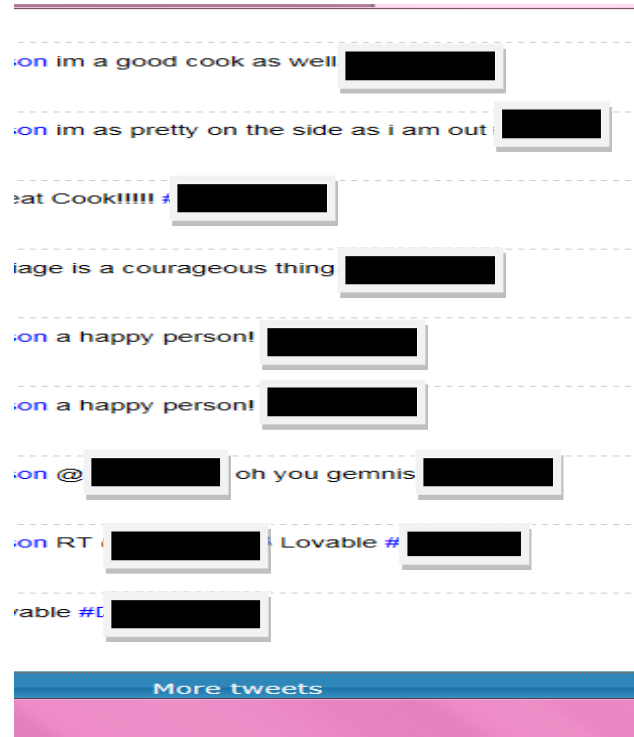
Research question 3: How do cooperative writing groups work together to prewrite?

1. In what ways did group prewriting help you to understand prewriting?
2. How did you communicate in your groups? (individual accountability)
3. What was easy or difficult about prewriting in groups?
4. How did your thesis statement represent/ reflect each of you? (individual accountability)
5. How did your group ensure everyone participated and everyone's voice was heard? (positive interdependence)
6. How would you describe your face-to-face meetings?
7. How did your group integrate everyone's ideas? (positive interdependence)
8. Would you choose to prewrite as a group again? Why or Why not?
9. What did you learn from other members of your group? (social skills)
10. How was this writing experience different from other experiences in the past?

APPENDIX B

TOOL SCREEN CAPTURES

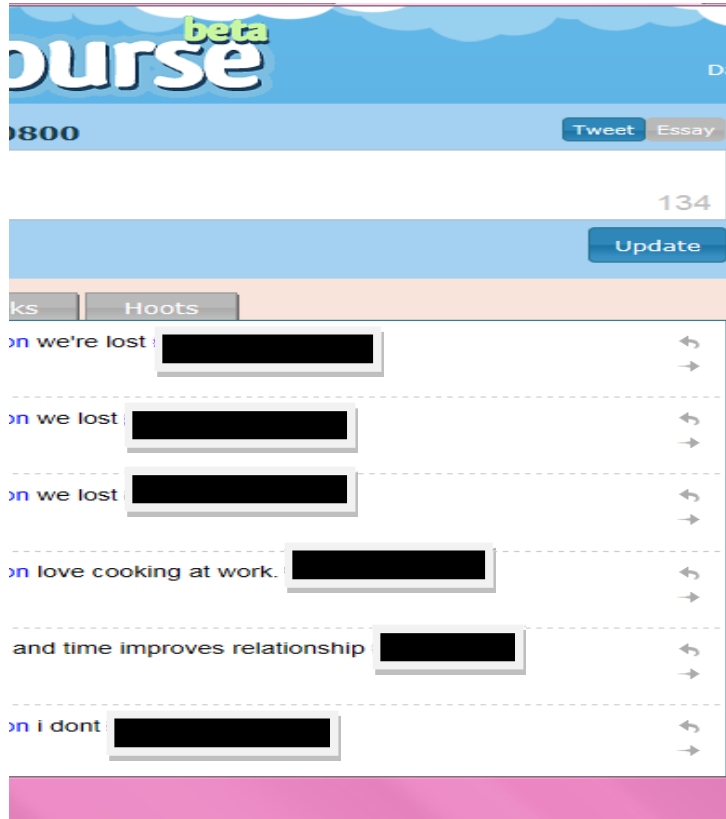
The following screen captures exhibit a progression of ideas.



TOOL SCREEN CAPTURES



TOOL SCREEN CAPTURES



APPENDIX C
COPY OF THE HANDOUT

Cooperative Prewriting 101

Objectives:

- To know the definition of prewriting
- To know the prewriting parts
- To use the prewriting parts to tweet brainstorm, cluster ideas, and create a thesis statement

Prewriting Definition and Parts

What is prewriting?

Prewriting is **planning before writing an essay.**

What are the prewriting parts?

The prewriting parts are **brainstorming, clustering, and thesis statement.**

Use the prewriting parts

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is jotting down ideas about a topic as they come to mind.

How to brainstorm in groups on the internet

What you will need

- Internet access
- Hootcourse login
- A topic
- A prewriting group (assigned)
- A mobile device (optional)

What you will do

- Tweet a list of ideas
- Use one to three words
- Maximize your tweets by posting at least 5 ideas

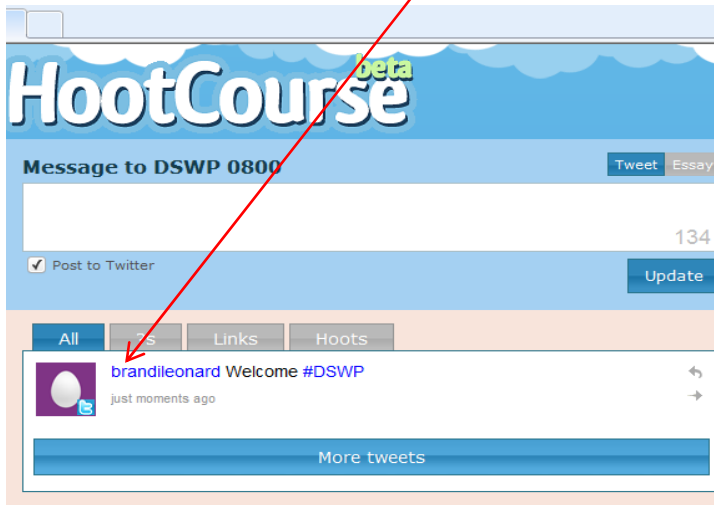
Brainstorming Practice

Read the steps carefully.

Step one: Use the internet to login to Hootcourse (see your welcome email for the link to join the Hootcourse class or go directly to www.hootcourse.com if you have already joined the course)

Step two: Write down your group members' names and Hootcourse tags*

*note—a Hootcourse tag is the name or nickname that each person is identified by in the Hootcourse



Group Members' Tags

Step three: With your group, choose a topic from the list below:

- Choosing a career
- Becoming an adult
- Being successful
- Overcoming a challenge

Step four: Start posting your individual ideas by typing your idea in the message box and then by hitting update; type up to five ideas.



Collect the best 7-10 brainstorming ideas from you and groupmates' Hootcourse tweets (refer back to your Hootcourse list on the internet).

Hootcourse Brainstorming List

Clustering

Clustering is grouping ideas around a central topic

How to cluster in group

What you will need

- Your 7-10 brainstorm ideas from Hootcourse brainstorming list

What you will do

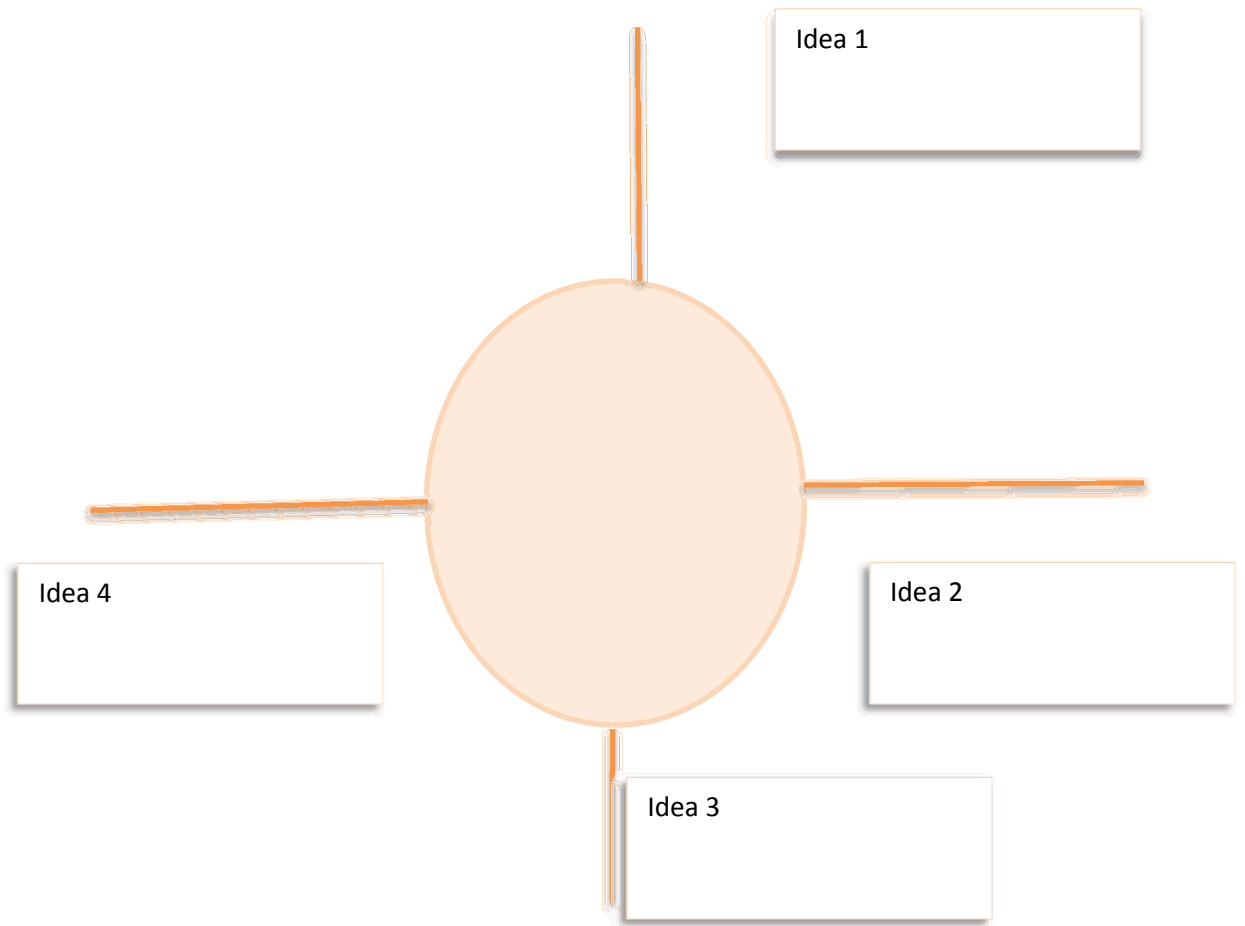
- Choose the best three ideas
- Create a cluster

Clustering Practice

Read the steps carefully.

Step one: Make a list of the best 3-4 ideas from your Hootcourse Brainstorming List.

Step two: Create a cluster by writing your topic in the center of the cluster circle and by branching off your 3 or 4 ideas from the list from step one.

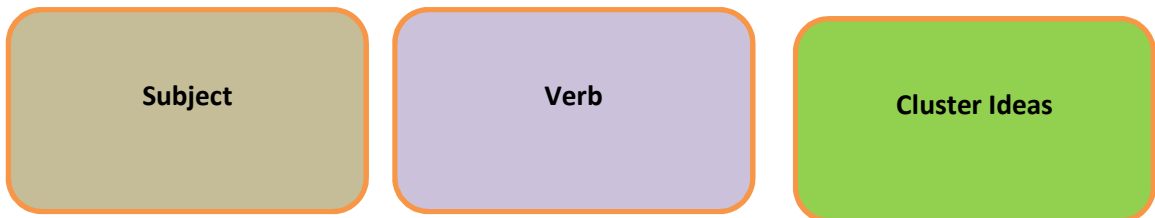




Thesis Statement

- A thesis statement is the main idea of the essay.
- A thesis statement needs to be an argument (claim/ opinion)
- A basic thesis statement for a five-paragraph essay has three parts.

Thesis statement parts



Example: **Becoming an adult** **is more difficult** when one has to **be a parent, pay bills, and go to school.**

- What are the three parts in this example thesis?
- Why is this thesis an argument?
- What is the main idea?

What you will need

- Your three to four ideas from your cluster and your cluster topic

What you will do

- You will create a thesis statement with your group members that includes three parts

Thesis Statement Practice

Read the steps carefully.

Step one: Use your topic as the subject

Step two: Individually think about how you will use a verb and the three ideas from your cluster

Step three: Write your thesis statement.

Step four: Compare your thesis statement with the others in your group and try to create one master thesis statement as you agree on the best parts from each group member.

Step five: Write your master thesis statement.

Thesis Statement Check Up

Check your thesis statement for the following:

- ✓ Your thesis statement has three parts—subject, verb, three cluster ideas
- ✓ Your thesis statement is an argument
- ✓ Your thesis statement is a main idea



APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT EXAMPLE OF HANDOUT

Collect the best 7-10 brainstorming ideas from you and groupmates' Hootcourse tweets (refer back to your Hootcourse list on the internet).

Hootcourse Brainstorming List

doing what you love
making money
room for advancement
rewarding
interaction with people
Job security
Something that interest you
Challenging
nursing

Clustering

Clustering is grouping ideas around a central topic

How to cluster in group

What you will need

- Your 7-10 brainstorm ideas from Hootcourse brainstorming list

What you will do

- Choose the best three ideas
- Create a cluster

PARTICIPANT EXAMPLE OF HANDOUT

What you will need

- Your three to four ideas from your cluster and your cluster topic

What you will do

- You will create a thesis statement with your group members that includes three parts

Thesis Statement Practice

Read the steps carefully.

Step one: Use your topic as the subject

Choosing a career

Step two: Individually think about how you will use a verb and the three ideas from your cluster

Step three: Write your thesis statement.

Choosing a career is difficult when you want it to be challenging, interesting, and financially gainful.

Step four: Compare your thesis statement with the others in your group and try to create one master thesis statement as you agree on the best parts from each group member.

Step five: Write your master thesis statement.

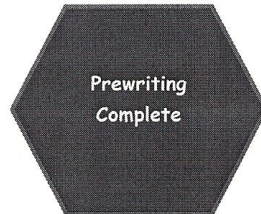
Choosing a career is difficult when you want it to be challenging for your skills, beneficial for your family and financially gainful for your future.

PARTICIPANT EXAMPLE OF HANDOUT

Thesis Statement Check Up

Check your thesis statement for the following:

- ✓ Your thesis statement has three parts—subject, verb, three cluster ideas
- ✓ Your thesis statement is an argument
- ✓ Your thesis statement is a main idea



Choosing a career

~~Choosing a career most likely~~

~~The most important thing about
choosing a career is job security,
making money, and challenging.~~

The most important aspect about choosing a career
is job security, money, and challenges.

APPENDIX E
RESEARCHER NOTES

Add more Observation notes

Wk 3

Day 1 solicit more participants
 - decision to include [redacted] students who have previously taken [redacted] and who are on the fence in [redacted]
 - met with group 2, reviewed practice tweets, face-to-face wk to create thesis statement

interacted as a group
 has I know the things I know about how they interacted

group - gained 2 participants total # 8

Day 2
 - interview 1 from group 1 scheduling conflicts - only 2 members from group could interview

type up.

Day 3
 - met with 2 participants from new [redacted] group 3
 • course login group 2
 • practice tweets
 • tweets

Day 4
 - interview 3 with 1 indiv. from group 2
 possible dropout of 3rd indiv. from group 2
 participant # = 7

RESEARCHER NOTES

Observation for group [REDACTED]

~~The results of~~ the observation for group [REDACTED] reflected that the group worked well together although there was not much verbal communication between the participants. Much of the time ~~deliberating~~ over their tweets was silent; however, the participants made frequent eye contact and nodded their agreements ~~between~~ when one or the other mentioned including an idea in the cluster. When the participants communicated, they both took turns listening to the other ^{person} talk. The most important piece of evidence ~~so far~~ to support that the participants worked well together was that they ~~also~~ arrived at the same conclusion for their separate thesis statements. Both participants wrote very similar separate thesis statements. ~~Therefore~~ The final agreement was to merge use ~~most of~~ ~~the~~ ~~idea~~ sentence ~~added~~ as their final thesis statement because _____

APPENDIX F

OPEN CODING EXAMPLES

Transcript 2: Interview 2, Group 1 Respondent 2 and Group 2 Respondent 1

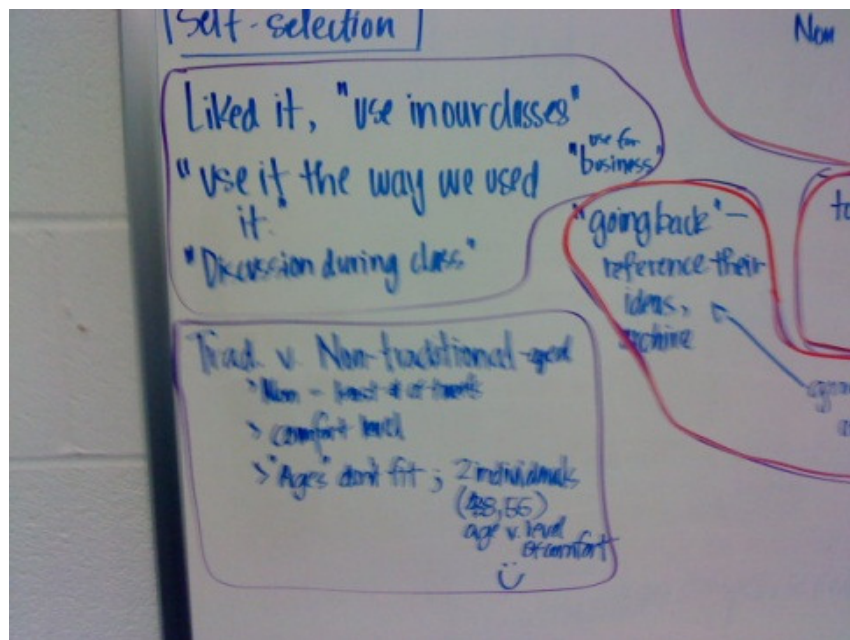
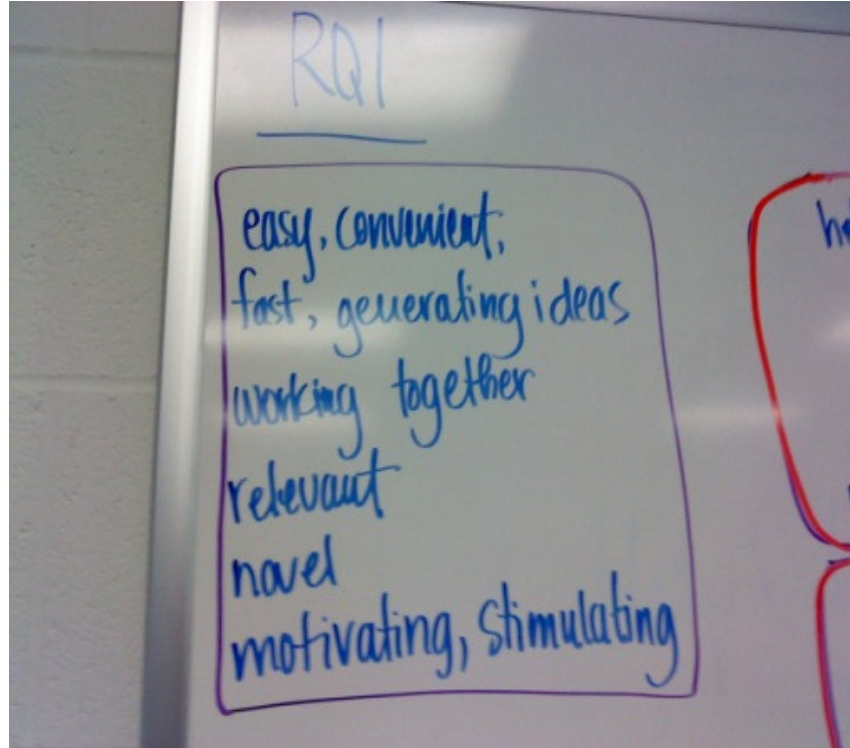
1		I: The first thing I want to ask you about are your experiences working in
2		groups. In what ways did the group prewriting help you to understand
3		prewriting?
4	I liked it because it	Beth Group 2: I liked it because it kinda helped out with the
5	helped out w/ the brainstorming	brainstorming part of it. Helped relieve some of the stress and give you
6	part. Helped relieve	more ideas.
7	Stress; give you more ideas	Lisa Group 1: I also liked it because it helped me to share ideas and
8	I liked it... helped me	improve and expand my knowledge, to be able to do more.
9	share ideas; improve and expand my knowledge	I: What was it like communicating in your groups?
10	to be able to do more	
11	mine was great.	Lisa Group 1: Mine was great. It became more like we knew each other.
12	it became more like we	Beth Group 2: It was easy
13	it was easy	
14	easier; a lot easier	I: Do you think it was easy or difficult prewriting in groups?
15		Beth Group 2: I thought it was easier; a lot easier.
16	I didn't mind working	Lisa Group 1: I didn't mind working together in groups
17	together in groups	
18		I: Ok, and umm, would you choose to prewrite in groups again and why?
19	I would because I think	Beth Group 2: Yes, I would because I think it gives you a little more brain
20	gives more brainpower.	power so-to-speak. There is more than one person. Two heads are
21	more than one person	always better than one.
22	Two heads better than one	
23	there is more knowledge	Lisa Group 1: Yeah there is more knowledge.
24		
25		I: How was this writing experience different from other writing
26		experiences?
27	I had a teacher rather	Lisa Group 1: Well writing in the past, I had a teacher rather than other
28	than other students	students come together. So this is kinda different. Kinda relaxed cause it
29	come together. Different	was like me trying to [unclear]
30	Relaxed	
31	puts you on the level	Beth Group 2: It kinda puts you on the level, well have people on your
32	have people on your	level rather than the teacher who obviously knows what they're doing
33	level rather than the	cause they're teaching you so you kinda are comfortable
34	teacher; it's more comfortable	
35		I: So how did your group integrate everybody's ideas?
36		
37	politely and respectfully	Lisa Group 1: They took it politely and respectfully. We shared and we
38		laughed and we had a little bit of everyone putting it together and it

OPEN CODING EXAMPLES

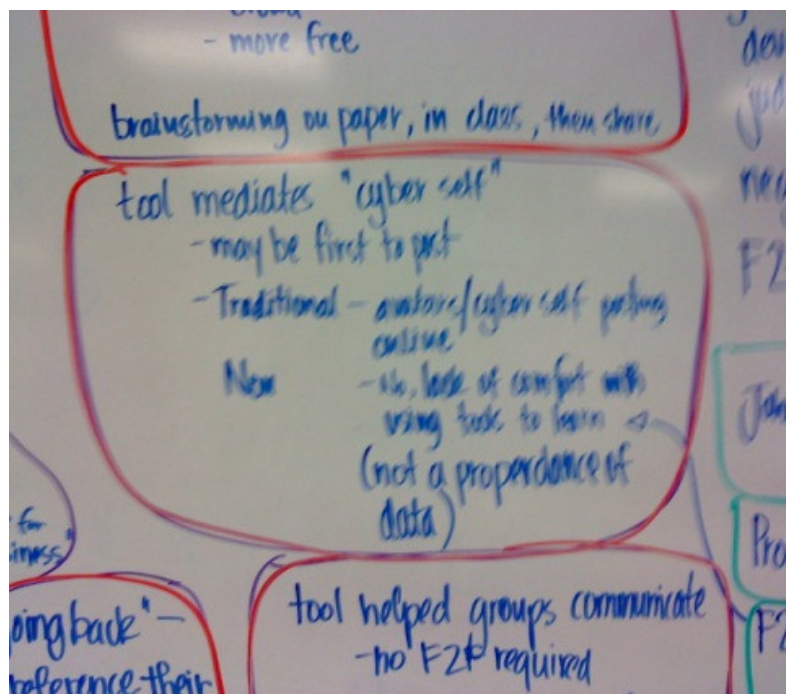
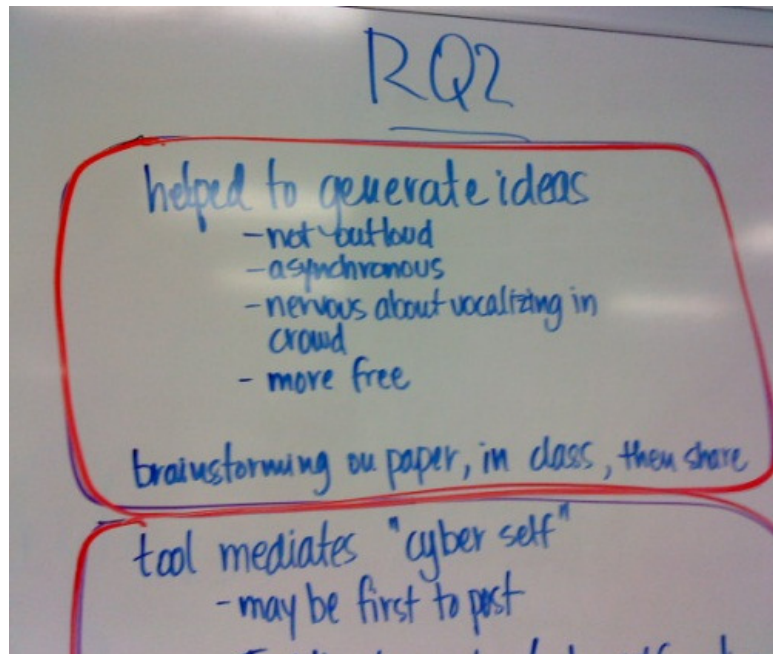
Transcript 7: Interview 7, Group 4 Respondent 2

- 1 I: In what ways did group prewriting help you to understand prewriting?
- 2 It was easier Tameka: It was easier, I actually enjoyed it cause the brainstorm part didn't take
3 I actually enjoyed it cause the brainstorm part, didn't take all my energy, was easy,
4 working with I: Tell me about how you communicated in your group. Was it easy or difficult?
5 him bc we thought alike What was it like?
- 6 It was easy bc we had similar ideas. I didn't even know him. Tameka: It was easy because we had similar ideas, and I didn't even know him
7 we had similar ideas. I didn't even know him. I: How did your thesis statement represent or reflect both of you?
- 8 We said the same things. I worded mine differently Tameka: We said the same things, but I worded mine differently, it meant the
9 same thing it meant the same thing
- 10 I: How did you ensure that both of your voices were heard?
- 11 We took turns talking, our ideas were similar, it wasn't hard at all, he was respectful. Tameka: We took turns talking, like I said our ideas were similar it wasn't hard at
12 all, and he was respectful.
13 I: Give me some feedback on what your face-to-face meetings were like.
- 14 It was fun. We revelment, just to have similar ideas click like we did it was easy. Tameka: It was fun. Because we never met, but just to have similar ideas and
15 click like we did it was easy.
16 I: Would you choose to prewrite in a group or with a partner again
17 yes because somebody can have a better idea that you they can give you different ideas Tameka: Yes, because somebody can have a better idea than you, and they can
18 give you different ideas—something that you would have never thought of
19 something that you would have never thought of. I: did you learn anything from your partner?
20 Tameka: Yeah
- 21 I: What did you learn?
- 22 glad to relax, so calm, he didn't make me nervous, he was laid back. Tameka: How to relax, he's so calm. He didn't make [me] nervous. He was laid
23 back.
24 I: How was this experience different from other experiences in the past?
- 25 wasn't a lot of conflict Tameka: There wasn't a lot of conflict
- 26 I: Describe how you felt when you worked in groups before
- 27 I don't really like groups Tameka: I really don't like groups to be honest
28 I: Ok, why not?

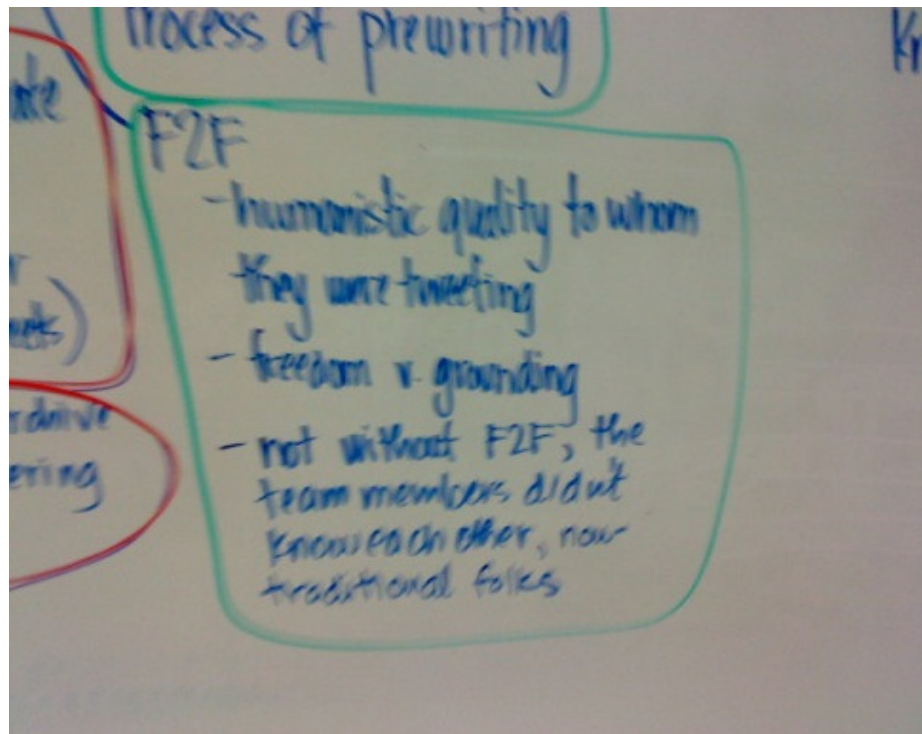
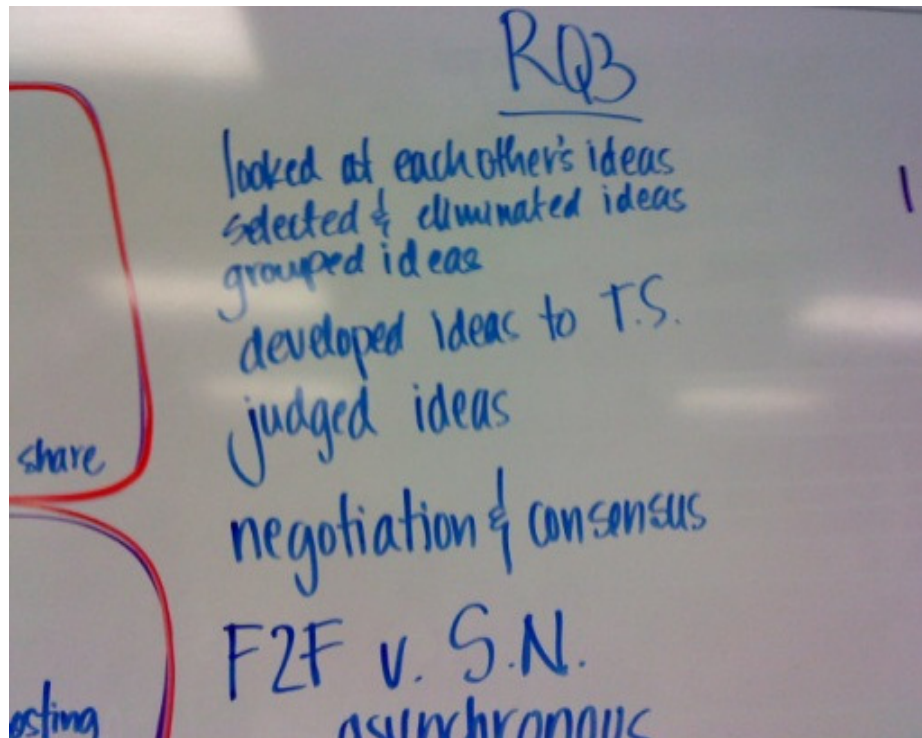
APPENDIX G
ADVISOR NOTES



ADVISOR NOTES



ADVISOR NOTES



ADVISOR NOTES

The whiteboard contains handwritten notes in red and black ink, organized into two main columns: 'Thinking' and 'Sharing'.

Thinking

- > come up with/generate ideas
- > thought process,
- > reference to determine what "goback" to post
- > that was the brainstorming step
- > thinking visible
- > recall, draw on what they already know
- > reservoir of ideas
- > tool = motivation, novel, stimulation, comment
- > group = motivating, stimulating, responsibility, others post/help/come

Sharing

- > posting ideas that would be used for TS.
- > Others would see their ideas
- > Some ideas selected, other ideas discarded
- > All ideas No ideas are singular/isolated/distinguished.
- > group negotiation / consensus

How knowledge is represented/depicted

nk