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Creating a space for dialogue in the beginning argumentation course

Claire S. Calcagno
San Jose State University

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CREATING A SPACE FOR DIALOGUE IN
THE BEGINNING ARGUMENTATION COURSE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Claire S. Calcagno

May, 1998

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Dr. Shawn Spano

Dr. Jo Sprague

Dr. Dennis Jaehne

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

Serena K. Stanford

ABSTRACT
CREATING A SPACE FOR DIALOGUE IN THE BEGINNING
ARGUMENTATION COURSE

by Claire S. Calcagno

The purpose of this study was to incorporate two social constructionist based techniques into the basic argumentation and advocacy course at San Jose State University, and to provide a qualitative evaluation of their effectiveness. The two techniques, circular questioning and reflecting, were expected to result in dialogic patterns in the students' discourse. The techniques were introduced via class lectures and activities at approximately week 12 during a 17 week course. Students' spoken and written discourse both *about* argument and *in* argument was sampled at various points during the semester and analyzed using a thematic discourse analytic method.

While students did demonstrate aspects of cosmopolitan communication in their talk *about* argument, their patterns of discourse while engaging *in* argument more closely resembled ethnocentric or modernistic communication. As a practical theorist, this study provokes further investigation of various ways to foster cooperative interaction in an otherwise competitive practice.

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My professional associations have been a backbone of this project. My work with Irene van der Zande and the KIDPOWER community set the stage for my work with conflict and cooperative forms of argument. Irene provided a forum for me to blend the world of self-defense with the world of communication. The result was conflict management and dialogue.

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CHAPTER I

Review of the Theoretical Literature

Introduction

From cordial disagreement to long running social controversy, argument takes many forms and contributes to the fabric of democracy. What remains consistent from a social constructionist perspective, is that argument is created between people and through communication practices. Interestingly, the goal of many beginning argumentation texts and courses is to improve the quality of argument by teaching students argumentative structure. Structural skills are important and may have considerable positive impact on public communication as a whole and therefore on democracy. However, what many texts and courses leave out is the co-constructive element of argument—an acknowledgment of the roles that participants play in co-creating the processes and outcomes of argument (the interpersonal element if you will) and how those roles affect the social and political systems in which the arguers participate.

Pearce (1995b) discusses the importance of argumentation in the “national conversation” and as part of democracy. He notes three important assumptions that are relevant to this study. First, “good public communication and democratic forms of life, whether in politics, organizations or families, are so closely related that they are mutually constitutive” (p. 242). Thus, the *quality* of our democracy is constituted by the *forms* of communication in which we engage. How we talk will determine what kind of democracy we ultimately create. Second, “there are different forms of communication which have different qualities such that while ‘enough’ communication is certainly a precondition of

democratic social relations, 'more' communication does not necessarily mean 'better' communication" (p. 242). This assumption draws attention to the nature and quality of the communication we engage in, and highlights the importance of examining and assessing the structure, effectiveness and affects of that communication. For example, Pearce (1995b) argues that public communication may well benefit from the incorporation of different conversational structures and/or what may be called dialogic forms of interaction. In *dialogue*, participants have a high regard for themselves, the outcome, *and* the relationship with their conversational partner. This form of interaction is focused on understanding, exploration, a foundation of personal experience, and an acknowledgment of the complexity of issues and positions (Littlejohn, 1997). Specifically, as will be discussed, *dialogue* means the kinds of conversational structures which facilitate what Pearce (1989) calls "cosmopolitan" ways of interacting in which conversants suspend belief in their own positions and take the time to explore the positions and interests of others.

The third assumption that Pearce (1995b) explicates is that, "analysis, intervention and instruction about the qualities of 'good' communication is a good way to spend one's time" (p. 242). This call to action is especially poignant in light of an argument that Daniel Yankelovich makes that the public is given little opportunity to participate in democratic decision making (see Norman and Hillman, 1995). He argues that essentially, "leadership" makes decisions and then engages in a process of mass persuasion to achieve public "buy-in." If this is the case, it is all the more important to promote active participation among "the masses" in order to stimulate a more participative democracy. Otherwise, by our simple lack of involvement, we, the constituents, allow "the leaders" to know *for*

us, what is best. Only with active participation can our voices be heard. Further, as Pearce notes, the *quality* of our communication makes an immense difference in the outcome. In a video entitled, *Public Dialogue and Democracy*, Pearce and Yankelovich demonstrate that the public is constantly exposed to a sort of “media monologue” in which the media bombard the public with one-way messages about what is important in public life, and what to do about it (Norman & Hillman, 1995). However, the public is given little chance to respond, and if they can, it is only the extreme and polar positions that are given, “air time.” This points to a considerable need for the promotion of civic participation. However, *if* we were to promote civic participation, *where* would this promotion and participation take place? How would “the masses” come to “spend their time” as Pearce suggests, learning about or engaging in more dialogic or cosmopolitan forms of communication that may, in turn, improve the quality of democracy?

Clearly, there are many agents of socialization which may impact one’s ability to engage in various forms of conversation. The family and mediated communication are two important sources. However, the media can largely be counted upon to bring forth sensationalism rather than substance (Jamieson, 1992). The family is a wonderful source of interpersonal skills, but judging by the quality of discourse which currently exists in public, more instruction is needed. My position as an instructor of communication is that one important place where students learn how to be public conversationalists is in the classroom — particularly in public speaking and argumentation courses and other skill oriented oral communication courses. It is, after all, the goal of university general education requirements to “promote citizenship” and to help

students “develop abilities to address complex issues and problems using disciplined analytic skills and creative techniques” (*San Jose State University [SJSU] General Education [GE] Requirements*, 1991/1993, p. 1). In addition, it is specifically the goal of the oral communication requirements to emphasize “the roles of public communication in a free society” (*SJSU GE Requirements*, 1991/1993, p. 8). It is in these public speaking-based courses that students learn how to explore their own perspectives, assess and critique the perspectives of others, defend public policies, build and present arguments to articulate their views—in short, learn to engage in public life. While these processes are happening in many classes, the public speaking or argumentation course emphasizes the skills necessary for presentation of social issues in public venues and promotes civic participation. Thus, these forums are clearly appropriate places to practice and explore argumentative, dialogic and cosmopolitan modes of public communication.

Further, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, a review of popular argumentation texts shows that there is an absence of dialogic models and an emphasis on structural models designed to assist students in the development of proper logic, cogent reasoning and proper practices of debate and advocacy—thus leaving a niche to be filled. It is my belief that students would benefit from being introduced to techniques and skills designed to promote dialogue in addition to those which promote traditional argumentation practices. This would give students a broader range of skills and competencies from which to choose when engaging in argument.

Therefore, I developed a unit to present in my beginning argumentation and advocacy course in the Spring of 1996. This study is an analysis of the impact of

introducing my students to the set of skills designed to foster dialogic (i.e. cosmopolitan) forms of argument and discussion in that unit. These skills (circular questioning and reflecting) are grounded in social constructionist theory and work to “open up” patterns of interaction, allowing conversants to explore issues from an “argument as learning” stance, rather than from an “argument as war” stance.

The guiding assumption behind this study is that training students in dialogic forms of argumentation may contribute to better public communication and democratic life. Spano (1996) states that, “developing new communication practices in the classroom holds out the possibility that we can create with our students different forms of life, different ways of experiencing the world beyond the classroom” (p. 82). To this end, the two systemic techniques (circular questioning and reflecting) were introduced via lectures and class activities as a way of broadening the focus of the beginning argumentation course and of extending the application of both the techniques themselves and social constructionist theory. The crux of this project is an interpretive discourse analysis of student interactions and writings about controversial issues and about the process of argument during my course. The implication is that instruction in these techniques may be a productive way to make an impact on future generations of civic participants and thus improve the quality of democracy. In addition, the analysis serves as an assessment of my pedagogical practice. The way that the techniques were introduced in my course had considerable impact on the relative success of this project.

In this chapter, I will review the literature in several areas relevant to this study. Beginning with social constructionism, I will discuss variations in the

theory and root this study in a version of social constructionism strongly influenced by Pearce and Cronen's Coordinated Management of Meaning theory (1980). The tenets of this theory will be explicated and used as a framework for the remainder of the study. This section concludes with a discussion of Pearce's taxonomy of four forms of communication (Pearce, 1989).

The next section explores the tools available to teachers of the beginning argumentation course. My review of a collection of basic argumentation texts reveals that what most students are exposed to in the basic argumentation course is primarily structural. Interestingly, while social constructionism has been utilized as a guiding metatheory in various contexts, it is largely absent from these texts. There are, however, ways to use and supplement what is available to highlight the co-construction of the argumentative event, which then allows for the practice of dialogic forms of argument. Chapter one concludes with a discussion of what this dialogic form of argument would look like.

The second chapter will focus on some practical aspects of this study. Here, I will attempt to answer the question, "what might a social constructionist view of argumentation actually *look like* in the classroom?" The chapter begins with a presentation of some of the specific ways of working developed by the Public Dialogue Consortium and other groups committed to the improvement of public discourse. In this study, I used these ways of working in the classroom to facilitate conversational forms of argument. A discussion of how the techniques were implemented is also presented. Chapter two concludes with the research questions.

The third chapter discusses the method of data collection and analysis, while the fourth presents the findings. The final chapter discusses the implications of

this case study in terms of social constructionism, argumentation pedagogy, my work as a practical theorist and the state of public discourse, and makes suggestions for future research.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is an epistemological, ontological and methodological perspective rooted in the belief that knowledge and meaning are constructed through social interaction and within context (Pearce, 1994b; Shotter, 1993; Shotter & Gergen, 1989; Shotter & Gergen, 1994). Leeds-Hurwitz (1995) categorizes social constructionism as one of many similar perspectives which she broadly terms, "social approaches." These social approaches include a vast array of theories and methods which share an interpretive quality. Included in this array are, "cultural studies, critical theory...postmodernism, symbolic interactionism, dialogism...feminism...ethnography of communication, systems theory...discourse analysis, ethnomethodology, pragmatics, social constructivism or constructionism, coordinated management of meaning...and social interaction" (p. 3). While these approaches have subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) differences, they all share certain qualities which stand in contrast with what are traditionally known as "objectivist" or "positivist" approaches. The following comparison of positivist to social approaches will help to clarify the primary tenets of social constructionism.

Social Constructionism and Positivism

Traditional logical positivism is exemplified by specific assumptions that are quite different from social constructionism. In fact, social constructionism

evolved in part as an alternative and response to traditional positivism. When the field of communication studies was first developing as a unique field of study, traditional social scientific ideals were incorporated in an effort to gain credibility as a discipline (Delia, 1985).

The first distinction between positivists and social constructionists is that logical positivists (or communication scientists) seek to discover communication regularities that will develop into communicative laws, rules, traits or relational patterns. P. A. Andersen (1989) notes that, "science is a process of discovering order amid chaos and regularity in randomness" (p. 4). Knowledge (or laws, rules, traits or relational patterns) from this perspective is (are) something to be "discovered" or "identified" through the process of theory building. Pearce (1995) calls this a "quest for certainty" and contrasts it with an "exercise of curiosity" that is the drive behind a social constructionist paradigm (p. 93).

Specifically, Pearce (1995) notes that curiosity may indeed drive the quest for certainty, but in fact, the kind of curiosity that drives social constructionism is one that positivists may find, "frivolous, incomprehensible, and often perverse" (p. 102). He notes that from the perspective of a social constructionist, the exercise of curiosity

consists of an affinity for paradox and irony, a certain playfulness about our own actions that take into consideration the fact that we make the world that we describe, and an orientation toward mutuality, co-construction, and systems rather than toward reductionism or objectivism. (p. 102)

The exercise of curiosity then becomes a way of being in the world—a way of fully embracing what social constructionists believe is the unpredictable and undetermined nature of life—a stance that positivists strive to overcome.

While social constructionists may share an affinity for curiosity, there are subtle distinctions between social constructionists in the ways that they *embrace* curiosity. While all social constructionists would shy from the search for certainty with a capital “C,” the degree to which an individual social constructionist exercises curiosity varies. For example, if curiosity (in social constructionist terms) is an appreciation for paradox and irony and for the unfinished nature of life, then the exercise of curiosity can be at once freeing and paralyzing. Any and all answers from this perspective are unfinished, unknowable and necessarily incomplete. Pearce (1995a) addresses this tension as a liberation. When discussing the exercise of curiosity he notes that

an inevitable consequence of this liberation is being ensnared in just those webs of significance prefigured in the languages we use. We can remain comfortably enmeshed in those languages, but it is also possible to experience a ‘second liberation’ this time *from* language. This liberation does not consist of escaping the snares of language but in understanding—and thus becoming able, albeit briefly and occasionally, to transcend them. (p. 103)

This is like the fish that temporarily “sees” the proverbial water — we become humans who “sees” the entanglements of the language in which we live.

Similarly, Robert Walters (personal communication, February 19, 1996) has talked about an inherent tension between social constructionism and relativism and notes the strain that can arise from the view that we create the social worlds in which we live. If this is so, then are we 100% responsible for the outcome? Partially responsible? If we are responsible, how much power and influence do we exert over others and over our own lives? Thus, any given group of social constructionists will probably demonstrate varying degrees of appreciation for curiosity, or what will be later be called the notion of mystery—the uncertain nature of human communication and the unfinished nature of life.

The second distinction between positivists and social constructionists is described by Pearce (1995a) when he states that the positivistic approach sees “the social world as monadic” (p. 93) or, as a place with predictable outcomes. Such a world is perfect for the communication scientist whose job is to explain, predict and control. Indeed, Chaffee and Berger (1987) note that

besides explanation, basic goals of science include prediction and control....scientific control means that we would know how to produce a phenomenon in which we are interested by setting up the conditions that account for it. Understanding those conditions is the essence of prediction. (p. 100)

Again, in contrast, a social constructionist sees the world as inherently unfinished, or “pluralistic.” This is the notion “that the social world is ‘made’” (Pearce, 1995a, p. 94), and is in the *continuous* process of being re-made through communicative action.

When we communicate, we are not just talking *about* the world, we are literally participating in the creation of the social universe. What will be will grow out of what was, but it will take on the form of the actions that you and I perform in this particular moment. (Pearce, 1994b, p. 75)

Thus, pluralism to a social constructionist is the notion that the future is inherently unfinished which renders prediction and control rather unattractive and somewhat useless.

Further, while all social constructionists would see the social world as pluralistic rather than monadic, they may differ on the degree to which they choose to examine the *products* or the *process* of communication. As mentioned earlier, some communication scholars emphasize the products of communication. This may result, for example, in a focus on the shared meanings that contribute to the creation of a given culture (e.g. ethnomethodology). Others would emphasize cognitive processes, or how we construct our realities

given variations in cognitive complexity (e.g. constructivism). Still others (and this reflects my own interest) would choose to focus on the process by which meanings are negotiated—or on conversational patterns and how these patterns help to create outcomes. Thus, while we all believe that the social world is inherently unfinished, where we choose to focus our efforts as social constructionist researchers may differ.

The third distinction is apparent upon an examination of some of the “tools” of communication science, which include “empiricism, testability, falsifiability, publicness, self-correction, measurability, objectivity, skepticism and heuristic value” (P. A. Andersen, 1989, p. 3 - 4). From a positivistic perspective, communication is to be observed, tested, and measured by an objective, skeptical scientist. Andersen notes that “social scientists should attempt to be unbiased and unemotional about the findings obtained in scientific studies....Objectivity requires reporting of one’s findings with a minimum of personal bias and distortion” (p. 8). This implies a certain detachment from the process of research that is unknown (and undesirable) to social constructionists. Pearce (1995a) calls this research approach, “gaining knowledge as a spectator” versus the social constructionist approach of “gaining knowledge as a participant” (p. 93). Stewart (1995) also summarizes this difference when he describes traditional scientific approaches as

grounded in what philosophers call the subject-object polarity and the epistemology that grows from it....[Which]...means that [these positivistic] approaches generally view persons as Cartesian-Kantian subjects who engage in various relations with elements of a more or less objective world. (p. 24)

He contrasts this with social approaches which, “integrate the conviction that the person is first and foremost being-in-the-world, not a ‘subject’ relating to ‘world-

objects'" (p. 24). Stewart also calls upon Heidegger's term "Dasein" to characterize each human as "an involved doer," or "a situated interpreter, understander, or 'sense maker' engaged in everyday coping" (p. 26). Thus, to gain knowledge as a participant is to embrace the notion of participation (even as a researcher) in the co-construction of the social world—including the research situation.

Again, while all social constructionists would, by definition, be categorized as believers in participant knowledge, there are subtle distinctions in the degrees to which their participation is reflected in their notions of theory. For example, Pearce (1995) notes that ethnographies of communication are one form of participant knowledge that may lead to theory building, while practical theorists engage in a different form of theory building. "Some social constructionists repudiate the very idea of a theory; others work hard to identify forms compatible with their intellectual commitments" (Pearce, 1995a, p. 102). Although I would have to say that I label myself the latter of these, in all cases, social constructionists believe that there is an inherent reflexivity in their research endeavors which must be acknowledged. Steier (1995) notes that reflexivity actually means, "a bending back onto a self" (p. 63), and that reflexivity creates a kind of circularity. This is literally the paradox that the language we use creates the world we live in, which creates the language we use— a very sticky place for a positivistic researcher. Steier also notes that, "reflexive relationships have posed difficulties in communication processes, and for the most part...have been dealt with by either admiring the problem as a problem...or by attempting to create a world in which reflexivity is seen as irrelevant" (p. 64). Far from either

of these approaches, social constructionists embrace the notion of reflexivity and acknowledge the inherency of their own presence in every research situation.

The distinction between constructivism and constructionism is also an example of differences in degree of participation in the creation of knowledge. Constructivism is a more cognitive model than constructionism that may be “characterized by [an] interest in the *stories we make up* and then, of course, live within. Their [constructivists’] research and theory focus on the determinants of these stories and, in the other face of constructivism, deconstructions of these stories” (Pearce, 1995a, p. 100). In contrast, constructionism is “characterized by [an] interest in the *stories we make real* in our actions” (p. 100). Further, Pearce notes that “although it is an oversimplification, it is useful to say that constructivists see communication as a *cognitive* process of *knowing* the world, and social constructionists see it as a *social* process of *creating* the world” (p. 98). Hence, “constructivists foreground perception while constructionists foreground action” (p. 98). The *emphasis* for constructivists and constructionists in the way knowledge is conceptualized is different. Constructionists emphasize processual, embodied knowing, while constructivists emphasize cognitive, perceptual knowing.

Social Approaches and Social Constructionism

Bearing these differences between social and positivistic approaches in mind, Leeds-Hurwitz (1995) offers a synopsis of the similarities between various social approaches by delineating eleven sub-categories. Roughly, these eleven sub-categories can be clustered into three broader categories of similarities in

epistemology, ontology and methodology. I will examine each of these three broad categories in turn.

The epistemology of social approaches. It is no surprise that Leeds-Hurwitz (1995) describes social approaches as, “social”. These approaches to communication are primarily interested in what happens *between* people rather than within individuals. The epistemological perspective, then, is that knowledge is the result of social interaction. Further, she notes that social approaches tend to look at both the product and the process of communication, and that communication is broadly seen as symbolic activity. Thus, social approaches acknowledge that communicators are actively involved in the construction of reality through language and other forms of symbolic activity including nonverbal communication. She notes, “In this view, social reality is not a fact or set of facts existing prior to human activity; it is created through human interaction” (p. 7). This resonates with Pearce’s (1995a) notion that knowledge is gained as a participant, rather than as a spectator.

The ontology of social approaches. The nature of being from a social constructionist perspective emphasizes the situated self. Thus the exploration of “being” cannot be divorced from the socio-historical and cultural context which is created by and contributes to the self. Leeds-Hurwitz (1995) notes that, “social approaches emphasize the study of identity” (p. 8). However, this is a culturally specific, “socially constructed view of the self” (p. 8) rather than a psychological view. The “self” is inextricably situated within particular socio-historical and cultural circumstances which include rules, norms, and structures, which are themselves continually constructed and reconstructed through communicative action. These “rules” are discernible from the kinds of rules sought in traditional

scientific inquiry. The “rules” of social constructionism can be conceived of as logical forces that are in the continuous process of being constructed through communicative action (Pearce & Cronen, 1980). Further, they are rooted in plurality— in the notion that outcomes are not fixed, but are instead created and are continually in the process of being re-created within specific socio-historical and cultural contexts (Pearce, 1994b). This stands in contrast to the rules sought in traditional social science that are posited to transcend time and context and to offer a degree of predictability.

The methodology of social approaches. Because the culture of interest to any communication scholar may be as vast as the broadest social culture (e.g. the American culture), or as specific as the most well-defined sub-culture (e.g. the culture of a specific classroom with a specific teacher at a specific western university), the method of inquiry for social constructionists must be well established in context. This means taking a holistic view of the situation (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1995, p. 10), exposing the researcher’s own cultural perspective with her or his respective biases and experiences, and examining the socio-historical context surrounding and constituting the research experience.

Direct involvement in the research situation is seen as the preferred method for inquiry (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1995, p. 9). However, direct involvement requires a heightened sensitivity to the reflexive nature of research. Recall that a central epistemological assumption of social approaches is that social knowledge is created between people in interaction. Thus, the researcher cannot remove and must acknowledge her or his influence from and on the co-creation of social meaning that results from the research process (Steier, 1995). This reflexive

stance is imperative in conducting research from a social constructionist perspective.

To summarize, social approaches share certain epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions. These assumptions include an emphasis on the way that social knowledge is created through human, symbolic interaction and within specific socio-historical contexts. Conversants create and re-create the social worlds in which they live through communicative action. Knowledge is gained through participation in this process and the results are inherently processual. The methods of social constructionists are rooted in a deep curiosity about the undetermined nature of life and are holistic and inherently reflexive. What then, differentiates social constructionism from the vast array of social approaches in general? This differentiation is the focus of the next section.

Roots and Distinctions of Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is a unique sub-set within the larger category of social approaches, while coordinated management of meaning theory is one of many social constructionist approaches. Specifically, this section will discuss the three primary roots of social constructionism and the evolution of CMM.

To begin, social constructionism (and the coordinated management of meaning theory in particular) descends, in part, from the American Pragmatists. Bernstein (1992) outlines five essential assumptions of American Pragmatism that help define the philosophical basis of social constructionism.

Pragmatism. First, Bernstein (1992) claims that early pragmatists were “anti-foundationalists.” They criticized the notion of objectivity—that knowledge can exist independent of human inquiry and is “discovered” through unembodied

scientific methods. This was a criticism against the core foundation of philosophy and scientific thinking of the time. As such, it was a precursor to social constructionism. In fact, Bernstein notes that Pierce “sought to demolish the idea that there can be any absolute beginnings or endings in philosophy. He sought to exorcize what Dewey later called the ‘quest for certainty’ and the ‘spectator theory of knowledge’” (p. 327). These terms are recognizable as the same ones that Pearce (1995a) uses to contrast and distinguish social constructionist ideals from positivistic epistemological notions.

Second, the pragmatists celebrated fallibilism—the notion that there are multiple interpretations of any belief or claim. This assumption stands in contrast with the scientific ideal that a given hypothesis may represent an accurate picture of the external world that can be looked upon and consistently interpreted. This second assumption leads to the third, which is that the American Pragmatists called for “the need to nurture a critical community of inquirers” (Bernstein, 1992, p. 328). If knowledge is socially created rather than objective and “knowing” is fallible, it makes sense that ideas should be subject to the scrutiny of many minds. Bernstein states, “It is only by the serious encounter with what is other, different and alien that I can hope to determine what is idiosyncratic, limited and partial” (p. 328). This is a call for heuristic dialogue among philosophers, theorists, and practitioners which serves as an important backdrop to one of the techniques used in this study as an attempt to build an argumentation course informed by social constructionism (i.e. reflecting). While this technique will be described more thoroughly in the next chapter, reflecting is rooted in the assumption that “a critical community of inquirers” will serve the important purpose of “opening” ways of interacting between individuals who

have “forgotten” about the socially constructed and inherently fallible nature of any given position.

The fourth and fifth assumptions are that life is marked by “radical contingency and chance” (Bernstein, 1992, p. 328), and that “there can be no escape from plurality” (p. 329). These tenets set the stage for the importance of Pearce’s (1995a) pluralism, or the notion that the social world is unfinished and has undetermined outcomes. Bernstein (1992) ties these assumptions together when he notes that

the type of pluralism that represents what is best in our pragmatic tradition is an engaged fallibilistic pluralism. Such a pluralistic ethos places new responsibilities upon each one of us. For it means taking our own fallibility seriously—resolving that...we are willing to listen to others without denying or suppressing the otherness of the other. (p. 336)

Thus, Bernstein is arguing that a cacophony of voices does not detract from but rather contributes to more developed understandings of the world and paradoxically, that those voices also contribute to the uncertainty that characterizes life. This engaged fallibilistic pluralism stands in opposition to the positivistic notion that there can be singular or preferred ways of knowing an empirically consistent and definable world.

Systems theory. A second, but no less important root of social constructionism includes systems theory and the “ecological epistemology” of Gregory Bateson (Pearce, 1994a). Specifically, Bateson advanced the notion of interconnectedness. Pearce notes that

“ecological epistemology” defines the meaning of a “thing” by its location within a network of relationships, the totality of which comprise a system....individual human beings or specific social situations are located within a *social ecology* [italics added] and should be understood by tracing the various relationships that comprise them. (p. 98)

Simply put, things are described and understood by their relationships to other things and within specific contexts that we define. This is reminiscent of the notion of situated action which shows itself clearly in CMM.

Penn (1982) describes Bateson's ecological epistemology in terms of double description, co-evolutionary change, and circularity. Double-description is the process of describing things in context. For example, a bucket of water is only cold or warm in relation to the air temperature or another comparative object such as another bucket of water. This results in a double-description of the water temperature that highlights the difference between things implicitly connected. It is because of interconnectedness that things are better understood when the contexts in which they exist are acknowledged.

The concept of co-evolutionary change posits that evolution itself cannot be viewed as linear, but is best thought of as a circular process—emerging from interaction and creating subsequent interaction. As such, interaction itself becomes the fuel of evolution. This is consistent with the fundamentals of systems theory which emphasize interdependence and wholeness. In a system, no member acts or exists in a vacuum, but rather acts only in relation to everything else. All parts together create a whole that is bigger than the sum of its parts. Thus, in order to understand how a system works, it is best to focus on change and how it affects the whole. Change becomes the primary unit of investigation. The circularity that Penn (1982) discusses is much like the notion of reflexivity discussed in a prior section of this work. It too is a concept of interconnectedness which will be reviewed in detail in the next chapter.

Bateson's theory of ecological epistemology also impacted the Milan School of Family Therapy to a great degree, out of which came the specific systemic

techniques utilized in this study. Circular questioning (one of these techniques) was developed by the Milan school for family therapy purposes and was adapted by the Public Dialogue Consortium for use in public interventions. Circular questioning is a practice designed to call attention to differences and to make connections between members of a system. It is a technique that has since been utilized in various forums including team facilitations and training sessions. This technique will be presented in detail in the next chapter.

Wittgenstein. The third root of social constructionism is found in the later works of Wittgenstein. Primarily, Wittgenstein's philosophy helped to shift social constructionists in general, and CMM in particular, toward an emphasis on language in use. Specifically, Wittgenstein's work suggests three interwoven tenets that must be acknowledged for their centrality in the evolution of social constructionist thought and of CMM in particular.

The first is the concept of a *language game*. A language game is in essence an interactive communicative event in which there are rules that govern our linguistic behaviors. Like a chess game or a ball game, language games are learned, somewhat prefigured, but also created and re-created in episodes of individual usage. Schulte (1992) states that, "in one respect, the concept of language games simply serves to emphasize the importance of taking context into account when trying to understand or explain the meaning of linguistic expressions" (p. 103). This emphasis on context is important for the derivation of meaning. In his text, Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein (1968/1972) uses the metaphors of tools and games to describe the uses of language in the larger language game. Finch (1977) says that these

metaphors of tools and games suggest...that the important thing about a word is what is done with it or what can be done with it, but this will

involve looking at the word itself *and* at the larger activities into which it fits. (p. 24)

Thus, the primacy of language is upheld, and the important notion of context is sustained. Words are tools, and games are what can be accomplished with the tools. It is also important to note that there is no distinction between the tools (words) themselves and the realities that those tools create. They cannot be separated because we actually live *in and through* the language games which are created and sustained.

And what about this notion of a game? Shulte (1992) discusses this metaphor and asks,

Why does Wittgenstein use the peculiar concept of “language game”? Isn’t game playing for children, or for adults without serious work to do at the moment? And isn’t the use of language often an important matter—something on the serious rather than the light side of life? Why, then, of all things, speak of “language games”? (p. 106)

Shulte’s answer is that

Wittgenstein wants to stress that we have to learn linguistic expressions and wants to remind us of how we learned them in the first place. We are not to think of the way adults learn a foreign or technical language, but of the way children learn their mother tongue. (p. 106)

These are prefigured rule structures that are (re)created through language use. A language game, then, is essentially a rule governed activity which is context specific and continually re-created through language use.

The second and third important contributions from Wittgenstein are the notions of *rules* and *grammar*. There are rules for language in use which are episode specific and which, in turn, create the *grammar* of that episode. Baker and Hacker (1985) discuss the idea that rules are only rules in use, and thus are episode specific. “Something is a rule only dynamically, only in so far as it is

used in a certain way" (p. 47, emphasis theirs). Further, "it is not the form of words, but the use we make of them in practice, that makes them an expression of a rule" (p. 49). Simply put, rules are only rules when used in episodes. According to Cronen and Lang (1994), episodes are "distinguishable patterns within conversations...[which have] internal coherence [due to] participants using rules that give them a sense of emerging order" (p. 21). The rules are "knowledge of how to connect and create utterances in episodes of conjoint action" (p. 21). Thus, it is the sharing of rules that creates an episode. Further, all the rules at play in a given episode are the "grammar" of that episode. *Grammar* then, is the complex system of rules employed which allow a person to interact *in a given episode* (i.e. to play the language game). A key concept here is that the rules attending language use, and the resulting grammar, are situation (or game) specific and therefore subject to change across situations. This highlights the notion of context and draws attention to the fact that all communication is situation specific.

With all this talk of rules being situation specific, it is important not to lose sight of the notion that there are pre-existing rule structures. We are born into on-going conversations which means that there are pre-structured language games in any given socio-cultural setting. "We are born into a preexisting social world and we learn our rule-using abilities by acting into the practices of others in that world" (Cronen, 1995, p. 233). The process of learning how to "play by the rules" in a given situation constitutes being a game player (i.e. communication competence), while the ability to *create* the rules of coherence can be likened to being a game master (Pearce, 1994b).

Summary of Social Constructionism

To summarize, social constructionism is a subset of a larger collection of what we have called social approaches. Specifically, social constructionist approaches are concerned with the process of *creating* realities through language use *in specific contexts*, as opposed to constructivist approaches which emphasize the perceptual process in the creation of social realities, or the more ethnomethodological approaches which emphasize the shared meaning which emerges through communication. I am drawn to the study of the forms of life that people create through language in use. My emphasis, therefore, is on the process of language in action and the “forms of life” created when individuals coordinate their actions via language in specific contexts.

This study is rooted in a particular version of social constructionism that grows out of Pearce and Cronen’s Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory (Pearce & Cronen, 1980). CMM draws on all of the social constructionist assumptions and distinctions discussed thus far, but has its own emphases and has evolved in its own particular direction. The particulars of this theory are essential to the remainder of this project, and so will be elaborated here.

The Evolution of the Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory

Pearce (1995a) describes the coordinated management of meaning theory as, “an explicitly nonobjectivist, realist position that foregrounds the process of communication....It holds that the activities performed by persons in conversations are themselves real. Persons are not only cognizing entities, we are embodied; our activities are real” (p. 95). This theory has evolved over two decades from its original version explicated in the book, Communication,

Meaning and Action (Pearce & Cronen, 1980). In its original version, CMM was a rules-based approach to language—more constructivist than constructionist with an emphasis on the logical operators at work in conversation. The emphasis was originally on the *how* of coordination through language. The text focuses on such questions as, “what rules and precursors are at play in a given interaction?” “what does it look like when rules are coordinated versus uncoordinated?” and “in what differing rule systems is an individual enmeshed at any given time?” These questions implicate an examination of hierarchical contexts from the broadest archetypal constructions (which serve to differentiate societies and cultures), through life-scripts, episodes, contracts and speech acts, to an examination of the specific logical rules which guide the content of any individual interaction (the constructivist perspective). Pearce and Cronen (1980) go on to explore the implications of these rule systems for research and theory. However, as noted above, influenced by ‘later’ Wittgenstein, the American pragmatists, and Bateson (Cronen, Pearce, & Changsheng, 1989/90), CMM has evolved into a theory which emphasizes the creation of social realities through the use of language (Pearce, 1989).

Language as primary. CMM, like all social approaches, is predicated on the assumption that meaning is created through social interaction. Unique to the evolution of this theory, however, is the central role of communication in use. Pearce (1989) talks about the “discovery of communication,” or the “linguistic turn” (p. 18) as the cornerstone of CMM. “The events and objects of the social world are not what they appear. They are not external, ‘found things.’ Rather, they are the product of social action whose continued existence depends on their reconstruction in patterns of communication” (p. 19). Language, from this

perspective, is not a tool, but rather the essence of the social world itself. It is a primary process, inextricable from the realities it is used to describe. Stewart (1995) calls upon the work of Heidegger, Gadamer and Wittgenstein to describe the centrality of language in social approaches. He notes that Heidegger and Wittgenstein agreed on the primacy of language as central to the process of determining reality. Further, "Gadamer emphasizes that humans do not simply 'possess' or 'use' language, we *inhabit* it" (p. 29. Emphasis his). The world we live in then, is constructed through our language choices. From this perspective, speech *acts*—it performs; it creates. "To be human is to engage in the life process of coming to an understanding (everyday coping), a process that paradigmatically occurs in conversation. Humans co-construct and negotiate their worlds in verbal and non-verbal address and response" (p. 29). This focus on communication, then, directs attention to the *process* of communication itself, rather than to the *products* of communication. To clarify, Pearce (1995a) highlights the subtle but profound difference between social constructionists who emphasize the social construction of *reality* (emphasis on product) with those who would describe this action as *constructing social realities*. In the latter, the emphasis is on the *process* of communication in the construction of reality. This then, has become the focus of CMM.

In Communication and the Human Condition (Pearce, 1989) he refines and manipulates CMM theory with more of a central emphasis on language. Several tenets and concepts from that text are of central importance to this study and therefore must be explicated here.

Coordination. The first of these important tenets is *coordination*, or the ability to coordinate one's actions with the actions of others, thus (re)creating the rules

which guide the interaction itself as well as future interactions. Given that our social worlds are created through language, it is important to note the affordances and constraints of engaging in particular *forms* of communication. As was previously discussed, in Communication, Action and Meaning, Pearce and Cronen (1980) developed the notion that there are contextually based logics of meaning and action that guide our language choices and that contribute to the realities (*forms* of communication) we (re)construct. These logics of meaning and action are coordinated sequences of communication between social actors which, together, create the “glue” of social reality, or *practices*. Coordination occurs in episodes and is the result of the “logic of a communication system [which is] produced by the joining of the rules of both (or all) of the communicators” (Cronen, Pearce & Harris, 1979. p. 29). For example, there is a particular logic to ordering a meal at a restaurant. Knowing this logic in context (i.e., ordering a meal at a Burger King drive-thru is different from ordering at a five star restaurant) allows us to coordinate with others in patterned dances of communicative action (read: language games). However, this is not a logic which exists independent of communication. These are rules created *by* and *through* communication (read: grammar), and are only sustained through communication. It is important to remember that in recent years the emphasis has shifted toward language in use and away from rule structures.

Coordination refers to the ways that we negotiate the limitless communicative input to which we are exposed. It “names those practices in which persons attempt to call into being conjoint enactments of their visions of the good, the desirable, and the expedient, and prevent conjoint enactments of what they envision as bad, ugly and obtrusive” (Pearce, 1989, p. 20). It is the process by

which we communicate—the dance between expression and interpretation—our ability to engage a grammar and/or play a language game. However, coordination does not always imply smooth or conflict-free communicative interactions. It is very possible for two people to coordinate their actions and still produce “unhealthy” or “ineffective” communicative sequences. For example, a couple who fights incessantly can certainly coordinate their communication. Their fights may be patterned dances which are understood by both parties to be inevitable when discussing specific topics. The proverbial nag-withdraw pattern in communication certainly exemplifies coordination. Wife nags, husband withdraws. It is predictable, patterned, coordinated behavior, although it does not constitute a healthy pattern of conjoint action.

Coherence. Coherence is another central tenet of CMM which refers to the making of meaning. It is the process of *resourcing* (or creating resources for interaction) and is achieved by means of *story telling*. Every culture and every language is imbued with stories. Every institution, from families to friendships, perpetuates certain stories. These stories then, are potential vehicles for coherence when they are given “a good reading” (Pearce, 1989, p. 70). Essentially, there are an infinite number of stories that can be told about any given event. “Stories are underdetermined by the ‘facts of life’” (p. 71), which means that of the numerous possible interpretations of a given practice or event, the stories that we become enmeshed in, that become part of the larger social workings of a culture, must be appropriately creative (rich) and must engage listeners. When a story is drawn upon by two individuals engaging in conversation, it can be seen as a serendipitous sharing of logics of meaning and action, and coherence occurs. The conversants are utilizing the same resource,

and shared meaning happens. We can see this in Wittgensteinian terms as a language game—two people sharing a grammar and understanding the rules of interaction.

Metaphors, for example, can be seen as certain kinds of stories—organizing structures for the events of our lives which allow coherence in specific situations. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). If the metaphor itself is a story (for example, “love stinks”), then when two individuals come together who share the same story (grammar/ metaphor), then they will share a rule set about how to talk about love. They will therefore play the same language game and will achieve coherence. (And probably won’t have very satisfying love lives in the process.)

Mystery. Mystery is an appreciation for the inherently unfinished nature of the world and it refers to the ability to suspend belief in the stories told. It is rooted in the idea that the stories told are quite simply, human creations (as is the language with which we tell these stories)—self-imposed for the sake of coordination and coherence. If these stories are self-imposed, and the stories told are underdetermined by the elements of life, then other stories are equally as plausible. This is the essence of seeing the world as pluralistic. The ability to embrace this idea is the ability to engage in mystery.

Let me illustrate these ideas with an example of new students entering an argumentation course. These students will enter a classroom with a pre-structured syllabus and chosen subjects of study. They are entering a language game (or story) already in progress. The students will bring with them their own *resources* (i.e. systems of rules) that will prefigure their argumentative style and interaction patterns. These will rules will guide the students as they interact with each other, resulting in the grammar of the episode. Coordinated patterns of

interaction between teacher and student, and between student and other students, then create a context (i.e. language game) in which new meanings (i.e. coherence) and *new* ways of interacting (i.e. *new* language games) emerge. When students have learned the rules of argumentation, they have become game players. When they have integrated the ideas of argumentation and are able to play with the logics of meaning and action attending argument in a variety of ways, they may be considered game masters. When they are aware that there are multiple outcomes for any argumentative situation, they have acquired an appreciation for mystery. Thus, *rules* are communicative *resources* that are called upon by conversational participants via *coordination* and that result in the grammar of the episode. It is by interacting in these episodes, that students achieve *coherence* and play *language games*.

In sum, the process of coordination requires resources, and coordinated interactions constitute practices which may lead to coherence. To acknowledge the inherently underdetermined nature of the worlds we create is mystery. The ways we engage these different tenets of CMM in individual interactions produce different *forms* of communication. Pearce (1989) has explicated these forms of communication in a taxonomy of sorts. These forms are the subject of the next section.

Forms of Communication

Also central to the evolution of CMM is a shift toward the *form* of communication that is created through various communication practices. The following forms of communication (monocultural, ethnocentric, modernistic and cosmopolitan) are exemplified by shared grammars (i.e., shared understandings

of what counts as resources, practices, coordination, coherence and mystery). Each form can be viewed as its own language game with its own rules and grammar.

These forms are “based on the concept of communication as a collective process by which resources are expressed and (re)constructed in practice” (Pearce, 1989, p. 92). Pearce further states that “forms of communication differ depending on how the communicators treat each other, and the nature of the ‘reading’ they give to the stories that comprise their ‘resources’” (p. 92). The way communicators treat each other can be described along the continuum of treating one another “like natives”. To treat someone like a native is to use *your own* stories as the criteria to interpret *their* actions. To treat them *not* like a native is to seek *their* stories to use as a criteria for interpretation.

The nature of the “reading” that is given to anothers’ stories can be described as the willingness to put one’s own resources at risk. This willingness is demonstrated as a suspension of belief in your own stories and a seeking for alternatives. It may lead to the changing of one’s own stories if it seems appropriate (a willingness to suspend one’s own grammar and become a student of a new language game). Conversely, unwillingness to put resources at risk can be described as “the suspension of *disbelief* that comes from deep enmeshment in your own stories” (p. 92, emphasis mine).

Although he is speaking specifically of dialogic communication (which closely resembles cosmopolitan communication), Pearce (1995b) implicates the necessity of examining forms of communication for the success of democracy. He notes that, “any hope we have of participating in a public discourse of sufficient quality to sustain democratic social relations requires the ability to

discern the differences among these—and other—forms of communication” (p. 243). This calls attention to the forms of communication that are being utilized and highlights the importance of analyzing those forms.

Monocultural communication. The first of the four forms is monocultural communication. Monocultural communication exists when others are treated like natives (i.e. when one’s own resources are used as the evaluative criteria for another’s stories), and when resources are not put at risk. Two people engaging in monocultural communication will be able to coordinate effortlessly and will probably achieve coherence if they are indeed sharing resources. It is a mindless form of communication in that it need not be discussed or examined at all. If the participants were not sharing resources, they probably would not know it due to the assumptions of this form. Mystery is embedded in the grammar in such a way that it is not seen as a separate component. Pearce (1989) notes that the act of discussing communication (as differentiated from simply “doing” communication), is, by definition, to put resources at risk and thus to move participants from the monocultural form of communication into a different form. In this form of communication, people (unknowingly) share grammars of interaction, are playing by the same rules set and re-construct familiar language games. For example, two people who belong to the same belief system may share monocultural communication. They may fundamentally and profoundly agree on an issue and know no different stories. This shared belief system will allow them to coordinate and cohere effortlessly.

Ethnocentric communication. In ethnocentric communication, the communicator knows that there are “others” who are non-natives (unlike in monocultural communication), and she or he treats them as others. This

“otherness” is seen as “less than,” and becomes part of what defines a group (i.e., we are who we are because we are *not* them.) Resources are not put at risk because, even though there is a knowledge of difference, the stories of the others are seen as not “right.” About these stories Pearce (1989) states, “at least two themes must be present: some account of the difference between one’s own self or group and the others; and some explanation of how one’s stories are valid” (p. 128).

Well worn patterns provide the basis of coordination, which remains unthreatened as long as stories about the others and patterns of interaction with them remain consistent. In this way, coherence occurs. The meaning behind the other persons’ stories is interpreted as constant. When inconsistency arises, it is made coherent by privileging the “rightness” of one’s own stories over the others’. The patterns which guide this dance range from explicit/ formal (those codified in law books, for example), to implicit/ informal (those which have become socially expected but are not articulated—like family communication patterns between two who agree to disagree). Between these extremes lie the patterns which begin as informal, and become formal (i.e. training manuals). Coordination and coherence depend on the maintenance of these patterns. Thus, two people who utilize resources which put them on opposite sides of a controversial issue may engage in ethnocentric communication when they tout the rightness of their own stories over the stupidity of the others’. They may have well rehearsed arguments designed to confront the arguments of the other which are played as scripts, never changing.

Mystery in ethnocentric communication is achieved by harnessing the most potent symbols to the content of stories by which coherence and coordination are achieved. One of the most common moves is to link religion and the state, investing the ruler with divine authority and the

religion with state power. Within this arrangement, the mysterious is expressed in the elaboration of stories and symbols. (Pearce, 1989, p. 120)

Modernistic communication. In modernistic communication, the guiding story is the search for change. "The primary moral injunction is to change resources and practices" (Pearce, 1989, p. 145). Essentially, this means that the primary resource *is to risk*—by definition. Thus, resources are not actually *at risk*, they are simply *defined by risk*. In addition, because this form of communication seeks difference, *every* person is looked upon as different. Through its consistency, then, this pattern becomes a loop in which everyone is treated the same, or as natives. Those engaging in it are deeply enmeshed in the story of modernism, or are "happy modernists" (p. 147).

To the extent that others are also engaged in the search for "truth," some coherence is possible. Coordination is sacrificed in the name of progress toward change. The two communicators engage in a common search for change and difference (i.e. sharing a grammar of change), and thus coordinate their actions. Mystery is looked upon as something to be explained. "The closest approximation to mystery is delight in change and unfeigned faith in 'progress'" (Pearce, 1989, p. 147.)

There are four final characteristics that Pearce (1989) cites which differentiate modernistic communication from ethnocentric or monocultural communication. First, modernistic communication requires a "great deal of mindfulness" (pp. 145-146). Communicators engaging in modernistic communication are constantly searching for ways to change and improve their communication along with everything else. Second, there is a sense of community between those who see themselves as pursuers of rationality, searching for truth. Third, time is linear and finite and is viewed as an element in causal relationships between

events. Finally, “there is an explicit awareness of the process by which practices (re)construct resources” (p. 146). Thus, in the search for change, those engaging in modernistic forms are willing to change their practices and resources readily.

Cosmopolitan communication. Cosmopolitan communication involves an emphasis on coordination rather than coherence. It acknowledges the existence of infinite stories, without the compulsion to challenge every resource. It is based on a “willing suspension of belief” (Pearce, 1989, p. 177) in one’s own resources, in order to gain a better understanding of the resources of another. It approaches differences as sites for learning, which might possibly lead to coherence. Cosmopolitan communication does not assume coherence, but rather opens the potential for coherence through coordination. Coherence emerges through a process of interacting, with the goal of learning the perspective of the other.

The primary resource in cosmopolitan communication is the understanding that all people are involved in the process of constructing the social world. In this way, others are treated as natives. However, others are also treated as non-natives in the sense that the form and content of others’ stories are understood to be different.

Mystery, in cosmopolitan communication, is achieved through the acknowledgment of numerous resources and the sense that there are always different ways of interpreting the “stories” of life (Pearce, 1989). Thus, the language game of cosmopolitan communication involves challenging one’s own grammar and suspending the “usual” rules in search for improved practices and realities.

Thus far, this chapter has explicated the central tenets of CMM and the basic philosophical and practical assumptions upon which this study rests. I adhere to a social constructionist world view, and it is this paradigm that informs my practice. As stated in the opening paragraphs of this thesis, I believe that the state of public discourse is in need of reform. I believe that citizens must have access to forums in which they can learn and practice cosmopolitan ways of interacting. As an instructor of argumentation, I believe that the classroom is an appropriate place for this kind of endeavor.

This, however, opens more questions: as a social constructionist, what teaching models are currently available for the argumentation and advocacy course? Where shall I begin if I am to merge my theoretical assumptions with teaching practices in the argumentation classroom? I am seeking methods of teaching argument that will allow me to emphasize the forms of communication that arise between people through interaction, and that allow me to explore how those forms of communication influence and are influenced by the resources we bring to bear in the argumentative situation. I am also bound, of course, to provide a learning environment in which students take away with them the basic tenets of argumentation so that they are adequately prepared for their subsequent courses. In the next section, I will review various paradigms of argumentation theory and a variety of popular texts to see what they have to offer with respect to the tenets of social constructionism.

Exploring Argumentation Theory

What happens in the argumentation classroom is clearly a result of the theoretical assumptions that instructors bring to bear on the situation. These

theoretical resources inform the instructors' practices. Zarefsky (1995) delineates four primary roots that inform argumentation theory: The debate paradigm, the social scientific paradigm, the recovery of practical philosophy, and the critical movement. These roots will be discussed briefly.

The Roots of Argumentation Theory

Problematizing the debate paradigm. Zarefsky (1995) begins by foregrounding debate as the ancestor of most of our current practice of academic argumentation. This form of argumentation study originated in the late 19th century "as an alternative to social fraternities and athletics" (p. 33). Zarefsky labels this perspective the "stock issues" paradigm, and notes that it is "modeled on formal logic and courtroom oratory" (p. 33). Conceptualizations of argument that emphasize form and structure may be categorized within this paradigm. For example, the extraordinarily influential model set forth by Toulmin in The Uses of Argument (1958) demonstrates how to diagram an argument and analyze the relative effectiveness and utility of its parts.

Zarefsky (1995) also notes, however, that intense exploration of the debate paradigm began in the early 1960's. Theorists began looking at debate in a broader sense, problematizing the underlying assumptions of the practice. Out of this era came broad new conceptualizations of debate as a sub-set of argument and much conversation about the nature of argument itself. Zarefsky notes that

writers began to focus attention on the underlying nature and goals of the process of debate itself, believing that emerging differences about theory and practice really reflected different root assumptions about debate....The traditional perspective on debate, now renamed the stock-issues model, took its place among...[several] alternatives. (p. 34)

I must add that the alternatives as Zarefsky describes them emphasize different models of debate and argumentation and focus largely on problematizing concepts of debate such as presumption and proofs. Zarefsky notes that, "From the perspective of hindsight, this literature is not so important for its explicit content....this phase of debate literature was significant because it shows how conventional wisdom was rendered problematic through the imagination of alternatives" (p. 34).

The social scientific paradigm. Zarefsky (1995) discusses the impact of the social scientific paradigm on the field of communication studies. He notes three major influences on communication studies resulting from this root:

First, it emphasized descriptive and empirical rather than normative studies....Second, it sought to produce testable statements about communication in general, rather than shedding light on particular significant cases. It was far more concerned with prediction than with retrospective explanation....[and] Third...the social science perspective de-emphasized formal oratory and public address in favor of studying interpersonal communication, group discussion, and bargaining and negotiation, for example. (p. 36)

While this paradigm is exemplified by traditional social scientific work like that done by Dominic Infante on argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness (e.g. Infante, Trebing, Shepherd, & Seeds, 1984; Infante & Wigley, 1986), Zarefsky (1995) also notes that constructivist research grew out of this paradigm. He cites

a particularly influential essay, [by] Daniel J. O'Keefe [which] distinguished between two different senses of argument — one that referred to texts and products (as in "making an argument") and the other that referred to ongoing processes (as in "having an argument"). Moreover, it [the essay] challenged the assumption that the first of these senses was somehow more foundational. (pp. 36-37)

While this seems to be a possible inroad to a view of argumentation theory which adheres to the tenets of social constructionism, Zarefsky reiterates that the literature that grew out of this paradigm was empirical. Therefore, the group of theorists and practitioners advancing scholarship categorized in this realm are working with positivist assumptions rather than those informed by social constructionism.

The recovery of practical philosophy. A third major influence that Zarefsky (1995) offers is the “recovery of practical philosophy...[which] harks back to the classical concept of *phronesis*, practical wisdom in a given case” (p. 38).

Scholarship from this perspective directs attention at the situated aspects of argument, showing that evaluation of argument is always situation specific.

Zarefsky notes that, “the concept of fields of argument...encouraged recognition that the soundness of arguments was not universal and certain, but field-specific and contingent. This belief...was another step in undermining the analytic ideal and resituating argument within the rhetorical tradition” (p. 39). Further, scholars who contribute to and develop this view of argumentation acknowledge and pursue truth as a rhetorical consequence. Zarefsky cites the work of Robert L. Scott as being influential here.

He maintained that rhetorical discourse itself was a means of determining truth. His work contributed further to the emerging belief that truth is relative to argument and audience. It stimulated studies of what sorts of knowledge are rhetorically constructed and how arguing produces knowledge. (p. 40)

It should be apparent at this point that the notion of returning to a practical philosophy is very much in alignment with my purposes in this project and as a social constructionist. The major difference between this view and my own is my emphasis on language in use and the *forms* of communication that arise through

interaction. Further, while the notions of fields and spheres may be useful for understanding the resources that one brings to bear on argumentation, a social constructionist view of this concept would need to focus attention on language and patterns of interaction. I am less interested in the rule structures that inform different fields, in the notion of emergent truth or even in the impact of argument on notions of self (which Zarefsky notes as another important consequence of this root), than I am in the language games and practices of students *while they argue*. Simply put, while the aforementioned contributions are significant in the realm of argumentation theory, and while this root of argumentation theory may be in alignment with some of the principles of social constructionism, it does not necessarily inform my study due to a difference in emphasis.

The critical movement. The fourth and final root of influence that Zarefsky (1995) discusses is the “growing interest in social and critical critique” (p. 41). Essentially, Zarefsky says that this perspective exposes the hegemonic aspect of argument and

seeks to explore and expose the tendency of power to foreclose discourse, and to seek emancipation by opening up alternatives. This project focuses on marginalized arguers and arguments, and is given impetus by the widespread concern throughout the academy for matters of race, gender and class. (p. 41)

This thread emerges from the postmodern movement and includes research that questions the standards and practice of argument from a perspective of power relationships. It seeks the exultation of difference, and/or the equalizing of power in argument.

This critical movement is exemplified by feminist authors such as Gearhart (1979), Grovier (1995) and Foss and Griffin (1995). These authors critically examine the assumptions that we bring to bear on argument. For example,

Gearhart (1979) focuses specifically on the nature of argument as a form of discourse. She argues, for example, that persuasion is a form of violence. Her perspective is that classical rhetoric emerges out of a "conquest/conversion" metaphor (p. 196), and that persuasion itself is a means of oppression due to its "intent to change people and things" (p. 196). Grovier (1995) contributes to this critical dialogue with a review of the work of several feminist critics who posit that argument is a patriarchal practice which marginalizes women and promotes adversariality and conflict. Grovier challenges this claim, warning essentially that we should be wary of the tendency to abandon forms of argument that are in fact, appropriate in many situations. She states,

Many feminists have alleged that people who present arguments are necessarily trying to force them on others. I agree that this may occur, but I do not believe that it necessarily occurs. Argument is a way of acknowledging difference and need not include an effort to dominate others. (p. 202)

Thus, she critiques the critics, acknowledges the existence of confrontational forms of argument, and demonstrates that people would not argue if there were no differences in opinion or positions with which to contend. These differences, says Grovier, may be the fuel necessary for change.

Foss and Griffin (1995) (see also Foss & Foss, 1994) offer an additional alternative to the critique that persuasion is a form of violence. They pose "invitational rhetoric" as a means of "offering" one's perspective, rather than "forcing" or "coercing" argumentative partners to accept one's position. They note that "the act of changing others not only establishes the power of the rhetor over others but also devalues the lives and perspectives of those others" (p. 3). Conversely,

invitational rhetoric constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and see it as the rhetor does. In presenting a particular perspective, the invitational rhetor does not judge or denigrate others' perspectives but is open to and tries to appreciate and validate those perspectives, even if they differ dramatically from the rhetor's own. (p. 5)

This view then, provides a possible alternative to the idea that persuasion constitutes violence.

All of these ideas and writings (i.e. Gearhart, 1979; Grovier, 1995; Foss & Griffin, 1995; Foss & Foss, 1994) are examples of the dialogue that occurs within the boundaries of the critical movement. This movement then, opens the door for dialogue about new forms of argumentation. It critiques the underlying patterns and assumptions of argument and at times suggests ways of moving forward which are designed to compensate for the identified disparities. While I would not characterize myself as a critical theorist (I am not compelled to expose the hegemony or "power differentials" hidden behind different forms of argument), I do value this kind of discussion about new forms of argument. I am particularly interested in any "new" conceptualizations of argument which satisfy the root assumptions of social constructionism — an emphasis on language in use, and on the quality of life created through various forms of interaction.

In summary, Zarefsky's (1995) review of the roots of argumentation theory demonstrates that there are a variety of resources available for instructors of argumentation. Some of the scholarly interchanges and endeavors that he notes may set the stage for a kind of social constructionist approach to the basic argumentation course. I refer here specifically to the concerns of practically oriented theorists and those who critique the common practice of argument and argumentation pedagogy. However, according to Zarefsky, there are no specific

roots of argumentation theory which emphasize the co-creation of language games, nor which specifically set the stage for a form of communication that we might call cosmopolitan. As a practically oriented theorist with a social constructionist bent, I am seeking models which allow me to focus specifically on the form of communication created during argument, and those which call forth patterns of interactions which do resemble, "dialogue," or cosmopolitan communication. My interest in public discourse and in the improvement of democracy compels me to seek theoretically rich practices with which arguers can break the traditional mold of "point/ counterpoint" and move toward the exploration of new grammars. Specifically, I seek grammars which allow the expression of underlying interests and experiences, an appreciation for plurality, and an acknowledgment of the co-constructed nature and undetermined outcome of the argumentative exchange. My next question, as a new instructor of argumentation, was, "where can I find the tools for this kind of endeavor?" To answer this question, I turned to a sampling of texts.

The Language Games of Argumentation Texts: What is Available?

As I began my search for teaching tools, I realized that I was seeking models that would emphasize the tenets of social constructionism. Specifically, these can be summarized as: 1) Coordination: an emphasis on language in use, including rule structures and the resulting grammars of interaction. 2) Coherence: a model which emphasizes the co-creation of *forms* of interaction and the resources that each party brings to bear on that interaction. 3) Mystery: an acknowledgment of the pluralistic and undetermined nature of any argument.

I began my search by examining models that had been time-tested. This included suggested approaches by other instructors, a review of popular beginning argumentation texts, and consultations with my advisors. I sought materials and a text which covered the most important aspects of argumentation, and, if possible, took a social constructionist approach to argument which, in some manner, covered the three notions of social constructionism presented in the paragraph above. The sections below summarize the fruits of my search.

Seeking coordination. Recall that the notion of coordination calls attention to the rules which inform argumentation practices. As was mentioned in a previous section, coordination occurs in episodes and is the result of the “logic of a communication system [which is] produced by the joining of the rules of both (or all) of the communicators” (Cronen, Pearce & Harris, 1979. p. 29). This “joining of the rules” produces the *grammar* of the interaction, or the *use* of rules in conjoint action. This notion of coordination directs attention to the interactive nature of argument and the way we (re)create the rules which guide the interaction itself as well as future interactions. Coordination is our ability to play specific language games. Thus, an emphasis on coordination means an emphasis on language in use and the rules at play.

Argumentation texts do, in fact, call attention to the “rules” of argument. Clearly, there are rules for what constitutes an argument and how to engage in argument. The job of most beginning texts is to provide this information. For example, beginning argumentation texts introduce the definition of argument in the first several pages. Rybacki and Rybacki (1996) state that “argumentation is a form of instrumental communication relying on reasoning and proof to influence belief or behavior through the use of spoken or written messages” (p. 2).

Hinderer (1992) defines argument as, "at least one reason offered to influence a person's belief about something" (p. 16), while Grovier (1992) says that "argument is a set of claims that a person puts forward in an attempt to show that some further claim is rationally acceptable" (p. 2). These definitions certainly are intended to provide clarity about what counts as an argument, or the field upon which the language game of argument can be played. Further, these (and other) texts provide the rules of playing the game (see Freeley, 1996; Hatch, 1996; Kahane, 1995; Reike & Sillars, 1997; Warnick & Inch, 1994). Kahane (1995) and Hinderer (1992) for example, provide a very logic-oriented set of rules. These authors focus on patterns of reasoning, impediments to cogent reasoning, and fallacies.

Other authors emphasize the rules for playing debate or advocacy games. Freeley (1996), for example, includes a chapter which outlines different debate formats such as cross-examination, Lincoln-Douglas, mock trial, town-hall, and parliamentary debate. The rules are very specific for these different formats, and students learn to play within the rules for each language game. Rybacki and Rybacki (1996) and Reike and Sillars (1997) emphasize advocacy (or case building) and refutation patterns rather than traditional debate. These language games too, have their own rules of engagement.

Other rules are somewhat "universal." All of the above noted texts include discussions about claims (or conclusions), data (or evidence), and warrants (or reasons). Further, most of these texts provide rules for building claims of fact, value and policy. In addition, it seems that all of these beginning argumentation texts stress critical thinking skills and the rules associated with evaluating arguments. For instance, an argument must be evaluated on the validity and

soundness of the reasoning presented, on the quality of evidence, and on the clarity of the assumptions.

While all of the beginning texts that I examined seemed to present some common rules, other authors note that the rules change within various contexts. For example, Hatch (1996), in his text Arguing in Communities, dedicates an entire chapter to the process of identifying the boundaries and linguistic elements which define a community. He presents a general method for arguing in communities, but emphasizes the similarities of arguments across communities. He presents seven steps toward “joining a conversation” (p. 169), that calls attention to the process of learning to play a new language game. He says an arguer should:

Identify a controversial issue or claim you want to know more about; Identify a community that discusses or cares about this issue (or that should care); Understand the organization of the community and your place within that organization; Locate “sites” of conversation; Identify and record the conversation going on about your issue; Analyze and evaluate the various arguments being made about the issue [and]: Find or create a place from which you can contribute to the conversation. (p. 169)

His focus seems to be on the identification of existing language games — a worthy pursuit. However, a social constructionist orientation to this topic would emphasize at least the co-creation of the rules and perhaps the notion of changing the rules (being a game master). Little is said in most of these beginning texts about game-specific rules for engagement and evaluation of arguments. However, Warnick and Inch (1994) do address this notion with a chapter on *Arguments in Context* in which they address cultural contexts, the notion of fields, argument occasions, and the ethics of argumentation. Reike and Sillars (1997) also include a thorough treatment of the concept of spheres. Each of these will be treated in turn.

When discussing context, Warnick and Inch (1994) talk in general about cultural differences in the interpretation and evaluation of evidence. They challenge arguers to question the assumptions that they make in entering an argumentative situation, and grant credence to differences in assumptions, interpretations and evidence. This will be discussed again in the section below on mystery, but for now, let it suffice to say that a discussion of culture is important to the contextuality of rules. Warnick and Inch mean to say that culture counts as context, and context defines rules.

These authors go on to define *field* as, “the sociological contexts for arguments bound together by recurring patterns of communication and commonly accepted by participants in argumentative disputes” (p. 35). They further note that “fields share five common characteristics” (p. 35):

First, they are a human creation. This means that fields develop over a period of time through social interaction. Second, fields are developed by people with shared goals. People sustain interaction and develop fields when they share objectives and purposes....Third, fields develop specialized language and rules. When people converse to achieve their objectives, there are certain rules of conduct as well as language that facilitate their objectives....Fourth, people may belong to many fields....Fifth, a field will survive only as long as the field serves the common purpose of its members and as long as it can adapt to changing objectives. (p. 35)

While this demonstrates that fields are socially constructed, the authors emphasize that “the notion of an argument field is valuable because understanding fields helps arguers understand many of the rules and conventions for judging between competing claims in a controversy” (p. 37). This is certainly helpful background for one interested in understanding the applicable rules of the game, but does not encourage arguers to question or re-shape the rules.

Reike and Sillars (1997) discuss spheres as “collections of people in the process of interacting upon and making critical decisions” (p. 27). They note that spheres are “decision making groups, forums, organizations, societies, professions, disciplines, generations or other such arrangements” (p. 27), and that these spheres function as guides for decision making. The authors note that “Goodnight’s idea of the personal, technical, and public spheres is useful in understanding that some issues require only the most informal and commonsense demands for support of arguments, while other issues demand highly specialized argumentation” (p. 29). Further, they remind arguers to adjust their arguments to the standards appropriate for the sphere in which they are operating, although they also note that the standards within spheres change over time. Like Warnick and Inch (1994) however, Reike and Sillars (1997) emphasize a competence based model which urges arguers to familiarize themselves with the standards appropriate in a given sphere, rather than focus on the continuous (re)creation of those standards.

In summary, it is important to remember that from a social constructionist perspective the rules which guide our argumentative endeavors *are* context dependent. While Warnick and Inch (1994) and Reike and Sillars (1997) give this topic the most thorough treatment, neither text does much to prepare students to call into question the nature and co-construction of the rules themselves. This is reminiscent of the difference between the social construction of *reality*, and the *process* of socially constructing realities. These texts focus on the end-product, while a social constructionist would focus on the process itself.

As noted above, another important aspect of coordination focuses on language-in-use. Most of the beginning textbooks I reviewed include discussions

about language — specifically, about what kind of language is more or less effective for the purposes of persuasion. Hinderer (1992) distinguishes between denotative and connotative language and encourages arguers to “recognize biased language and resist it” (p. 69). Kahane (1995) talks about the cognitive and emotive meanings of language, “doublespeak,” euphemisms and the like, in an effort to clarify the impact of language on persuasion. He also talks about sexist language, the power of definition, manipulative rhetorical devices and politically correct terminology. All of this is discussed within the context of building and evaluating proper and ethical arguments. Hatch (1996) also talks about language as a symbolic activity, connotative and denotative meanings and definitions, and includes a short piece from Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) book, Metaphors We Live By. This piece discusses the metaphorical aspects of language and how those metaphors can shape our actions and experiences. Again, these discussions of language are largely constructivist rather than constructionist in nature, in as much as they talk about the way that language orders our experiences, rather than about what we create with the language we use.

Thus, there are several ways that beginning argumentation texts approach some aspects of coordination, but none which focus specifically on language in use and the resulting grammars of interaction to the degree that is necessary for my purposes. It is noteworthy that any standards which help students share resources and allow them to coordinate their actions in peaceful ways may lead to shared problem solving and negotiation skills. These skills, in turn, may allow students to generate new understanding of the issues at hand and therefore risk their resources.

Seeking coherence. Recall that coherence is another central tenet of social constructionism and the coordinated management of meaning. It refers to the making of meaning between interlocutors in a particular context. Specifically, coherence happens when two people share similar resources and/or risk resources in such a way that allows understanding and exploration. Thus, the questions become, what resources do basic argumentation texts offer, and what forms of communication do these resources prefigure?

I would argue that the goal of beginning argumentation texts is specifically to create shared forms of interaction between arguers. As was previously discussed, there are many consistencies in the topics that most of these texts cover. In fact, Weiler and Rancer's (1992) chapter entitled "Argumentation," in Linda Lederman's edited text, Communication Pedagogy: Approaches to Teaching Undergraduate Courses in Communication, provides recommendations for teachers of the beginning argumentation course. Weiler and Rancer suggest a structurally oriented model and state that

students completing this course should be able to research, invent, organize and articulate cases for and against policy change. They should know how to use a college library to locate credible sources of authoritative evidence on policy issues. They should understand how to meet the burdens of proof required of the advocate of policy change, and how to categorize arguments and supporting evidence accordingly. They should be able to construct a case from these materials in favor of policy change, and to construct argument briefs opposing it. (p. 59)

These are worthy goals of a beginning argumentation course, and quite representative of the texts I reviewed. Students are essentially taught to share standards of appropriateness with respect to evidence, reasoning, patterns of interaction, and ethics, and therefore to become versed in the rules of the argumentation language game. They are also encouraged to question each other

in a way that resembles risking resources. Thus, when one student questions the credibility of another's source, and they both *read* the interaction as an appropriate challenge within the bounds of argumentation, students will achieve coherence. But is this enough? Should it be considered sufficient for students to share rules of proper structure and reasoning patterns? Brockreide (1972), Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Makau (1990) offer additional information which may be helpful.

Brockreide's (1972) article, Arguers as Lovers, calls attention to the resources that arguers bring to bear in the argumentative situation. The author notes that the metaphorical stance that the arguer takes (argument as rape, seduction and love) makes an impact on the arguers' "attitudes toward one another, their intentions toward one another, and the consequences of those attitudes and intentions for the act itself" (p. 2). In addition, Grovier (1995), in her review of feminist critiques of argument, discusses the "argument as war" notion:

Feminist thinkers have rightly pointed to the depth and the dangers of the battle construal of argument....[However] one can describe arguments without using any militaristic words and without implying that a person who puts forward arguments is trying to vanquish, conquer, or dominate the intended listeners or readers. (p. 203)

Thus, she draws attention to the use of the metaphor as an organizing principle. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) do the same, providing a view of argument which emphasizes resources in the forms of metaphors. It must be mentioned, however, that this focus on prefigurative cognitive structures is clearly more constructivist than constructionist.

Makau (1990) offers a different kind of resource, inasmuch as she discusses the concept of argument as cooperation, wherein the focus lies on "the shared goal of finding the best answer or making the best decision" (p. 48). She notes

that the realm of public discussion, heavily influenced by our adversarial justice system, often favors a competitive mode in which winning is the objective. She also argues that “often, competitive argumentation leads...advocates to seek only evidence that advances a preconceived, narrow perspective, rather than searching for a more comprehensive understanding of the relevant topic” (p. 49). This more comprehensive and cooperative understanding would entail,

a process of reasoned interaction on a controversial topic intended to help participants and audiences make the best assessment or decisions in any given situation. Advocates participating in cooperative argumentation share evidence and ideas with one another. They recognize that their views can only be enlightened by as comprehensive and open an exchange as is possible. (p. 49)

Makau (1990) also goes on to discuss the benefits of such a sharing process to the workings of democracy, group decision making, as protection against “group think” and as a valuable personal tool. Inherent in her perspective is a challenge to the “same-old” rules that are so frequently used in argumentation. This, “opening up” of resources is aligned with the goals of cosmopolitan communication.

All of these sources provide alternatives and supplements to the traditional way of presenting and conceptualizing the resources available for students of argumentation. It is important that students and teachers alike pay attention to the resources that they employ, and the forms of communication that result. Coherence can occur within an “argument as war” metaphor just as surely as it can within an “argument as love” metaphor. It is the responsibility of the social constructionist teacher and students to explore a variety of resources. It was my goal to incorporate resources into my classroom which bring forth cosmopolitan (or dialogic) forms of interaction that help to improve the quality of public

discourse and democracy — those which encourage exploration and suspension of belief in one's own stories.

Seeking mystery. The final tenet of social constructionism that I searched for in argumentation texts is the notion of mystery—the acknowledgment of plurality and the undetermined nature of interaction. This involves suspending belief in the stories that we tell, and taking full advantage of the infinite futures available to us as we argue.

There is little to be found that resembles this notion in basic argumentation texts. The closest concept that I found in my review is the notion that different cultures have different measures of proof. This is specifically discussed by Warnick and Inch (1994), and peripherally addressed via the notion of spheres in the Reike and Sillars (1997) text. If it is acknowledged that different rules apply in different spheres and fields, and if these different rules sets are granted legitimacy, then this can be seen as an inroad to an acceptance of plurality. While the basic argumentation texts do not offer much in this arena, there are skills which students can learn that promote the exploration of various resources. These will be introduced in the next section.

Dialogic argument. It seems appropriate at this stage to summarize the conceptualization of argument most succinct with the evolution of CMM and the advancement of cosmopolitan communication. This is what Pearce (1995b) calls “dialogic argument.” In this work, Pearce talks about argument as a form of conversation. He notes that “conversation has a particular structure that distinguishes it from other forms of communication” and that “there are distinguishable forms of conversation. Among these are strategic communication, dialogue and deliberation” (p. 243). Further, “these forms of

conversation function as contexts for specific communication processes. One of these communication processes is argument" (p. 243). Therefore, argument can occur within the context of strategic communication, dialogue or deliberation, and may still be categorized as conversation.

But what makes conversation discernible from other forms of communication or from our traditional conceptualization of argument?

"Conversations are those instances of communication in which the participants take turns with each other in a patterned dance of reciprocity" (Pearce, 1995b, p. 243). Further, "the participants exchange 'positions' within a moral order comprised of rights, duties, responsibilities and affordances" (p. 243). It is the nature of this reciprocity that is influenced by the larger contexts: strategy, deliberation or dialogue.

Strategic conversation occurs when "one's own ideas or positions on issues are never put 'at risk' of being changed in the conversation; one's own behavior is controlled by interests and relationships outside the conversation and calculated for its impact on the other participants" (Pearce, 1995b, p. 244). This stands in contrast to dialogic interactions in that

strategic thinkers are more concerned with the direct effects of their actions while dialogists are at least also concerned with the reflexive effects of their actions; and strategists assume that facts and values are 'given' while dialogists are at least willing to call them into question. (p. 244)

Further, deliberative communication may be conceptualized as a conversational balancing scale, wherein different positions are weighed for decision making purposes. Pearce (1995b) describes argument in each of these contexts:

...argument occurs in all of these forms of conversation but differs in some important ways depending on which form is the context. In a strategic interaction, argument is one of many possible ways of getting one's own

way; it is to be used if it is effective, avoided or dropped when not....In the context of deliberation, argument is something quite different; one might visualize it as a scale for weighing options rather than as a club for bashing one's opponents....

Dialogue and argument might seem antithetical, but they are not. Rather, in this context, argument is a sophisticated collaborative action in which two or more people are engaged through language; it is not a single line of argument or well understood by the semiotic relations of linguistic elements or even by the relation of contentions and proofs. Its purpose is to weave together otherwise disparate, perhaps even incommensurate positions, rationalities, and moral orders. Its successful conclusion results in the participants' knowing how to go on together, not a 'win' for one and a 'loss' for another.

...Argument in dialogue exists, but it is collaborative rather than textual or individualist; it is evaluated by how well 'we' work together in the co-construction of arguments, not by how well 'I' work in demolishing 'your' arguments and defending my own. We might visualize dialogical argument as a process of collectively weaving a tapestry, in which the beauty and utility of the final product depends on how well we coordinate and help each other. (p. 245)

Certainly, envisioning argument as dialogue is a bold first step toward creating more cosmopolitan communication in the public realm. In fact, Pearce (1995b) extends this discussion about the implications of current conceptualizations of argument into the realm of public discourse and the workings of democracy.

Pearce (1995b; 1995c) has discussed the idea that the kind of conversation characterizing public discourse is overwhelmingly defined by the metaphor of strategy rather than dialogue. When interlocutors are strategizing rather than listening, scheming rather than co-creating ways to move forward, public discourse suffers immensely. Arguers who are strategizing are likely employing the "argument as war" metaphor. Thus, practice in dialogic argument may prove to be beneficial to public discourse in that it requires conversing, rather than strategizing.

However, given the link between argument and the quality of participative democracy, the question remains: even *with* this new conceptualization of argument, how will the nature of public discourse actually begin to change? What will this new conversation look like? How will arguers come to know and utilize more dialogic forms of interaction? These are not only the guiding questions behind this study, but also the moral imperative of organizations like the Public Dialogue Consortium. In fact, there are several organizations which are dedicated to changing the nature of public discourse. The Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC)¹ is one such organization which specifically focuses on the use of techniques firmly grounded in social constructionism and in CMM in particular. These techniques are systemic in nature and include among others, “circular questioning” and “reflecting.” While the PDC does the majority of its work in public forums or in private settings, the focus of *this* project is to open an invitation to students to participate in more dialogic forms of communication by introducing them to these specific techniques in a classroom environment. My hope is that by incorporating these techniques into the argumentation course, students will gain new resources for argument. The next chapter will discuss the techniques used to open up forms of discourse more thoroughly and will address some of the special considerations (i.e. reflexivity and practical theorizing) that come to bear in a social constructionist classroom.

CHAPTER II

Ways of Working

Introduction

In order for students to engage in dialogic interactions when the vast majority of their training has been in traditional argumentative models, I propose that students need to do several things. First, they need to conceptualize new metaphors for argument—to actively change their resources if you will—from metaphors of competition and strategy, toward metaphors of growth and learning. This will enable students to begin telling new “stories” about argument; a shift in language use which, from a social constructionist perspective, will help students shift their realities and future interactions by actually conceptualizing argument differently². This new conceptualization will call attention to the language used in argument, to the rules we follow when engaging in the argumentative language game, to the pluralistic or mysterious nature of every argumentative situation, and to the public realities we create when engaging in argument—essentially creating a shift toward more cosmopolitan modes of interaction. Circular questioning and reflecting are two techniques that are designed to enhance the dialogic aspects of argument and to call attention to these very things.

Another way to conceptualize the modes of interaction that guide the process and outcomes of argument is to view argument as a “form” of communication (recall Pearce’s [1989], “taxonomy” of four forms of conversation). Forms, such as ethnocentric, monocultural, modernistic and cosmopolitan communication, can be utilized as lenses through which we can

assess the grammar of a given interaction. Cosmopolitan communication comes closest to the dialogic form that I described above as desirable for improved public discourse and which meshes with the tenets of CMM most closely. To recapitulate, cosmopolitan communication is a form of communication in which resources are seen as socially constructed, variable and numerous. Resources are risked and differences are conceptualized as opportunities for learning. In cosmopolitan communication, mystery is achieved through the acknowledgment that there are numerous “stories” available, and coherence is potentially (although certainly not always) achieved through coordination— a manner of coordination in which differences are expressed, explored and legitimated. Cosmopolitan communication then, has its own grammar which emphasizes exploration and understanding and acknowledges the complex web of socially constructed resources. The challenge for the teacher of argumentation is how to introduce this grammar of cosmopolitan communication to students in a systematic manner while fulfilling the duties and obligations of general education requirements and while adequately preparing students for their future courses.

Fortunately, there are several organizations which are dedicated to the study and perpetuation of dialogue in the realm of public discourse. These organizations have already begun the task of working with individuals and organizations to help them create new patterns of interaction which are well rooted in social constructionist ideas, and which invite participants into the grammar of dialogue. Four such organizations are the Kensington Consulting Centre (KCC)³, the Public Conversations Project (PCP)⁴, the National Issues Forum (NIF)⁵, and the Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC). The practitioners of

the KCC and PCP have adapted the systemic methods used by the Milan school for use in family therapy and organizational consulting. The NIF utilizes a facilitation model to organize discussions about controversial issues. The Public Dialogue Consortium also works with these organizations to develop interventions for use in public forums which emphasize dialogic interactive models rather than debate-centered models. The goal of their training is generally to create an open space in which dialogue can occur, and to model and/or teach participants how to engage in dialogic grammar. While the PDC works in a variety of forums and has designed numerous interventions, all of the work that this organization does shares certain core elements—a systemic, social constructionist theoretical perspective, an emphasis on conjoint action, and a desire to create more dialogic interaction around potentially contentious public issues.

One of the many interventions that the PDC has designed and implemented involves representatives from opposite sides of moral conflicts in a public forum called a Kaleidoscope (see Spano & Calcagno, 1995). In this unique forum, a moderator and a reflecting team (usually three to four people) work with the representatives using techniques such as circular questioning and reflecting in order to create a niche in which the unproductive and repetitive patterns of communication that so often characterize moral conflict may be re-structured. While the *specifics* of the Kaleidoscope forum are essentially unimportant to this study, the techniques (circular questioning and reflecting) utilize conjoint action to engage participants in new grammars which accentuate the qualities of cosmopolitan communication. These techniques have been used extensively in family therapy (see Aponte & Hoffman, 1973; Cronen & Pearce, 1985; Minuchin,

1984; Penn 1982; Selvini, Boscolo, Checcin & Prata 1980; Tomm 1985), and in other public contexts (see Littlejohn, 1997; Pearce, 1994a; Spano & Calcagno, 1996). The following sections will describe these two techniques and special considerations necessary for their use, and present ways that they have been incorporated into the basic argumentation course.

Circular Questioning

The Evolution Of Circular Questioning

Circular questioning was originally developed by the Milan School of Family Therapy and the work of the Palo Alto Group. It is based on Bateson's principle of 'double description' (Penn, 1982) which is grounded in systems theory and in the perception of difference. Essentially, this theory is predicated on the assumption that learning takes place through the experience of change within a system. Pearce (1994a) notes that, "Bateson believed that we only perceive differences and that those differences comprise information" (p. 99). Thus, circular questioning highlights difference which provides information by comparison. With reference to public conflict, Littlejohn (1995) states,

circular questions are designed to build an awareness that the conflict is part of a complex system of actions and reactions and that this system can change. [Circular questions also] aim to raise consciousness of the ways the parties themselves jointly create their own conflict. (pp. 4-5)

Circular questions are also called *systemic questions* because they

are designed to invite respondents to think about relationships and connections, rather than individual wants, needs, successes and faults. This kind of questioning can help change habitual ways of understanding the problem and can interrupt escalating cycles of reciprocal blame. It can

also model more productive ways of discussing public issues. (Littlejohn, 1997, p. 31)

As such, it is a useful tool for highlighting the complexity and contextual nature of resources, and for opening spaces for understanding and exploration. This is an essential aspect of interventions designed for the resolution of moral differences and/or for the improvement of public discourse, and is therefore well suited to the purposes of this project.

But what is it that makes the questioning or interviewing process circular? In writing about the Milan team and their method, Karl Tomm (1985) explains, “there are two major aspects of this style of interviewing: circular questioning and circular questions. The second entails the linguistic form and the clinical focus of the questions, while the first entails the interactive process in asking them” (p. 34). Thus, there is a process that must be acknowledged, a way of being, in a sense, that the interviewer must adopt when engaging in the questioning process. Cronen and Pearce (1985) talk about this, “way of being” when they state

the Milan method...is a broad based, sophisticated ‘epistemology’, a way of thinking about and engaging in social systems. The Milan method consists of ‘inviting’ in various ways a family to engage in actions consistent with this epistemology. If the invitation is successful, the participation itself in this epistemology brings about changes in the ‘logic’ of the family system and the course of its evolution. (p. 70)

As for the questions themselves, circular questions are circular in the way that they highlight the connections between events and interactants in a system. They do several things: First, they utilize systemic feedback in order to build a basis for the next interaction. Selvini et al. (1980) note that “by circularity we mean the capacity of the therapist to conduct his [sic] investigation on the basis of feedback from the family in response to information he solicits about

relationships and, therefore, about difference and change" (p. 8). For example, a therapist (or interviewer) would use the response given by one family member to develop an interim hypothesis which would inform her next question.

Second, circular questions highlight the systemic and socially constructed nature of resources and relationships between system members. They call attention to the multiple levels of context in which any resource is employed, they emphasize the relationships between members of systems, and they play with the boundaries of subsystems. For example, a therapist working with a family may call attention to various coalitions that emerge through their interactions and then play with the socially constructed (and therefore changeable) nature of those coalitions (each of which represent a sub-system of relationships within the larger family system). A therapist using this technique may offer something like, "when dad gets angry, who is most affected?" This question highlights a potential coalition (i.e. a specific relationship among a subset of system members) within the family. Because each relationship is governed by its own set of tacit "rules," these coalitions may then lead to new interpretations of a given event. This aspect of circularity then, calls attention to differences in interpretations, relationships and sub-systems to invite participants into new or overlooked interpretations and/or rules of events and relationships. This opens the door to new stories and calls attention to the socially constructed nature of resources. Finally, circular questions "circulate around all the people in the group. The therapists ask first one and then another person for their perspective on the same issue" (Pearce, 1994b pp. 236-237).

While circular questioning (and the use of a reflecting team, which will be discussed in a subsequent section) gained its reputation as a therapeutic

intervention in systemic family therapy, it has since been used by the Public Dialogue Consortium as a mode of intervention in public conflicts. The PDC conducts public forums called Kaleidoscope sessions, in which a moderator works with one representative at a time, and then both together, interviewing them using circular questioning. This technique is utilized in order to get the representatives to begin to see the larger systems in which the issue at hand is embedded. This may consist of bringing to the forefront information they had not previously been aware of, information about the larger system in which the conflict is embedded, the way the conflict is punctuated, and the way that it is socially created (Pearce, 1994a; Littlejohn, 1997).

Through this project, the evolution of circular questioning was taken a step farther as it was introduced in a new forum. I introduced circular questioning (and reflecting) to students in my Argumentation and Advocacy course via lectures and class activities. It was used as an invitation into a new grammar which emphasizes the systemic and re-constructed nature of public conflict episodes. Class activities were designed to engage students in dialogic discourse and to present some of the conceptual underpinnings of both the techniques. The purpose was to give students an opportunity to engage in a new language game, and to experiment with new metaphors for conceptualizing argument. The present study is an assessment of written materials and the classroom interactions that resulted from the inclusion of circular questioning into this new forum—the argumentation classroom.

Genres of Circular Questions

Circular questions have been described in some detail by several authors. Tomm (1985) has categorized circular questions as “descriptive” or “reflexive”

depending upon the preferred consequences of the intervention. "Descriptive" circular questions are driven by the intention of understanding the system itself. These questions would "elicit information to generate or modify his [the therapist's] understanding of the systemic connectedness of the problem" (p. 35). "Reflexive" circular questions, on the other hand, are utilized to "facilitate therapeutic change" (p. 35). These questions are asked "in an attempt to deliberately trigger a change in the system being investigated" (p. 35). Thus, the preferred outcome (understanding or change) determines the type of circular question being asked.

Penn (1982) offers a different taxonomy of circular questions. She describes her categories (nine in all) as "patterns," each of which is a "characteristic arrangement, a model of information gathering, representing the conceptual structure of the *circular interview* developed by the Milan Associates" (pp. 271 - 272). She notes that

the pattern of circular questioning can be used in different orders, beginning in the present and moving to the past, or beginning in the past and moving to the present. It is as though an *arc* were drawn with one point in the present and the other point in the past. (p. 272)

Further, these "patterns...should always be seen as bridges that relate symptom, intervention, family and therapist as parts of a larger co-evolutionary process" (p. 272).

Penn's categories begin with "verbal and analogic information" (p. 272). The verbal aspect of this category of questions seeks to unearth the grammar of the family. The therapist is looking for "'cue' words used by the family" (p. 272), which then allow the therapist to explore the relationships of system members around those "cue" words. For example, if "guilt" came about as a cue word, the therapist may ask, "'who worries most when mother is guilty?'" (p. 272). The

analogic component of this category is an assessment of the body language of the interviewee. The therapist observes “eye messages, postural shifts, tone, timing of interruptions” (p. 272), and then makes note of this subtext.

Penn’s second pattern concerns problem definition. Specifically, this type of question “establishes one end of the *arc* that will later connect the problem in the present to a time in the past, usually around the onset of the problem, when relationships in the family were different” (p. 272). This definition of the problem then leads to the third category, “coalition alignments in the present,” (p. 272) which seeks information about coalitions or relationships among family members which accompany the problem definition. This allows the therapist(s) to move forward or modify her or his hypothesis (p. 273). The therapist may then seek information about the “sequence of behavior around the problem [which] provides a detailed scenario of all family actions that serve the performance of the problem. A fully tracked sequence discloses a repeated cycle of behavior that the family are unable to change” (p. 273). This, of course, allows an opportunity for intervention on the part of the therapist. If the therapist can intervene and invite the family to utilize new resources in the form of interpretations, rules or expressed coalitions, then the sequence will have been disrupted.

“Questions of classification and comparison” comprise the fifth category of questions. These “are constructed to follow the changes in the family’s coalition alignments” and provide, “hypothesis validation about changes in relational patterns in the family” (p. 273). These questions ask respondents to identify coalitions, and then to make comparisons among events and relationships in order to establish hierarchies of understanding and prefigurative force.

Classification and comparison questions then allow a greater understanding of how the family conceptualizes their relationships and the changes in those relationships associated with the onset of a problem.

Penn also discusses questions of agreement in which family members are asked to validate or deny the coalitions and comparisons presented by other family members. This again allows the therapist to explore the family's conceptualization of the issue. If more information is still needed, the therapist may ask a family member to "gossip in the presence" (p. 274) of another. Here, one family member is asked "to comment on the relationship of another two" (p. 274) in their presence which may serve to validate relationships and dynamics in the family. Further, "subsystem comparison" questions "draw further distinctions about relationships" (p. 274). They are essentially designed to delve deeper into the nature of subsystems and their workings, and can also provide avenues for exploring possible futures. Penn talks about "if" questions and their importance for "testing the consequences of change in the family" (p. 274).

Finally, "explanation questions illuminate former, past relationships in the family" (p. 274). These are useful tools for solidifying or reframing a working hypothesis which allows for "a therapeutic intervention [to be] composed" (p. 274). These nine categories are used by the therapist during the intervention to explore changes in relational dynamics which are proving problematic for the family. The notion of co-evolutionary change suggests that the mere interaction of the therapist with the family creates shifts in dynamics which become part of the larger system.

The final classification system I will mention is one developed by the Public Dialogue Consortium as a framework for categorizing and engaging in circular

questions as part of interventions in public discourse about morally divisive issues. The three categories include, 1) questions that reveal the grammar of the participant, 2) questions that challenge the grammar of the participants, and 3) questions that extend the grammar into possible futures.

The first category is similar to Penn's category of "verbal and analogic information," and invites participants to share their ways of conceptualizing and talking about issues. Littlejohn (1997) states that, "an important part of the participant's grammar is the language used to describe and explain the interaction between the two sides and in some cases the interaction within each side" (p. 31). Questions in this category might sound like, "From your point of view, why do you think this subject has become so important to this group?" or, "Whose position is being heard best, do you think? What are the signs that it is being heard best?" (p. 32). Because this category of questions is interested in the grammar of participants, it looks not only at the vocabulary used, but also at the rule structures employed by participants for connecting subsystems and vocabularies⁶.

The second category of questions challenges the grammar of participants and "consider[s] the limits of the grammar. These questions aim to extend the thinking of the participants beyond where they usually go" (Littlejohn, 1997, p. 32). This is similar to Penn's (1982) category of "a different sequence" (p. 273) inasmuch as it calls attention to the patterns of interaction prefigured in the grammars utilized by participants. Specifically, this category emphasizes the actions and responses which *show* the grammar in use. Because the PDC focuses on alleviating diametric public discourse these questions also call attention to the implications of the grammar and the relationships, hierarchies, affordances and

constraints created by that grammar. Questions may sound like, “is there anything Tony is trying to say that you have difficulty hearing?” and, “who would have the most to lose if you prevailed in this dispute?” (Littlejohn, 1997, pp. 32 - 33). These questions then explore the relationships and results created by existing systems of interaction.

Finally, the PDC asks participants to “imagine possible futures” using questions which “stimulate thinking about ‘what would happen if...’” (p. 33). Questions might sound like, “what would change if this conflict were discussed in a different way?” (p. 33). This invitation from the interviewer to participants to engage in more productive modes of interaction is itself an interaction which opens possibilities for the participants to engage differently with one another in the future.

While these classification systems are helpful and useful to keep the interviewer or therapist on track, Littlejohn (1997) notes that,

good systemic questioning is done in a rather natural way without reliance on stock questions and phrasing. Most important when doing systemic questioning is to put yourself in a certain mode of consciousness and to ask questions designed to bring participants into that way of thinking. (p. 33)

In addition, no matter what classification system is being utilized (if any), the emphasis for the intervention needs to be on exploring system dynamics through an analysis of relationships and change. The notion of what counts as change, however, has been approached from different levels of analysis.

The Milan group calls attention to change on the level of family relationships and dynamics (Selvini, et al. 1980). Change is also represented by perceived shifts in alliances and coalitions among family members and in interpretations of events (see Minuchin, 1984; Aponte & Hoffman, 1973). Cronen and Pearce (1985)

have focused on change at the level of the logics of interaction in any given episode. From a CMM perspective, interlocutors organize systems of meaning via hierarchies of logic. For example, at times a speech act will be driven by prefigurative force—a logic which can be likened to a life-script in which action is based on overarching perceptions of self in relation to others and immediate context. This makes change rather threatening or overwhelming because it requires change on such a fundamental level. At other times however, practical or reflexive force drives action. Practical force “refers to the shaping of one’s choice of action by the response an actor desires” (p. 74). In the case of practical force, I may be driven to say something in order to create a specific desired response. Reflexive force, or “reflexive needs and effects,” occur when a “particular response might be needed to sustain someone’s sense of identity, confirm their conception of a relationship, or maintain the course of an episode. The actual response obtained may have the effect of changing, modifying or dramatically altering a context” (p. 74). Circular questions, from this perspective, are utilized to “reconfigure logical force,” or to “invit[e] the respondents to perceive their actions in terms of practical or reflexive forces rather than prefigurative force” (p. 74). Thus, if an actor is presented with a means of shifting away from the use of prefigurative force and toward the use of practical force as her or his guiding logic, a change has occurred which may in fact open possibilities for more productive action. This change, or difference, however, must not be too great. A shift away from a fundamental way of being is, of course, much greater than a shift away from a more peripheral belief or behavior. Manojlovic (1994) summarizes this position when she states that “introduction of

difference happens only if the proposed difference is big enough to be noticed and not too great to have disorganising [sic] effect on system [sic]" (p. 5).

While an analysis of shifts in logical force is certainly interesting, the authors of CMM (and their colleagues) have long since shifted their emphasis toward a more holistic assessment of the grammars of interactants. In this case, it becomes much more important to reveal the grammar of the participants, challenge that grammar, and imagine possible futures (Littlejohn, 1997), then to necessarily assess levels of logical change. Of course, the intention is the same—to engage participants in discourse (action) which opens new possibilities and new ways of approaching and engaging in the system.

As would be expected from any intervention, circular questioning is often performed with an emphasis on providing positive connotation, or an "appreciative" stance. Cronen and Pearce (1985) state that

positive connotation is one of the most distinctive procedures used in the Milan method [circular questioning]. The family is frequently told that the pattern of activity about which they are complaining is really serving an important function for their family. Symptoms are described as so basic to the family logic that they cannot be expected to be alleviated quickly or easily. (p. 77)

Broadly, this "appreciative" stance (also called "positive connotation") involves making positive assessments of the "symptoms" or the "problem" which are rooted in and exemplify the notion of systemic functioning. The "problem" person is not discussed independently, but rather in terms of his or her connections to the whole system and the important and useful job the person is performing for the functioning of the group. This helps the interviewee and all members of the intervention to conceptualize the difference of opinion or experience as not only natural, but useful, and one of many possible means of

interaction. This reflects a key component of cosmopolitan communication: that multiple resources are available, useful, and imperative to the process of life.

Reflecting

The Evolution of Reflecting

“Reflecting” is another practice which originated in the realm of family therapy and has been employed by the PDC in their intervention forums. When it was originally developed by the Milan school, a therapist working with a family or group would be watched through a one-way mirror by a team of other therapists. When the team had something to contribute to the session, or when the intervening therapist got “stuck,” the session would be interrupted and the therapists would consult with one another outside of the therapy room (T. Andersen, 1992).

Eventually, this technique was replaced by the entire team of therapists being in the same room with the family. If they wanted to consult with each other, they would simply tell the family that they were going to share some thoughts with one another and then they would do so. The therapists treated the family as equals, offering “suggestions” and “ideas” rather than prescriptive assessments. T. Andersen (1992), notes that the language used by the therapists changed when their team shifted from leaving the room for consulting purposes, to consulting in front of the family. Their language, once marked by complexity, jargon, prescriptions and sometimes “nasty” words (those which belittle or call forth pathologies in the system), changed to a language more congruent and equal with that of the family. Reflections were framed to the family as “ideas

that may be useful for your conversation” rather than “ideas for you” (p. 58). This equanimity between therapist and client upheld systemic principles and acknowledged social constructionist ideals which require a suspension of the privilege so regularly granted to the interpretations of the therapist. Instead, all resources are granted equal validity and clients are held to be responsible agents of their choices.

This intervention process between teams of therapists and families was eventually named “reflecting team” by T. Andersen and his associates. The Public Dialogue Consortium utilizes a reflecting team during a Kaleidoscope session, which consists of three to five people who reflect on each moderated interview. Thus, after the moderator (using the process of circular questioning) has elicited the grammar of the participants and has explored the logics of meaning and action that accompany that grammar, the reflecting team “suggest[s] implications, consequences, and alternatives to the conflict as depicted in the interviews” (Littlejohn, 1995, p. 6). The team uses a process of hypothesizing in which they offer as many interpretations (hypotheses) about the grammar, possible futures and logics of interaction of the participants as possible. The goal of reflecting in any forum is to help those who are being “reflected upon” get “unstuck” by acknowledging a virtual plethora of ways to envision and discuss the issue. The reflecting team thus offers a variety of resources upon which interviewees can draw in order to make sense of their interactions. Another way of conceptualizing this process is that reflections are designed to get participants to “try-on” new stories which may be more beneficial to future interactions than the ones that they have been utilizing. In some cases this means changing patterns of interaction which serve to divide,

rather than unite. For example, in the classroom, students often attack each others' arguments and perspective and work to prove each other wrong in a point/counterpoint style. Through the process of envisioning new resources, the interactants may well shift toward more productive patterns, or might at least begin to envision new and positive possibilities.

The "Rules" of Reflecting

The "rules" of reflecting have evolved, just as has the process of circular questioning. T. Andersen (1992), in an essay about the evolution of the reflecting team, offers three rules that reflecting teams should follow during therapeutic interventions. The first is "that the team's reflections should be based on and start with something expressed during the conversation, not from another context" (p. 60). This is similar to the notion of circular questioning being linked directly to the grammar of the participants.

The second rule is also in alignment with circular questioning guidelines, namely, that the reflecting team should refrain from negative connotations and should instead choose to focus upon positive interpretations which open up possibilities for positive future interactions. The final rule that T. Andersen mentions is that the reflecting team should talk among themselves rather than to the listeners. The listeners should be invited to listen, *and* given the opportunity *not* to listen (p. 60).

As mentioned above, the Public Dialogue Consortium has utilized the reflecting team in Kaleidoscope sessions. In these sessions, the team follows a similar set of rules, and their job is threefold: First, they *reflect the grammar* of the representatives and call attention to its potential power. This is done in an

“appreciative style”—just as is systemic questioning, so as not to call forth familiar but sometimes negative modes of interaction. Second, they *challenge the grammar*, “or point out possible limits of the proponent’s view” (Littlejohn, 1997, p. 6). Finally, they *imagine possible futures* or offer new grammars for representatives to ‘try on’.

Two additional features are important to note. First, the reflecting team is positioned (in their chairs) in such a way that representatives are literally ‘eavesdropping’ on the team while they hypothesize. This allows participants to be in the role of observers, both physically and conversationally, which, in turn, allows them to embody a third-person perspective on their positions. This key feature forces participants to get outside of their well rehearsed “stories,” suspending belief for a time, while in the position of listener rather than speaker.

The second feature is that the moderator and reflecting team adopt an air of neutrality or “not knowing” (Selvini et al. 1980). This neutrality serves as a model for all observers and has as its goal the creation of a sense of curiosity and wonder that is essential for adopting a new grammar. It is important that observers watch and hear the consulting team freely adopt a variety of perspectives and easily relinquish hypotheses. This sets the stage for participants to freely change their own resources. These features (third party perspective and neutrality) contribute to the possibility that a shift in conversational structure—away from the well-rehearsed and divisive grammars that characterize moral conflict, and toward the more pluralistic and systemically oriented grammars of dialogue—may occur. It is this shift that makes cosmopolitan communication possible.

Summary of Ways of Working

In summary, these two methods, circular questioning and reflecting, are useful tools for bringing about changes in interactive patterns. Intervention (whether in the case of therapy, a Kaleidoscope session, or a different public forum) happens through the interaction between the interviewer, reflecting team, and the participants. Because these techniques rely upon “conjoint action” as their form of intervention, a fundamental change occurs in the system. Further, the family or other social unit is not seen as independent from the interviewer, but rather as a system which is entering into new forms of discourse with the interviewer. Families (or civic participants in the case of public issues) are assumed to be simply “stuck” in repetitive patterns of unproductive discourse. The object of intervention then, is to invite the participants into new forms of interaction by engaging them in those forms. Circular questioning and reflecting have been shown to do just that— to open doors for new forms of interaction which acknowledge numerous, valid resources, build an appreciation for plurality, and assist participants in the move toward third party positions which allow them to see the difference between the positions that disputants (or family members) often present, and the interests that inform those positions. In order to do this most successfully, interviewers and reflecting team members must remain unattached to the outcome of the interaction. They (we) must focus on the process of questioning in particular, rather than on the results. Selvini et al. (1980) describe this stance as “neutrality” and emphasize the importance of the therapist remaining unattached to the outcome of the intervention. The therapist’s (or interviewer’s) job is to adopt a temporary hypothesis about the

situation and then to explore the hypothesis through a line of questioning while remaining neutral and open to change.⁷

Further, while these techniques were originally developed for use in therapeutic interventions, they have also been successfully utilized in public forums designed to interrupt the patterns of discourse associated with moral debate. With the heavy emphasis on debate-centered models available for students of argument, I propose that these tools are also a useful complement to the argumentation curriculum. It has been my opinion that instruction and practice in both circular questioning and reflecting for students in argumentation courses would provide a necessary counter-perspective that would enable students to select from a broader range of acceptable and useful communication behaviors depending on the argumentative situation. Thus, students would learn and practice not only the tools which allow them to formulate well-reasoned, sound and valid arguments, but also tools for shifting grammars, asking questions, and engaging in third party perspective—in short, cosmopolitan communication. The next section addresses some specifics about the introduction of these techniques into the classroom.

Introducing New Ways of Working into the Classroom

Overview

My challenges in introducing these techniques into the classroom were many. First, it was imperative that I fulfill the obligations of the argumentation course—presenting the required material for general education purposes and that which would adequately prepare students for their post-requisite

coursework. As a social constructionist, I also believe it was imperative that circular questioning and reflecting be presented from an integrated perspective which acknowledges the embodied-ness of the skills. It is important in the presentation of these skills that they are not taught as simply “strategic tactics” but as ways of *being* and participating in argument. Recall that Pearce (1995b) warns against this very thing when he notes that

some communication events which have all the properties of conversation are simply ‘strategic.’ That is, one’s own ideas or positions on issues are never put ‘at risk’ of being changed in the conversation; one’s own behavior is controlled by interests and relationships outside the conversation and calculated for its impact on the other participants. (p. 244)

To teach these skills in such a manner would be to go against the very notion of cosmopolitan communication while perpetuating a more strategic model of argument.

It was my job to invite students in my argumentation course into new grammars of interaction which I hoped would produce more cosmopolitan modes of communication in subsequent speech rounds, while presenting the necessary and basic skills required for traditional argumentation. This meant that I must employ a family of communication practices and assess their efficacy. I was performing the role of theory builder—interested not only in the immediate, situated discourse that might result from my teaching, but also in the overall success of the project. Due to the unique nature of the skills necessary for cosmopolitan communication (circular questioning and reflecting), and the proportionately small amount of time spent on these skills, my research questions center on the students’ abilities to embody these unique grammars of

interaction rather than on their abilities to engage in traditional argumentative interaction.

Because I was engaged in the process of theory building, I needed a model of theory building that grew out of my social constructionist beliefs. Practical theory, a model which “was developed as a complement to the social constructionist perspective on human communication” (Spano, 1996 p. 81), was a perfect fit. This theory is borne out of reflexivity and situated discourse, and uses several assumptions which are directly in alignment with social constructionism as a foundation. The next section presents some of the basics of practical theory.

Practical Theory

Spano (1995; 1996), Cronen (1995), and Craig and Tracy (1995) all discuss the notion of theory borne out of reflexivity and practice. Spano (1995) posits that a false theory-practice dichotomy exists and has dominated the field of communication studies as a result of positivist communication science (see also, Chen & Pearce, 1995). This false dichotomy favors theory (*theoria*) over practice (*praxis*) and removes the personal, *situated* aspects of communication practice in the process of abstract theory building. In order to abstract, one must (by definition) move beyond situated, individual practice to the realm of generalizations. However, the use of a social constructionist approach “situate[s] speech communication within the domain of *praxis* rather than *theoria*” (Spano, 1995, p. 8) which calls attention to speech in action. “Embodied” speech becomes the focal point for research, as opposed to attending solely to abstractions *derived from* situated speech acts. Essentially, Spano is saying that speech communication *is* situated and contingent, and thus is squarely in the realm of

praxis, rather than theoria. The decisions that we make in individual communication interactions are uniquely and totally dependent upon what people do when they act together. Thus, communication is clearly a practical art.

Cronen (1995) delineates various features of practical theory which include (1) an emphasis on real-world interaction between embodied people; (2) an acknowledgment of the “families of communication abilities” or “grammars of practice” (p. 233) that the participants bring to the interaction; (3) a recognition that practical theory leads to enhanced abilities for all parties involved; (4) a method of assessment which examines *consequences*, and promotes the kinds of consequences which make life better, and (5) that practical theory “coevolves with both the abilities of its practitioners and the consequences of its use, thus forming a tradition of practice” (p. 232). Each of these features is clearly present in my own study⁸, making my classroom a learning environment for all—teacher and students alike. Spano (1996) says it well when he states that “the theory is useful to the extent that the practices lead to better teaching and learning” (p. 88). As will be discussed in the final chapter, I was as much a student as a teacher as I introduced the skills of circular questioning and reflecting into my classroom.

While Spano (1996) argues for taking a practical theory approach to teaching the basic public speaking course, I assert that this approach is also useful in the argumentation course for the same reasons...primarily because

bringing practical theory into the classroom essentially entails bringing in a “family” of communication practices that enable participants to create patterns of coherent interaction. The simple test [of which]...is whether it allows students and teachers...to talk about socially significant issues in ways that make sense, in ways that are coherent. (p. 83)

“Coherence,” for the purposes of this study, involves risking resources and expressing an appreciation for plurality, or adopting the grammars associated with circular questioning and reflecting.

Cronen (1995) states that the communication theorists practice a “family of methods for the study of situated social action wherein professionals join with participants and clients. As such, practical theory respects the centrality of the grammatical abilities of persons in conjoint action” (p. 231). Spano (1996) points out that having a family of practices means that some may be more formal and structured, while others may be more informal and fluid. This was certainly the case in my classroom as I danced between teaching the formal aspects of argumentation (i.e., Toulmin's model, advocacy and refutation structures, tests of evidence and the like), and the more “interpersonal” skills designed to open up cosmopolitan modes of interaction (i.e., circular questioning and reflecting). Thus, I was actively engaged in the process of theory building—testing my methods to see how and if they would work as invitations into new grammars of practice for the students. This involvement in the research situation, of course, required an appreciation for the reflexive nature of the interaction. Spano states that

the practitioner of practical theory is reflexively involved in the act of theorizing such that he or she becomes part of the research process.... This means that theorists must relinquish the quaint but fictitious notion that they can remain comfortably insulated as spectators on the sidelines. The question for practical theory, then, is not whether theorists influence the research process, but rather how they are going to influence it. (p. 81)

Thus, the process of introducing, assessing and re-formulating the unit on circular questioning and reflecting is inherently a part of the research process. In

the next section I will discuss how I introduced the techniques into the classroom; an evaluation of the process can be found in the final chapter.

Classroom Integration

I approached my beginning argumentation and advocacy course in a rather traditional manner, covering issues of form, structure and presentation from the start. (See appendix A for a copy of the course calendar.) In approximately the 12th week of a 17 week semester, I introduced the unit on systemic techniques with an overview of the metaphors we use when engaging in argument. (See appendix B for an agenda for the systemic techniques unit.) Using Brockreide's (1972) "Arguers as Lovers" as a framework, I introduced the connection between the metaphors that inform our argumentative practices, and the communicative actions that may result. As a class, we brainstormed on the chalkboard about three different metaphors for argument, and what actions may result from employing each of these metaphors. The three metaphors were argument as rape, argument as seduction, and argument as love. As a class, we decided that we did not care for conceptualizing argument as rape, and instead changed our metaphor to argument as domination. We specifically discussed the stance or "position" taken by the arguer in each of these modes, some of the thoughts about others that may arise within each conceptualization of argument, some of the likely communication patterns, or strategies that one might employ in each mode of argument, and the preferred outcomes of each stance. The table below summarizes the classroom discussion.

	Argument as... domination	Argument as... seduction	Argument as... love/learning
Your position	To control To win	To persuade To manipulate	To understand Knowing that there are lots of ways to view things.
Thoughts about others	No respect Who cares?	How can I get my way?	Caring Open
Strategy	Coercing Steam rolling	"Hiding" evidence Fallacious reasoning Pretending to care	Fostering the relationship. Asking questions. Expressing curiosity. Seeking understanding. Expressing yourself clearly.
Preferred outcome	win-lose	win-lose, or win-I don't care	win-win

Summary of Classroom Discussion

Overall, students appeared to be vocal and interested in this metaphorical approach. The discussion was rather lively compared to many lecture days. We went on to discuss competency, and some of the situations in which each stance would be appropriate. One student mentioned that he thought that the dominance metaphor was never really necessary, and that from an aikido perspective, it was always better to move *with* the "opponent" rather than against.

The next topic of discussion was the co-creation of the argumentative event. I talked briefly about the social construction of the love/learning and dominance metaphors, and then about unwanted repetitive patterns (URPs). An unwanted repetitive pattern is when two people feel compelled to create an unproductive pattern in their interactions. For instance, one will make a remark, and the other feels as if he or she *has no other option* than to respond in a particular way (Pearce, 1989, pp. 20-21). I talked about the notion of making choices about our argumentative stances, and about choosing patterns that open avenues for exploration. As a class, we decided that argument can be seen as opportunity for learning—both about concepts and about our argumentative partners. We then specifically discussed what kinds of communicative actions would ensue if students could actually employ such a metaphor when arguing. What would be different about their approach to argumentative situations if they assumed that learning was the framework, rather than “domination”? They stated that they would ask more questions and seek understanding, rather than attack their “opponent” with counter arguments and “missiles” of counter evidence.

All of the above led into our discussion about some additional skills they could employ to achieve such a learning stance. I then introduced circular questioning and reflecting and invited guests into the classroom to demonstrate the techniques with one volunteer class member and me. (See appendix C for handouts and overheads utilized during the training session.) During three class days (out of 30 in the semester), we introduced, demonstrated and had students practice both circular questioning and reflecting.

This discussion started with an overview of systemic principles. Here, I used overheads to guide a discussion which emphasized six principles. 1) People co-

create their patterns of argument through their communication. 2) Getting stuck in unwanted repetitive patterns of communication reduces our communication effectiveness. 3) People can create new, healthier ways of communicating that will enhance their interpersonal relationships and ultimately enhance the ways that the entire population communicates. 4) The ability to get “un-stuck” is one of the primary means of improving argumentative patterns. 5) People are not their positions, and 6) People have their beliefs for “good reasons.” These principles then led into a discussion of the goals of systemic techniques. These include recognition, respect, understanding, social awareness (the notion that the parties involved determine the nature of the conflict), and forward movement (making new, productive patterns of conflict is a good thing).

We then moved into a discussion of circular questioning and then reflecting, before the demonstration. In the demonstration, one class member and I role played a scenario about gun control. Specifically, I was against gun control and he was for it. We each had short descriptions of our positions (see appendix D), and a few moments to “get into role.” Three members of the PDC joined our class to assist with the demonstration. First, Dr. Shawn Spano performed the role of moderator, asking each of us, in turn, circular questions. We then debriefed as a class, and various class members were asked to offer their own circular questions. Dr. Spano and I offered feedback to their responses.

During the next segment of the role play, the other two PDC members and Dr. Spano acted as a reflecting team. Class members were asked to write their own reflections and share them. Again, Dr. Spano and I offered feedback. Due to time constraints, we debriefed the session during the class meeting following the demonstration. In our debriefing, the students had an opportunity to voice

their opinions about the process, and we discussed how to incorporate these techniques into actual argumentative situations.

Research Questions

The most important aspect of the in-class training was to introduce students to new forms of communication that they could employ in argumentative situations. The intervention also provided data for this thesis research. I was able to collect responses from the students to assess for the purposes of this paper — specifically, to provide a point of demarcation after which I could assess the students' communication with one another. I was seeking information regarding the following research questions:

RQ1: When students talk *about* argument, what grammatical themes emerge throughout the semester?

RQ2: What grammatical themes emerged from the discourse of the students when arguing and participating in classroom discussion after the unit on systemic techniques?

These research questions direct attention to the themes which arise in the students' discourse both when they talk *about* argument and when they engage *in* argument. These themes will then be interpreted in chapter five with respect to the students' grammatical abilities to use dialogic or cosmopolitan forms of communication (i.e. to risk resources, acknowledge plurality, ask questions of difference, and hypothesize). The method of data collection and analysis will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

The Method

Introduction

To begin, it is important to note that circular questioning and reflecting are not simply techniques employed systematically in order to confuse the system. Rather, as I quoted before,

the Milan method...is a broad based, sophisticated 'epistemology', a way of thinking about and engaging in social systems. The Milan method consists of 'inviting' in various ways a family to engage in actions consistent with this epistemology. If the invitation is successful, the participation itself in this epistemology brings about changes in the 'logic' of the family system and the course of its evolution. (Cronen & Pearce, 1985, p. 70)

This is consistent with the social constructionists' commitment to reflexivity and the co-creation of social realities, and consistent with my purpose as a practical theorist of introducing and assessing these techniques in my argumentation classroom. Further, actively engaging the family, disputants, or students in new grammars brought about by the intervention allows them to embody the experience of grammatical shift and thus perpetuates systemic change.

"To the extent that the family engages in these practices, and to the extent that these practices are linked to the family structure, the system of the family is changed, sometimes dramatically" (Cronen & Pearce, 1985, p. 70). While this description is about family systems and the Milan method, it refers to a systemic, social constructionist way of working which, when applied to public discourse and argumentative patterns, can help to create new modes of public interaction. The "therapists" in the case of a Kaleidoscope intervention are the moderator and reflecting team. As was reported in the last chapter, in my classroom this

function was served by me and co-instructors who demonstrated and engaged students in practical applications of the techniques.

The intervention, in my specific case, happened through classroom instruction. The “invitation” in my case is for students to enter into dialogic grammar with fellow students. The preferred outcome (should students decide to accept the invitation) is dialogic, cosmopolitan style communication, rather than debate-style interaction in the sphere of public argument.

How will we know if it worked? Broadly, Cronen and Pearce (1985) suggest “that the Milan method works to the extent that it engages the clients in patterns of action which imply a systemic epistemology, and that this epistemology changes the existing logic of the family system and facilitates its evolution” (p. 71). The intervention may work in the moment; the effects may or may not last. What the PDC hopes for in a single intervention is often simply that participants (and audience members) will engage in these more cosmopolitan forms of interaction, which will perhaps positively affect future interactions in similar ways. Perhaps someone exposed to one of these interventions will eventually tell someone else about what they learned at the forum; perhaps they will incorporate others’ experiences in such a way that it broadens their own experiences; the next time a participant interacts on this issue, perhaps she will ask questions about the personal experiences and underlying interests of her collaborator rather than simply re-stating her well-rehearsed position statement; perhaps a participant will simply reflect on the experience of discussing a normally “undiscussable” issue as pleasant or enjoyable, thus reducing the resistance to discussing the issue on another occasion. Any of these (and countless other) outcomes would demonstrate the usefulness of this systemic

approach and would continue the rippling effect of the intervention. Any of these outcomes would constitute success.

In the classroom, the hoped-for results are similar. If students, when exposed to these “tools,” engage in grammars which reflect cosmopolitan tenets, temporarily or permanently, they are assumed to have been positively affected by the intervention—to have learned something valuable and/or gained new abilities. Thus, I introduced these techniques in my own classroom in the hopes that students would adopt some of the grammar of circularity and reflecting, and that they would demonstrate that grammar in their interactions during classroom speeches—specifically during the question and answer period following each round of advocacy and refutation speeches.

Research Design

All of the above suggests that I needed to examine discourse in use in order to get an accurate “read” on the systemic nature of the interaction. By definition then, my best choice was to utilize a qualitative method of discourse analysis (see Spano & Calcagno, 1995; Spano & Calcagno 1996). Lindlof (1995) states that “qualitative inquirers strive to understand their objects of interest” (p. 9) rather than to predict or control behavior—the same goals that I have in mind as I enter the classroom as a practical theorist. Further, Lindlof writes that “fundamentally, qualitative researchers seek to preserve the form and content of human behavior and to analyze its qualities, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations” (p. 21). He also supports the validity of this form of research when he states

if communication is primarily a matter of signifying meanings and purposes, then qualitative inquiry is interested in how signifying occurs

and what it means to those who engage in it. This is no simple task, nor is it a lowly one. For too long in the history of communication scholarship, we have focused on what messages refer to, or the effects they have, without examining what messages are or how their articulation creates social realities for speakers and audiences. (p. 22).

This emphasis on the creation of social realities through language use is clearly consistent with a social constructionist approach to the communication situation, and gave direction to the type of data collected.

Data Collection and Interpretation of the Research Questions

All data were collected in my Argumentation and Advocacy class during the spring semester of 1996. Students were asked to fill out a permission slip which guaranteed their anonymity and granted permission for me to use their video and tape recorded class discussions and speeches, and their responses to questions on peer and self critiques, test items and evaluation forms. They were told that all these materials were to be used for research purposes. (See permission slip in appendix E). Data were collected through a variety of sources which will be discussed in turn below.

RQ1. The first research question directs attention to the ways that students talk *about* argument. This question is important when we consider the formative nature of language. If it is true, as social constructionists would argue, that language is inextricably intertwined with reality, then the examination of the students' discourse should provide insight into the ways that students are conceptualizing argument and their relationship with argument. If, for example, they speak of argument in war-like terms, then we might expect them to engage in more combative forms of argument. A war-like metaphor may set the stage for bi-polar logic, attacks on the other party's position, or strategic questions

designed to uncover or “expose” the faults in their partners’ argument. Conversely, if their grammar reflects a more interpersonal orientation when speaking about argument, then we might expect them to engage in more personal discussion in the context of argument. We may hear questions which explore the personal experiences of the other, hypotheses, or even statements which reflect a risking of one’s own resources—acknowledgments of the possibility that there are other, valid perspectives on the issue. The “stories” that students tell about argument (or the grammars that they utilize) are indicative of the resources that they employ when engaging in argument. A thematic analysis of these resources should then yield insight into those resources.

In order to answer this question, data has been collected from several sources. First, at the beginning of the semester, students were required to deliver a short speech about an argument that they remember, what made it memorable, and what they hoped to get out of the course. (See appendix F for a copy of the assignment sheet.) These speeches were video taped, transcribed near verbatim and thematically analyzed. Essentially, I was interested in the ways that students would describe their expectations about the course, prior to having formal training in argumentation and advocacy.

Further, students were asked to provide data in the form of responses to various questions throughout the semester. Students answered a series of questions on the midterm course evaluation and on the final course evaluation. These questions are listed in the chart below.

Source...	Question(s)...
<p>Midterm Course Evaluation Sheet</p> <p>Responses were anonymous. 15 students responded.</p>	<p>Describe an argument you recall... Why is this argument memorable? Have your feelings about argument changed over the course of the semester? If so, please describe how. Reflect on your learning. What have you learned in this class so far? How has it impacted your life and the way you argue? Finish this sentence, "arguing is like..."</p>
<p>Final Course Evaluation Sheet</p> <p>Responses were anonymous 11 students responded</p>	<p>Same questions as midterm evaluation</p>
<p>Final Exam</p> <p>3 points were given for this question. 19 students responded.</p>	<p>Describe how your view of argument has <u>evolved</u> over the course of the semester. How did you think about argument when you first started this class? How did you think about argument in the middle of this class, and how do you think about it now? <u>What</u> did you learn that inspired these changes? (Be specific.)</p>
<p>Final Exam</p> <p>2 points were given for this question. 19 students responded.</p>	<p>Describe what kind of arguer you would like to be in the future with friends, family members and classmates. What have you learned that you will take away from this class and <u>HOW</u> will you use it? (Be specific.)</p>

Table of data collection points for Research Question One

Each of the course evaluation questions calls attention to the grammar or stories (metaphors) that students use to describe argument. According to Lakoff

and Johnson (1980), metaphors structure our conceptual systems and thus the nature of our experiences. A grammatical thematic analysis of these “metaphors” (and stories) was used to lend insight into the way that students were ordering their experiences with argument, which may have prefigured the conversational forms utilized by students when they engaged in argument.

RQ2. The second research question asks, “What grammatical themes emerged from the discourse of the students when arguing and participating in classroom discussion after the unit on systemic techniques?”

This question directs attention to the way that students actually *do* argument after the unit on systemic techniques. Focusing attention on the grammars that emerge from the discourse of these students allows an assessment of the degree to which students engaged in “dialogic” patterns of argument. This will be addressed in the final chapter of this thesis.

Data used to answer research question two were gathered from audio and video taped question and answer sessions after the final round of speeches. The discourse of eight students was used for in-depth study. The students were selected based on their consistent attendance, their participation in the systemic techniques unit in class, and for their consistently high degree of participation. This set of data was also considered adequate and manageable. Of the eight respondents, four were female and four were male, and they represented a variety of ethnic backgrounds including African-American, Hispanic, Caucasian, and Polish.

The question and answer periods following this set of speeches were particularly relevant due to the interactive nature of question and answer and the emphasis on “real-time” interaction. Specifically, the questions and/or

comments made *to* each speaker were of interest because it is the art of asking questions (rather than answering) which was emphasized during the systemic techniques unit in class. I expected these sessions to elicit discussion among students about controversial issues—particularly because the final round of speeches followed an advocacy / refutation sequence.

Analysis

As Waitzkin (1993) suggests in his article on the interpretive analysis of discourse, the method of interpretation for the collected data has been decided in advance. This section discusses the plan for analysis.

Recall that my emphasis is on introducing a new grammar into the argumentation and advocacy classroom through the inclusion of circular questioning and reflecting. Because the crux of this proposal is to examine shifts in the students' discourse both *in* argument and *about* argument, interpretive discourse analysis has been conducted on the transcribed data from both video and audio sources and on the written data provided by students in response to exam and course evaluation questions.

The concept of grammar has been utilized as a coding and categorizing scheme for students' discourse in order to answer the research questions. (See Spano & Calcagno, 1995; Spano & Calcagno, 1996, for similar approaches.) As Lindlof (1995) notes, "the purposes of qualitative coding are to tag segments of interest and to look for new ways to categorize action or talk that will lead to inductive proposition" (p. 221). Thus, the categories or grammatical themes (in a Wittgensteinian sense) have emerged through careful examination of the data and with special attention to the recurrence, repetition and forcefulness of

utterances (Owen, 1984). Recurrence was observed when “at least two parts of a report had the same thread of meaning, even though a different word indicated such meaning” (p. 275). Repetition occurs when a unit of meaning is used more than once, and “forcefulness, refers to vocal inflection, volume, or dramatic pauses which serve to stress and subordinate some utterances from other locutions” (p. 275). Utterances, or units of meaningfulness, were identified as words, phrases, sentences, or larger fragments of discourse. Where appropriate, excerpts of dialogue between speaker and respondent were also included.

Specifically, I transcribed video tapes near-verbatim, noting forcefulness to myself as assessed from the tone and nonverbal elements that I observed on the video tapes. I then made several copies of the transcripts and cut them into parts so as to double code excerpts whenever necessary. Excerpts were read numerous times and categorized based on my holistic assessment of their meaning based on the context in which they occurred. Because it is the context which an utterance occurs which determines the grammar of that utterance, I paid specific attention to context as I was sorting. I carefully read the comments which preceded and followed any given utterance, and I reviewed the original video tapes whenever necessary.

This thematic grammatical analysis is appropriate due to the formative nature of discourse, and because of the “potential for discourse to tacitly *inform* [italics hers] a participant (or bystander) of certain things that she or he did not know but that are presupposed by speech acts he or she generally understands” (Much, 1992, p. 52). Thus, as was discussed in previous chapters, discourse itself is the basis for the meaning systems that prefigure action and social reality.

In conclusion, if, as teacher and practical theorist, I was able to create an environment that invited the students to change their rules about what constitutes good argument, my expectation was that they would also employ grammars which allow for shifts in person positions, risking of resources and/or curious reflection on the contributions of their classmates. These “grammars” would constitute a movement toward cosmopolitan communication. The next chapter assesses the impact of the invitation.

CHAPTER IV

The Results

Research Question One

Because the first research question focuses attention on the ways that students talk *about* argument, the data set consisted of both verbal responses in an introductory speech and written responses to test and evaluation form questions. The data is presented below in a chronological fashion to highlight changes in the students' grammars during the course of the semester. First, themes from the *About Argument* speech are presented. Specifically, I examined the portion of the speeches in which the students explained what they hoped to gain from the course. This provides some information on the students' pre-existing conceptualizations of argument upon entering the course.

The next data set consists of responses to the midterm course evaluations. These were administered just before the systemic techniques unit, although a few students handed them in afterwards. The data from the final course evaluations comes next, while the last data set consists of responses to two questions on the final exam. Each of these data sets was thematically categorized and is presented with examples.

Themes from the "About Argument" Speech

In this data set I specifically look at the part of the speech where students indicated what they would like to get out of the course. Out of 24 speeches, the following 4 categories emerged.

To learn public speaking skills. Several students mentioned that they wanted to gain greater comfort speaking in front of an audience. No doubt this came from the fact that this class fulfills the oral communication requirement at San Jose State University, and they understood that they would be doing some public speaking. One said that she was "terrified of public speaking," and that she therefore "just wants credit." Another said that he wanted to be "more relaxed speaking in front of people," while a third said that she wanted to "gain an ability to speak in front of a large audience."

To learn traditional argument skills. In addition to gaining greater confidence with public speaking, many expressed that being a "good" arguer was important to them. While they didn't have well developed descriptions for what that meant, some did say that proper structure was important. One student remarked, "I want to be able to develop clear and concise arguments," while another said, "I want to learn a little bit about how people argue, what kind of strategy they use." Other comments included, "I want to learn how to successfully approach arguments," "I want to learn how to debate," "I want to learn to organize my thoughts," and "I hope to gain the tools necessary to argue with my girlfriend, like induction, deduction, and fallacies." Thus, the students had varied abilities to explain what a good argument was, but they seemed to know their purpose.

To learn to win. It was very important to many students that they learn how to "win" arguments. One stated that he got frustrated when trying to argue with a used car dealer and that he is "very soft skinned." His goal for the class was specifically to be able to "win arguments...especially with [his] girlfriend." Others noted that they wanted to be "successful" in arguing, which meant to

some, the ability to “get my point across.” Further, several said that persuasion was important to them. One student said, “[I want to learn] how to present convincing and persuasive arguments...so that I can ‘get away with murder’” (a reference to the O.J. Simpson case). Interestingly, these students clearly expressed argument as one-way communication. They were much more interested in expressing themselves than in collaborating with others.

To learn to control. The final theme that came out of these first speeches emerged from the desire of many students to control their emotions. One student talked about an argument she had with her boss over a sexual harassment complaint. She said that she “would like to have a better way to discuss a point without showing my true feelings.” For me, this evokes the notion of argument as a poker game. Another student said that he was known to fight a lot, and that he would like to “be able to debate or argue with someone without getting too personal and not hurting the other person because I tend to do that, you know, I’ll say things that really make a punch and that can really hurt them.”

A third student discussed an argument that she had with an instructor. She said that she “always tr[ies] to keep a clear head,” while another said that she’d like to “be able to argue, not fight, and just reason and be calm about it.” She mentioned that she is usually mad when arguments come up, and that she would do things to provoke the other person.

Overall, I found it exciting that these students were quite reflective about their own argumentative patterns and expressed a desire to change their resources. It will become apparent in the next several sections that some of these themes remained consistent throughout the semester.

Themes from the Midterm Course Evaluations

The midterm course evaluations included several questions about the ways that students conceptualize argument. I was looking specifically for descriptions of their relationships to argument. Using 15 midterm course evaluations, the responses have been categorized according to the question number.

Question one. The first question that I analyzed on the midterm course evaluation was “what makes an argument memorable?” In the answers to this question, three major themes emerged.

Personal involvement in the argument. Students seemed to remember arguments in which they were personally involved. Two students wrote about arguments that they had with friends over drunk driving. One remarked “it was memorable because I saved my friends’ lives and to think what could happen if I let them drive drunk is pretty scary.” Another said “it was memorable because I have seen first hand what drinking and driving can result in.” These two responses clearly show a strong degree of personal involvement in the situation.

Another student wrote about an argument she had with a friend because the friend stayed out all night and didn't tell anyone where she was. The student wrote, “It was memorable because my friend and I seldomly argue. It was pretty bad.” Again, the response indicates a degree of personal involvement in the argument, perhaps emerging from a sense of responsibility for the other person or a relationship at stake. Another student wrote about an argument that she had with her boyfriend rather frequently. He was of the opinion that she should not go out to clubs because she's a girl, while it was fine for him to go out. She wrote, “I still argue about it because he's wrong. I will never change my mind.”

This comment may also have something to do with the power relationship between the people involved, which leads us to the next category.

Issues of power. Many students described arguments as memorable when there was a power differential involved. For example, one student wrote about an argument he had with his parents about where he was going to go to college. He stated, "it was memorable because it decided my future." Another wrote about a decision that her grandmother had made unilaterally about her Christmas vacation. She wrote, "it was memorable because I couldn't take all five of my friends to LA and it hurt my heart." Apparently, in both of these cases, another person wielded power.

Yet another student wrote about her frustration in an argument with her mother. She wrote,

it was memorable because my mom had all the power, and no matter what I said, I was wrong. So my words meant nothing. When the other person has all the power, there is nothing you can say to change the situation in your favor.

This clearly shows the frustration of being in a lower power position in conflict. Further, it may indicate that the students felt powerless with the argumentative skills they had acquired so far. One student remarked, "I presented a prima facie case and my parents still said, 'no.'"

Impressions of form and structure. Interestingly, with only half a semester of argumentation and advocacy under their belts, many students remembered arguments because they were impressed by the structure and/or delivery of the argument. One student wrote of a presentation made in class: "the presentation was well organized, the delivery was fantastic, and the topic related well to class." Another remarked, "it was memorable because I was able to analyze his argument using techniques we learned in class, and prove that they couldn't hold

water." Perhaps it was a feeling of competency with the skills associated with argument that made certain interactions memorable for the students.

In contrast to the above remark, another student was impressed by the *poor* form used by the other person involved in the argument. She stated, "she didn't have substantial reasons for being pro-child, and had no statistics or factual evidence to persuade me." This emphasis on the form and structure of the argument tells me that these students were integrating new skills and using them to assess their arguments. This kind of analytical skill can certainly be a first step toward new patterns of interaction.

Question two. The second question on the midterm course evaluation asked, "Have your feelings about argument changed over the course of the semester? If so, please describe how." The following categories emerged.

Feelings of satisfaction with the process. Several students described feelings of satisfaction with the process as a whole. One student remarked, "my feelings haven't changed. I still like to argue. Although I have learned about different types of arguments like seduction, domination, and love." Another stated, "at the beginning...I didn't know what to expect...as the semester progressed I have really enjoyed this class." Both of these students seemed satisfied with the process of arguing in general, and expressed enjoyment with the process. Another student echoed this sentiment when he said, "I have rediscovered that research...is a time consuming process. However, 'sow and thee [*sic*] shall reap.' The rewards of taking the time to learn from this course will help...in the future." In his case, there were rewards from the investment of the course which would lead to productive learning.

A focus on traditional argumentative and presentation structure. A second category of responses indicates that some students had become focused on traditional argumentative or presentation details. For example, one student remarked, "I never understood the use of a visual aid and the importance of determining what type of audience you're going to give a speech to." This indicates that shifts in feelings about argument may have to do with learning proper presentation skills. Another student said, "I have finally understood how an argument is comprised and how it really works," while another stated, "No more attacking the person, attack the argument." These comments indicate that these students are making a separation between the argument and the arguer—a vital step toward the ability to change and/or improve one's argumentation style. One woman remarked,

there is a whole lot involved in it. Most of argumentation we do unconsciously. I think we are taught the 'proper' way to argue in our culture and we take a lot of argumentation strategies for granted. The point of this class, I think, is to get those working on a conscious level and then refine them.

Of course, there are also those students who are focused on the structure of the argument for purposes of "winning." One woman stated, "I think my feelings have changed over the semester because now I can argue someone down but I have to come up with prove [*sic*] to show that I know what I'm talking about because I used to argue and never have any proof and they used to have proof so I used to lose. Now I won't lose." Thus, this students' feelings of confidence with argumentative structure allow her to be in a position of advantage in the argument. Sometimes, this position of advantage is gained both through the use of proper structure and through the removal of emotion. One student pointed out:

my definition of argument at the beginning of the semester involved the heated yelling and screaming you have with a boyfriend or parent. Now I realize that arguments involve logic and reasoning. When you raise your voice, it is likely that you will lose the logic and the argument. Organization of thoughts is the key to success.

Another remarked, "I still need to learn to argue with using good and intelligent answers and come backs." This points toward the next category.

The removal of emotion. Several students wrote about argument being a process devoid of emotion. One woman said this rather succinctly when she wrote, "I believe that I have a more positive view on argument. I always considered argument to be two parts emotion and one part fact. Now I understand that it is 3 [sic] parts fact and one part warrant." This "measured" view of argument clearly denotes the students' view that "proper" argument does not involve emotion. Another student stated, "I never knew arguing was so diplomatic. It is a tedious process," while yet another said, "I found out that arguing isn't exactly like screaming/fighting, it's more like trying to let others understand your point." Note that there is a sub-text in that last argument about "let[ting] others understand your point." This sub-text is about one-way communication, a category that was overwhelmingly present in the students' first speeches. However, it was clearly more of a sub-text in the data at this point in the semester.

There is one more response that I must include in this section, although it does not represent a thematic category at this data collection point. One student (who may have even handed in this midterm course evaluation after the systemic techniques unit) responded to this question by saying, "because of this class I see argument as a way of learning and understanding different topics and it also opens you up to new ideas. I feel that it is a class everyone should take."

Question three. The third question on the midterm course evaluation asked, “reflect on your learning. What have you learned in this class so far? How has it impacted your life and the way you argue?” The responses to this question can be roughly divided into two primary categories. The first indicates that the students have learned the structural elements of argument, while the second indicates that they have learned about many different topics.

Learning proper structure. While this category is very familiar by now, its recurrence indicates that it is a strong element in the students' awareness of argument. Many students indicated that their learning had been *primarily* structural, and that they therefore felt more confident in their argumentative abilities. For example, one student stated, “I learned the essential factors that constitute a good sound, argument. Like testing evidence, deciding if argument is inherent, picking out fallacies and so forth.” Another said simply, “[I have learned] presumption—to know the audience or opponent.”

A different student remarked on the value of her acquired skills. She states,

I have realized that there are certain strategies which will help us improve structuring an argument. By understanding these strategies, I have developed an understanding which has high intrinsic value. I hope to apply these ideas in order to reinforce my learning.

Another remarked that she had a basic understanding of the skills, but didn't yet feel comfortable in the application of those skills. She wrote,

basically I learned the different ways of arguing and the rules and what they mean. I learned to do better outlines. It hasn't changed much about the way I argue but I'm sure by the time I'm out of this class I'll be better.

Again, there was (at least) one student who was still focused on winning. She stated, “I have learned the steps in forming an argument and how to win them.”

In addition to learning the proper structure of an argument, several students emphasized their public speaking skills. For instance, one wrote, "I've learned how to present a speech in front of a large group," while another said, "I have learned many mistakes people make while delivering their speech. I've learned how to organize my speech."

Another aspect of the responses in this category is that many students demonstrate an understanding that proper structure comes from and includes adequate and thorough preparation. An examination of the issue, prior to the argument, seems critical for these students. One student simply remarked that she learned to "prepare before the argument," while another emphasized the research process when she said that she understands "the importance of having clear, concise and thought-out points.... I won't argue w/ [sic] someone about a controversial issue until I have a lot of information on it." A third student remarked that

a good argument must have lots of support to change people's minds or enforce their thoughts about whatever is being argued. This class has made me really think before I get into an argument. It makes me think whether my argument is justified or not.

She added a statement about the value of this kind of endeavor when she said, "I am also looking forward to having this new knowledge in this election year."

For one student, the process of preparation included examining "both" sides of an argument. She said,

there are logical steps of succession for each project that you undertake. I have learned what those steps are for organizing thoughts for a speech. I know that it is important to know the topic thoroughly. Before, I would go into an argument with my thoughts scattered in every direction and not knowing both sides of the topic. You cannot have an opinion if you only know one side of the subject.

This comment highlights the imperative notion of proper and thorough research.

Learning about different topics. In addition to (or instead of, as the case may be) learning about structure, two students wrote rather pointedly about the issues that they researched, or about what they learned from all of the speeches. The first wrote,

the primary impact on my life has been the time researching, reading and doing homework. Hopefully it will happen as it often does for me, that I will leave and then realize how much I have learned. And then I can annoy friends with all sorts of informational and argumentative tidbits.

And the second wrote,

I believe my most useful knowledge is the information we are receiving through the speeches. When all is done and said we will remember only the fundamentals of speech, but a great deal of the problems that plague us today will be more clear to us.

Learning to be empowered. A final, and somewhat less obvious category of responses includes two remarks about the students' overall learning experiences. The first stated, "the achievements in the course help me understand the feelings and opinions of others and it also improves my behavior in making speeches and debate with my friends. I think that it has enhanced my speaking skills overall." The second wrote,

Everything in all my other communication courses has started to gel. Things are starting to make sense. I'm really starting to see how communication is so important and effective. This class has opened my eyes to this field and realizing the impact that communication has today.

While these two responses do not constitute as clear a category as the other categories, they seem to indicate that these two students are extrapolating from their class experiences in positive ways. As an instructor, seeing this kind of "big picture" thinking is exciting. Perhaps it is a precursor to positive future experiences for these students.

Question four. The final “question” on the midterm course evaluation asked students to finish the following sentence: “Arguing is like...”. This question was intended to evoke metaphorical descriptions that would lend insight into the ways that students were ordering their experiences with argument. Unfortunately, there was perhaps not enough description for the students, and the metaphors were very scarce and not explained well. Therefore, several responses to this question were not categorized because I did not understand what the student meant by their metaphor. For example, one person wrote that argument is like, “winning a gold medal.” Unfortunately, I can only imagine what this phrase means to the student, and thus cannot properly categorize the response. Another student wrote that argument is “something people love to do, but know little about.” It should be apparent by the above examples that some of these responses did not lend themselves to categorization.

However, other responses were more straightforward. While I am still abstracting from their metaphors, there are two larger categories which emerged.

Sending a message. First, several students were focused on the sending of a message through the process of argument. One student described argument as “defending everything you know,” while another said that it is like “justifying yourself and your ideals in a clear and logical manner.” Others stated that it is like “voicing your opinion and what you believe,” or, “trying to get your point across.” One last student remarked that arguing is like “showing your side.”

While these metaphors are strikingly focused on the *message sending* aspect of communication, the next category shows argument as a process.

Argument as a process. Four students responded with metaphors which clearly emphasize the process rather than the outcome. For example, one stated

that argument is like, "baseball because every base leads to the main home plate, the argument." Another noted that argument is like, "making a quilt," while a third said that it is simply, "a learning process." The fourth student explained the process as an art form. He said that arguing is like, "pottery; a specific way to shape the vase in order to strengthen its form needs to be learned. Once created, it can be a beautiful piece of work."

Themes from the Final Course Evaluations

The final course evaluation asked the very same four questions as the midterm course evaluation. This was done so that I could compare the emergent themes between the two data sets, and as will become apparent, several of the same categories of responses emerged. A later section in this chapter will compare the themes from the data sets and the implications of the categories will be addressed in chapter five.

Question one. Again, question one on the final course evaluation was the same as it was on the midterm course evaluation. It asked, "what makes an argument memorable?" To this question, there were nine total responses and only one theme emerged.

Personal involvement. By the end of the semester, all students seemed to remember arguments in which they were personally involved, or in which they were struck by the passion (so to speak) of the other people involved. For instance, one student remarked that it was memorable because "both speakers brought personal experience to the argument. They weren't arguing about abstract concepts." Another student said, "the speakers' conviction in what she believed in, as well as the obvious research that she has done, raised her

credibility.” Yet another remembered a discussion which came up in class about the censoring of rap music lyrics. He remarked, “it was memorable because it seemed like the whole class got involved. They divided into two sides and there was [sic] plenty of questions asked.”

Other students clearly remembered those arguments in which they had personal stakes. For example, one student provided the same response as he did to this question on the midterm course evaluation. He remembered an argument with his friends over drunk driving and said, “it was memorable because I saved his life and it brought all of my friends closer and now we’re best friends.”

Another student was very involved in a topic that was discussed in class. For her the argument was memorable because she “fe[lt] very involved in the welfare system and believe[d] the system could work better and save the tax payers money which could be used towards education.” A third student had an argument with her boyfriend because he wanted her to have a baby. She stated, “the argument was memorable because we stay [sic] up all night arguing.”

Obviously, it was her personal involvement in the topic that made it so.

Finally, one student offered advice in a sense, because she was able to catch herself in an argument before it became unproductive. She said, “it is memorable because you realize that you might be butting heads with someone for the wrong reason. Ask them what they mean. Don’t be afraid to ask questions.”

Even though this category was also present on the midterm course evaluation, it seems that the students felt more of a sense of personal involvement in arguments at the end of the course. Perhaps some of them feel, as these next two students report, that they can now evaluate arguments, which, in and of itself, makes them feel more involved. One student said, “I remember

an argument between a couple that I know, arguing about how they argue. It was memorable because it helped me remember the phases of argument."

Another stated that knowing more about argument "has made me more nosy. When people are in an argument, I want to listen." Thus, all of the responses to this question by the end of the course indicate that overall, students are seeing more of themselves in the arguments that they observe.

Question two. The second question on the final course evaluation asked, "Have your feelings about argument changed over the course of the semester? If so, please describe how." Out of 12 responses, the following three categories emerged.

Toward openness and inclusivity. This category of responses indicates that students have moved toward a more open and inclusive stance in argumentative situations. One student said this rather concisely when he wrote, "I have changed my arguing [style] from a dominance metaphor to a love metaphor. Respect for others leads to a more efficient end." Another student said, "I guess that I have learned to be more sensitive to others' feelings." Yet another stated, "I have only changed to not let myself get so angry, and also to see the other guys' side of the argument." All of these responses indicate a movement toward more openness in argument. This fourth student stated that she had shared her new found skills. She wrote, "since this class, I have been able to share my knowledge with my friends and mom, to help make their argumentative process more effective and positive and to be more open minded with others' point-of-view."

Toward respect for argument as a process. In addition to the notion of becoming more open to argument, several students indicated that they had a new understanding of argument as a process. One student wrote, "I expanded

my definition of argument to include things I would have called a discussion or debate earlier. I'm not sure that the word argument doesn't contain negative confrontational emotions as used in everyday language, though." Another student said,

when I first came into this class I wasn't really sure of the definition of argument, so I viewed argument to be a negative experience and a waste of time. Now, I can appreciate arguing because I have learned tools to help me become a better communicator and arguer. I am able to pick a position and stand for it with valid reasoning.

Thus, these students have broadened their own views of argument, and have perhaps overcome some of the negative emotions usually associated with arguing through the duration of the course. One woman stated this very concisely in her answer:

It is [sic] difficult to understand at the beginning what argument is. Our initial definition was that of a fight. Later, we began to understand the definition of argument that this course presented. I began to understand, as the semester progressed, how difficult it was to thoroughly construct a good argument. This experience has raised my appreciation for the subject, and I am sure that I will use the skills in the future.

Confidence in one's skills. A final category of responses to this question has to do with gaining confidence in one's skills. One student said, "I think my feelings about argument will never change because I learned how to become a good arguer. I just have to know how to say it on my outline." Another wrote, "[I am] able to pick an argument apart and find something to argue in every topic," while another remarked, "after this course, I have longer and more detailed arguments with my friends on many topics. These topics would be issues that I'm not usually interested in." These responses indicate that the students are increasing their level of involvement in argumentative situations,

perhaps as a result of feeling more confident with their working knowledge of argumentative structure.

Question three. The third question on the final course evaluation asked, “reflect on your learning. What have you learned in this class so far? How has it impacted your life and the way you argue?” While the first category of responses to this question is very similar to the category of responses to the midterm course evaluation, the second is slightly different.

Gained confidence with skills. As was true in the midterm evaluation, many students reported gaining significant confidence with their argumentation and public speaking skills. For example, one student wrote, “I can put my finger now on parts of peoples' arguments that bothered me since I know about the fallacies. Sometimes I try to argue more systematically or analyze others' arguments or shady reasoning.” Another said, “I have learned how to specifically construct a good argument,” and another noted, “I know how to cover all my grounds to make arguments *prima facie* cases. I am able to see fallacies and question others' beliefs.”

This student summarized the essence of this category in the following statement:

I have learned a lot in this class, I've learned how to use the Toulmin model, spot fallacies, spot reasoning, give valid grounds for claims. This has impacted my life because I really stretched myself in this class. It's made me more aware of the arguments made by people and why they make them. It's made arguing more effective for me and it seems easier to me than how I perceived it before.

Other students gained confidence specifically with public speaking skills. One said,

before I started going to class, I was afraid to go up and speak in front of people. As I did each speech I felt a little more comfortable. So now, I feel

that I can go in front of people and speak, which should help for the future.

Another wrote, “basically, I learned from this class better speaking skills, preparation for a speech, and how to use my knowledge for argument....Now that this is over, I now have more confidence in public communication.”

Just as on the midterm course evaluation, a couple of students did say that they learned a lot about the different topics in class, but the rest of the responses fell into the categories above.

Learned to argue with openness. The final category of responses are about learning to argue while maintaining an open stance. One student referenced his response to question number two, when he said that his style has changed “from dominance to love.” He added, “I really think my style of discussing things has changed....I think that these metaphors should be discussed at the beginning of the semester next time — they are very effective.” Another student said, “I have learned that my opinion is important, however, I need to understand that others are just as important.” Finally, “the most valuable thing I have learned is how to analyze an argument and how to be a good arguer who uses respect for the other person. I learned a lot in this class.”

These responses point toward a much more open stance with respect to argument. These students clearly demonstrate a sense of balance between one's own and the other persons' perspective, a stance that is aligned with my purpose.

Question four. The last question on the final course evaluation asked students to finish the following sentence: “Arguing is like...” Again, while some responses were vague, out of a total of eight responses, the following two categories emerged.

Argument is co-constructed. This category of metaphors seems to acknowledge plurality and the co-constructed nature of argument. For example, one student wrote, “[argument is like] a musical composition. There are many elements that go into a musical piece that is vital to make it complete. Any missing parts and the composition is no longer a ‘prima facie’ song.” Another metaphor clearly showed argument as a “back-and-forth” process. This student wrote, “[argument is like] ping-pong. Both sides need to keep the argument moving or it’s pointless.”

Argument as love or learning. These responses came directly from our systemic techniques unit during the course. For these students, argument was like, “love—it includes loving and sharing,” or “a lover / wife / girlfriend,” or “a learning experience.” One last student added, “[it’s like] making bread. You need to be patient and respectful to get a good finished product.” All of these metaphors point directly to the principles of socially constructed and cosmopolitan argument that we learned in class.

Themes from the Final Exam

Final exam question number one. The first final exam question asked, “Describe how your view of argument has evolved over the course of the semester. How did you think about argument when you first started this class? How did you think about argument in the middle of this class, and how do you think about it now? What did you learn that inspired these changes? (be specific.)” Out of 19 responses, the following five categories emerged.

Argument as domination. Out of 19 responses, only two remarks fell into this category. Both seemed to remain focused on argument as a tool for

domination in a sense. Their emphasis was on using the tools of argument as a means of scrutinizing or convincing others. For example, one student wrote, "Before, I would argue my point...without fully developing the important stock issues. But after taking this course, I can more fully develop my argument....Another valuable tool I learned is the significance of sub-points to the stock issues because then I can better pick and pry apart someone else's argument." This student's description of the argumentative process indicates that his goal was to "out-smart" his argumentative partner.

The other student wrote, "I did not think that argument was so structured. I always thought that whoever was the loudest and most vocal was the one who got their point across. This is true to some extent, but there are better, more underhanded ways to sway people toward your claim." Again, his point is to convince the other in an underhanded way—in what Brockreide (1972) might call a "seductive" manner.

I am happy to report that these were the only two comments that fell into this category. By and large, the rest of the students did not take such a domineering approach by the end of the course. Instead, even those who emphasized structure did so in a more neutral manner.

Argument as structure. These students remained focused on the structural aspects of argument and described their experience in mechanical terms. One student wrote,

When I first started...I did not believe argument was as technical and organized as it is. During the class I began to see the different tools and steps in forming a good argument. Now I realize it takes time and organization while using these tools and steps to create a good argument.

Another wrote,

At the beginning, it sounded more like a class on debate...[then] I realized it was more individual and in-depth where you could do library research....at the end I realized that what we had been doing in our individual speeches could be applied to debate or a several person argument. It was interesting to learn the different parts of an argument.

While these two students wrote only about the structural portion of the class, a third stated that gaining an understanding of the structure helped shift his view of argument. He wrote,

Argument...at the beginning of the course, was a means of engaging in verbal combat. I imagine 'verbal fights' with friends, family and classmates. As the course progressed, I was exposed to a new kind of argument [which] consists of logically and thoroughly creating an argument. The creating process consisted of understanding that there are key ingredients (i.e. stock issues, Toulmin model) that needed to be present;... As we completed speeches, the application of these ingredients drastically changed my views. Now I understand how difficult it is to construct an effective argument.

All of these responses indicate that the students' understanding of the argument process has changed, albeit toward a structural and rather static view. This mechanistic approach suggests that the focus for these students is on their own construction of an argument, rather than on argument as a co-created process. However, this structural perspective still seems to be an improvement over the argument as domination category.

A final student wrote,

I have learned the difference between a bad argument (no reasoning whatsoever) and a good argument (...supported by firm, reliable reasoning). I have learned that every time I argue with someone, I look at the credibility of my reasons to argue and determine the whole outlook of my argument.

Argument as co-constructed. A third category of responses are those which indicate that the students approached argument as a co-construction. Some of these students still clearly emphasized the mechanical aspects of the process,

while others described it more holistically. The overriding characteristic of these responses however, is that they considered the process to be interactive. For instance, one student wrote,

When the class first started, I thought that argument was simply a heated, verbal battle between people. But as time went on I realized that it is not necessarily a battle, it's more like a verbal confrontation between two people by using reliable sources and evidence that support their arguments.

It is apparent that this student has a rather mechanistic view of the process and I find her use of the term, "verbal confrontation" interesting, but she did mention that it is a process between two people.

Other students also expressed this notion of co-construction. One wrote, "My view of argument has changed from the traditional view of 'domination' and one person being the arguer and the other the listener. I now realize now [sic] that it takes two people to carry on a successful argument." Another said,

When I first came to this class, I thought argument was a heated discussion. I thought this way because that was all I ever saw on TV especially during election years. As class went on, I began to change my thinking about argument. [Then] I thought argument was when you really believed in an idea and spoke about [it]. Now, I think argument is two people conversing and freely expressing their thoughts.

This students' comment suggests a rather profound shift towards the interactive model that I was trying to demonstrate during the systemic techniques intervention.

A final student wrote,

When the class first started I viewed argumentation in terms of the domination metaphor—everyone that I argued with had to be a heated argument....By the end of class—when we started to discuss the metaphors of argumentation I began to analyze the way I argue with people. I began to realize that all forms are appropriate at times, but that

you can have a genuine argument with someone with the love metaphor and things usually work out a lot smoother.

This student's comment sets the stage for the next category, in which students' comments about argument clearly represent shifts toward a greater degree of enjoyment with the process.

It is also important to note that several students incorporated (to various degrees) the grammar associated with the systemic techniques unit presented in class. This will become more obvious in some of the comments below.

Negative to positive. While the first category of responses summarized the views of only two students, these two were still focused on argument as a tool for domination of sorts. The next category showed several students emphasizing the mechanics of argument. The third category represented a shift toward argument as co-constructed, which then leads to this category: positive feelings about argument.

This fourth category represents the many students who reported substantial and positive shifts in their relationship to argument. Responses noted here are those of the students who shifted from a view of argument as a destructive, negative or unenjoyable experience, to a productive process. For example, one student wrote,

My view of argument has evolved through the course [from] having a stereotypical view as in, 'argument was bad and a waste of time.' Now I am more aware and knowledgeable....When I first started class I didn't appreciate the whole argument. As class went on, I was able to piece everything together and now I can see how all of the work we've done and learned has fallen into place to make a valid and constructive argument for your position.

Another student said,

When I began this course I thought of argument along the lines of the domination metaphor. From what I saw in day to day life, I assumed that argument couldn't be anything but a ruthless combat of words. Through the duration of this class I have discovered that there is a much more civil, and successful way to argue. By avoiding fallacies...arguers can remain on the top and share their ideas without needlessly sparring. Our discussion of fallacies, our analysis of argument in the media, and our experiments with circular questioning have led me to this conclusion.

Both of these students described a major shift in their conceptualizations of argument that may have been the result of learning the mechanics of argument. Even though the second still wrote about "remaining on top" of the argument (which is clearly a dominant position), she emphasized a newly discovered feeling of "success" with the process. A third student wrote,

When I first started the class I felt that argument was a bad thing that only led to more problems, but...[then] I realized that argument didn't necessarily make things any worse, in fact, it somehow helped things get better. Now I see that knowing how to argue is important in today's society...[and] listening to arguments can fill you in and give you an opinion....Before argument was disagreement with yelling, now it's a debate and civilized discussion.

In addition to the shifts in approach reported by the above students, others clearly invoked the grammars presented during the systemic techniques unit. One student said, "I've learned that arguments have different kinds of structures like dominating to win-win types. At first, I thought arguments were sides voicing opinions. [Now] I feel arguments can be a teaching/learning experience." Another student commented:

I think that "argument" has very negative connotations in our society. We're supposed to compete and win at things. I still saw this throughout the semester with comments like, "you're going to beat him with that rebuttal," etc. Being a competitive person, I find it easy to slip into these modes of thinking. I've tried throughout the semester to not think in terms of winning or losing and I think the grade structure and class structure encouraged that (you don't get rated against other students or against your advocacy

partner). I think at the end of the semester I'm aware of my unwanted repetitive argument patterns, though it's still not simple to break out of them. I learned that even though I think I'm open-minded and listening, I still have my communication blocks and blind spots.

This student's comments demonstrate the tension that arises when one begins to see the patterns of conversation that one creates. She is able to clearly describe shifts in her relationship to argument and the tensions that accompany such shifts. Overall, however, these students seem to have gained a feeling of empowerment during the semester. Their relationship to argument shifted from a negative or uncomfortable experience to a positive and productive one. They describe the learning that results from an opening up of their positions and, as in the next case, the ability to suspend an emotional response. This student wrote, "Before in arguments I used to not really listen to reason but jump down people's throats and laugh it off. I started to learn a little about controlling myself during arguments. By the end...I was being much more patient and learned how to give evidence....I [also] learned to control my anger."

Empowerment. The final category of responses to this question consists of those comments that indicated a sense of empowerment through argument. These students' comments seemed qualitatively different from the rest in their descriptions of profound personal change. In my opinion, they represent what a teacher can, most often, only wish for in student learning. One student responded,

At the beginning of class I would just sit to the side and listen. I had no opinion and would never get involved or would be talked down easily. In the middle of the semester, I was...able to listen and catch certain problems and then bring them up to the speaker. At the end...I learned a great deal of information and was able to use it. ...I got in a discussion...[and] found myself doing a little circular questioning like,

“why do you feel that way?” and so on. The types of stances and evidence helped me.

Another student replied,

In the beginning ...I would keep my opinions to myself because I thought that no one would really care how I would feel or thought [sic]. I never really had a time when I can [sic] express my feelings and opinions anywhere and throughout this course I realized that there are people out there that would listen and ask questions because they want to know. Right now I feel that I can or will express my feelings more by taking this class and watching and listening to everyone in this fun-filled class. Every topic was a learning experience for me.

Final exam question number two. The second question on the final exam asked, “Describe what kind of arguer you would like to be in the future with friends, family members and classmates. What have you learned that you will take away from this class and HOW will you use it? (Be specific.)” Out of 19 responses, the following five categories emerged.

A grammar of domination. Again, there were those arguers who still aspired to win the argument. One student stated, “I want to be able to argue so that I can totally change the other person's point of view. In a way where no one yells and gets mad.” Another student also used a grammar of domination, but tossed in some terms from the systemic techniques unit (perhaps he was being facetious). He stated, “right now I am a dominant arguer. I should be more loving so I can hear what they are advocating. However, I think that the seductive approach is best for me. That way I still listen to their claim but I can break their will with circular questioning or attack their reasoning and/or their evidence.” This student’s use of the terms, “break their will” and “attack” indicates that he is still largely focused on the process of dominating, albeit in a “seductive” manner.

A third student commented that, "I would like to be able to see both sides of an argument so I could argue my side more effectively." Someone else mentioned, "I have also learned how to be more understanding of people's opinions and how before smashing them, find out how they came across these opinions." These comments all seem to indicate an emphasis on dominating the argumentative situation. Arguing one's side more effectively, or even understanding the other before "smashing" them, demonstrates a focus on "winning."

A grammar of tradition. This small sub-set of students indicated that they aspire to use "good form" when they argue. By this, they seemed to mean traditional structure. For example, one student summoned the idea of presumption when she stated,

I think that the skills... I have learned will come in handy during daily life. By sticking to the issue and answering people's questions before they even ask them, I will be a more effective arguer. Argumentation is a format of thinking. Now that I know this format I will be much more effective in my argumentation endeavors.

Another student emphasized the need to be "reasonable." She stated, "I would definitely want to be a reasonable arguer....This class has taught me how to determine when I'm reasonable/unreasonable, kind of like right and wrong." This student's emphasis on bi-polar logic suggests that she was still focused on the traditional aspects of argumentation, and had not yet experienced a shift toward a more encompassing "love" metaphor.

Another student wrote, "From this class I learned that I have to have enough evidence to back up my argument before I start," while one last student said, "I would like to be able to use my knowledge to become a better arguer, not so much as to win or lose, but at least get my point across." Again, the emphasis on

one-way message transmission and message construction indicates a tendency toward the traditional, structural aspect of argument. Perhaps it can be described as “building an argument,” rather than “co-constructing an argument event.”

A grammar of love. A majority of students commented that they would like to be “lovers” or “learners” in their argumentative style. For instance, one student said,

I would like to model the “learner/lover” metaphor. Being this kind of arguer is an investment that will help my relationships grow in the future. The metaphor requires...having concern for the other...listening to them will greatly improve relationships. I will use these skills! I will take it upon myself to listen to others with their feelings in mind. I will co-create productive and important discussions and I will have an open mind. In short, I will be a “lover” when communicating with others.

Another student commented,

The most important thing I did learn was how to love someone after arguing because...I used to get so mad at people when we [would] argue, but now I feel different because we're supposed to respect someone and their different views.

Although it seems that this student was focused more on her feelings toward her argumentative partner *after* the conflict rather than during the process, she still acknowledged the importance of respect for different views. Another student echoed some key systemic principles when she stated, “I would like to be an arguer in the love metaphor. When you respect another person's point of view, it doesn't mean you have to adopt it. Their perspective is an honest one— it is neither right nor wrong— just like mine. I am not so rigid in my way of viewing things anymore.” Another student wrote,

I have been trying to be more of a “love” arguer. Circular questioning and reflecting has [sic] helped me be more aware of this process. For seeing

people, not as their position, and accepting that everyone has valid reasons for their position and to be open-minded to others' views.

All of these comments indicate that the students not only remembered, but had integrated to some degree the key aspects of the “lover/learner” metaphor — not that these are simply labels to apply lightly, but rather that they stand for “ways of being” in an argument which include listening, suspending one's own position and grammar, and being open to the resources of another.

A grammar of competence. The comments which comprise this category indicate that students were using measures of appropriateness in assessing which approach to argument they would take in a given situation. They seemed to understand that different situations call for different argumentative strategies. For example, one student wrote, “I would like to be a ‘lover’ with my family members and friends, but I will most likely need to be a ‘seducer’ with my children and all my students.” Another wrote,

Obviously, an arguer as lover is ideal when dealing with friends, family, etc. “Winning” an argument with someone close to you is rarely winning. Openness and flexibility are required to make any long term relationship work out. However, though the arguer as lover is the best overall mode, argument as seducer can be necessary sometimes to ferret out what the real argument is about, and argument as domination may be required in safety situations. After these occasions, though, I'd want to return to the lover mode to look for understanding and make sure there are no ill feelings. Arguing as lovers is definitely the mode that takes the most work, which is why it is so hard to stay with it. In the long term, however, I think my relationships will benefit by it.

This student clearly talked about the relational aspects of the “argument as love” metaphor, while this next student was more specific about the applicability of other forms of argument. She wrote, “I would also want to be a seduction arguer only in times of debates in class and stuff in order to get my point across by persuasion.” Another student commented, “I would like to be the kind of

arguer that would be somewhere in between seduction and love. I want to be able to find out why they feel the way they do and use that to help us both grow." These comments indicate that students saw differences between the metaphors and could blend the styles as required by the situation. However, they also seem to uphold the "argument as love" metaphor as an ideal. One of the above students also wrote, "At the beginning of the semester, I said that I want to win an argument against my girlfriend. Now it is that I want each of us to see each others' points closely and clearly."

A grammar of systemic terms. Another notable feature in the responses to this final exam question is that almost every student used some term from the systemic techniques unit of the course. Almost all of them mentioned the term "love" or "seduction" while several used the terms "circular questioning" and "reflecting," and two mentioned "URPs." For instance, one student noted, "One of the most interesting things I have learned in this class is the circular reasoning [sic] questions....Learning phrases like, 'who should agree with you' is very practical and useful in everyday situations." Another said, "I have learned several different ways to deal with different kinds of arguers and how to get out of URPs (big plus!)."

Further, many students talked about learning to listen rather than simply getting one's own point across. One student stated, "the best thing I have learned from this class is people are not their positions" (emphasis hers). Another said, "I would also like to make use of circular questioning. I have also realized that it is more effective using these methods than the traditional methods [of] argument." The use of these terms several weeks after the presentation of the systemic techniques unit indicates that at least some students

did assimilate the key aspects of that unit. Further, it reinforces the depth and clarity of their commitment to systemic principles. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Summarizing the Data for Research Question One

The following table is provided as a visual recapitulation of the categories which emerged from the various data sets used for research question one.

Data Set	Thematic Categories
About argument speech: What would you like to get out of the course?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn public speaking skills • To learn proper argument skills • To learn to win • To learn to control
Midterm course evaluation: Question one: "What makes an argument memorable?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal involvement in the argument • Issues of power • Impressions of form and structure
Midterm course evaluation: Question two: "Have your feelings about argument changed over the course of the semester?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of satisfaction with the process • A focus on traditional argumentative and presentation structure • The removal of emotion
Midterm course evaluation: Question three: "Reflect on your learning. What have you learned so far...?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning proper structure • Learning about different topics • Learning to be empowered
Midterm course evaluation: Question four: "Arguing is like..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending a message • Argument as a process

Final course evaluation: Question one: "What makes an argument memorable?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal involvement
Final course evaluation: Question two: "Have your feelings about argument changed over the course of the semester?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toward openness and inclusivity • Toward respect for argument as a process • Confidence in one's skills
Final course evaluation: Question three: "Reflect on your learning. What have you learned so far...?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gained confidence with skills • Learned to argue with openness
Final course evaluation: Question four: "Arguing is like..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argument is co-constructed • Argument as love or learning
Final Exam: Question one: "Describe how your view of argument has evolved..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argument as domination • Argument as structure • Argument as co-constructed • Negative to positive • Empowerment
Final Exam: Question two: "Describe what kind of arguer you would like to be in the future with friends, family [etc.]..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A grammar of domination • A grammar of tradition • A grammar of love • A grammar of competence • A grammar of systemic terms

Categories for Research Question One

It is probably apparent that several themes recur and overlap throughout the analysis of data for research question one. The impact of learning traditional argumentative form was important to students, as was the ability to make "good" presentations. This showed itself right from the start as students

described their goals for the course. The theme of winning and/or controlling emotions were also recurrent, cropping up in the beginning, middle and final data collection points in one way or another.

Students seemed to gain confidence in their abilities during the course and I was pleased with their ability to describe appropriate times and places for different forms of argument. Most students also described their relationship to argument as progressively more positive. While the theme of domination was present throughout, students were more apt to describe their desire to learn or “love” in argument by the end of the semester. The students showed both an assimilation of the terms used in the systemic unit of the course, and a shift toward a more co-constructed view of argument.

Overall, the recurrence of themes can be interpreted as testimony to their importance and perhaps their validity as organizing structures. I was pleased with the emergence of such categories as “empowerment” and “negative to positive,” and generally impressed with the students’ descriptions of their relationships to argument.

From a social constructionist perspective, these kinds of descriptions should have set the stage for “different” forms of interaction. The next section presents thematic categories which emerged from an analysis of “real-time” interaction—data collected from the question and answer periods following the final rounds of advocacy/refutation speeches.

Research Question Two

The second research question directs attention specifically to the themes that emerged when the students were actually engaged in argumentative interaction.

Recall that the question asks: "What grammatical themes emerged from the discourse of the students when arguing and participating in classroom discussion after the unit on systemic techniques?" In order to answer this research question, I analyzed the discourse of eight students during the question and answer period following speeches three and four (an advocacy / refutation sequence). Three grammatical themes emerged and are delineated below.

A grammar of clarification and curiosity. The overwhelming majority of questions and comments (almost 60 comments from the eight students) fell into this category. These are comments and questions in which the student was asking for clarification of information of some sort, or was curious about some adjacent topic. Both clarification and curiosity questions were seeking more information— however, those seeking clarification are clarifying information provided in the speech, while curiosity questions ask for supplementary information. For example, one student asked, "did you say that the Gain program is a lottery system?" Another stated, "I was wondering about the consequences, you mentioned something about NASA and high risk students, and I missed that part." A third student expressed curiosity by asking, "Is there any other legalized gay marriage other than in the United States in the world?" And another asked, "Do either of you know how many crimes are committed by repeat offenders?"

Some of the questions in this category sought to clarify the speakers' argumentative stance. After a speech advocating the legalization of marijuana use for medical purposes, one student said, "I know that they're researching the THC pill. Are you saying that you want marijuana cigarettes to be legalized, or the pill, or what?" Further, in response to a speech about balancing the budget, a

student asked, "You said that Medicare was one of the first things that needs to be looked at. Can you explain why?" In response to a speech advocating changes in the sex education curriculum, one student asked, "so you think that the rise in STDs and teen pregnancy is linked to the media and societal influences?" These questions all ask the speaker to clarify her or his position by providing additional information.

Some of the questions in this category look toward possible futures. One student after a speech on eliminating affirmative action asked, "I mean, without affirmative action we won't have any quotas or anything, so how will we know if there is discrimination?" The speaker replied, "if a person is found to discriminate, then he is breaking the law and would therefore have to pay whatever the punishment is. I didn't look at the consequences, but he'll be breaking the law and will have to be reprimanded." While this question asks about a possible future, it is also a request for clarification about the speakers' plan for eradicating discrimination.

This next dialogue demonstrates two students interacting about the possible implementation of a plan to censor rap music lyrics:

Audience Member (AM) [to advocate]: who do you think should be in charge of this censoring? Whether it's labeling or actually not allowing certain types of music to be published?

Advocate: I think the government should take some action because it's like the type of sticker, we're talking it's like this big [hold up two fingers]. I couldn't even see it on there when I got this....I think that the albums should be made like somebody should go through and like the government and should see what should be censored.

AM: So you think the people in the government are going to be able to say what we should listen to?

Advocate: Well, obviously profanity is wrong and it should be labeled.

While many of these questions simply indicate that the audience member missed some aspect of the speech, some also demonstrate curiosity about the implications of a plan. For example, one student stated, "I missed how you talked about how taxes were going to go up," while another asked, "Can you tell me a range, say, about how many employees an employer has to have in order for this [affirmative action plan] to work?" Still another student asked, "Do you have the credentials on that psychologist? You know, like on what kind of background he has?"

Owen's notion of forcefulness (1984) was particularly relevant as I categorized the comments in this category and the next. For example, in most cases, the comments and questions in this category were spoken in a very curious tone and were isolated questions followed by an unrelated question asked by another audience member. This will become important when comparing this category to the next category in which the comments reflect an intent to expose the speaker or overtones of "leading the witness."

A grammar of challenge. This category of responses demonstrates an intent by the audience member to challenge the speaker in some way, perhaps by exposing some "deficiency" in the speech or leading the speaker toward a specific outcome. In some cases, these comments sounded like clarification comments or questions, but the tone of the speaker (as determined by my analysis of video taped interactions and using Owen's notion of forcefulness) and the context provided clues as to the speakers' intent. For example, in this next dialogue, the audience member is seeking to expose a lack of clarity in the advocate's case.

- AM: You said that... welfare benefits should be limited to families with no more than four kids. Is that what you said? What is your reasoning behind that?
- Advocate: I will say that because now, there is no limit on the number of kids that welfare will support. I say put a limit on it because just think about it, if you have six kids, and there's money for six kids, just think about it. That's a lot of money.
- AM: So you say that if there's a family with five kids and they come over here and they need welfare, are you saying that they wouldn't qualify for welfare just because they have five kids?
- Advocate: No, I'm saying that they wouldn't qualify, just that welfare should only pay for four kids.

The audience member was apparently concerned about whether the advocate meant that the family with five children would be ineligible for welfare completely, as she stated, or whether the family would simply be granted the same amount of money as a family with four children. His rather pointed tone led me to believe that he knew the answer to this quandary already, but was interested in exposing the inconsistency for the class.

In response to a speech advocating gay marriage, the same audience member who challenged the advocate in the last example challenges the concept of alternative parenting:

- AM: You said that it was important that a child had a good environment, but wouldn't a child lacking a mother or a father in a home be missing out on getting the benefits of either the mother or father? I mean, isn't that an important part of the (inaudible) to have both a mom and dad...
- Advocate: I could see that that would be a concern...and I would hope that they [the parents] would introduce them [the child] to members of the other sex [and] that would just be a part of raising the child.
- Refuter: I found that in gay marriages, one of the partners takes the more masculine side and the other takes the more feminine side so there you have to an extent a mother and a father and also you could look at it that the kid could come out... more open to the other. He wouldn't be so closed-minded. More '90's' I guess. If

he had gay parents he could also come out hating it and be totally against gays which is pretty much normal.

Advocate: One of the common ways that gay couples have children is with a third person, that is a close friend, someone who is involved in raising the child.

AM: So how does that effect the child? I guess the child, in essence, has three parents and I mean doesn't that kind of play mind games with the child?

The forcefulness of the audience members' comments was particularly telling in this case. His sarcasm stood in marked contrast to the advocate's tone of sincerity and gave away his own position on the topic.

As mentioned above, many comments were categorized here due to the forcefulness of the question in context. Viewing videotapes (rather than listening to audio alone) allowed me to watch nonverbal elements in addition to assessing the questioner's tonal quality. For example, one speaker asked, "You talked about health care in Great Britain and Canada. Where's your support for that?" While the comment sounds purely clarification oriented, the speaker's tone was an indication of the intent to expose. Another audience member looked for holes in the speaker's choice of sources during a speech about changing the drunk driving laws. She asked,

Why did you choose someone like that [a jail guard at the Department of Corrections] over one of the sheriffs? Because people in the Department of Corrections, they don't pull you over, they don't arrest you, they only take charge of the jails. Why didn't you go to a police officer to get his...point of view?

Another student also provided information intended to contradict a speaker's argument. In response to the advocate's comment that marijuana was harmless, this audience member said, "Obviously, there must be some harmful effect of marijuana or they wouldn't ban it. And it's banned. It's an illegal drug."

Another student expressed her frustration with the refuter's case and apparent lack of preparation when she said,

I'm just wondering, I just don't understand your refutation... I get what [the advocate] is saying about candidates being responsible for their positions and taking mudslinging out of campaigns, but I don't get how making voting more fun is really refuting her position. How did you see that tie in?

The refuter responded,

Because I didn't have her outline and so I didn't know what I was supposed to be doing. So if you don't give me your outline, how am I supposed to know what to do? So I'm just going on my opinion of what she's trying to say.

Another clue that a comment belonged in this category was a sense of repetitiveness in the form of the interaction. This next dialogue demonstrates how an audience member asks three successive questions which elaborate her own position. The advocate in this next example supports harsher penalties (including charges of manslaughter) for people who are HIV positive and engage in unsafe sex with uninformed partners.

AM: How do you intend to overcome the right to privacy?

Advocate: Just basically that the public health is more valued in our culture than individual rights and public safety becomes number one...

AM: But it's a constitutional right we have to privacy.

Advocate: But it's also in the constitution that the health and safety of the nation overrides an individual's rights.... there is a small clause in one of the amendments that says that the safety of the public overrides the individual's rights.

AM: But it's one thing to say that you should enforce this but the only way that it's going to come out is— I mean the only way that you can quarantine a person is if they get caught doing it.

In all three of the audience member's statements, she pushes for her position that the advocate's plan does not account for the right to privacy. It is this recurrence of theme that lends itself to this category.

Finally, this category also includes responses that sound like leading questions. These are the comments and questions in which the audience member already seems to know the answer, but asks the question or makes the comment anyway. For example, in response to a refuter's remark that the public does not need to hear graphic descriptions of violence and sex, one audience member said, "you said that rap music is based on life stories about drugs and society—how is society supposed to get better without knowing the details?" This same student asked another speaker, "Affirmative action was instated because there was obvious discrimination against women and African Americans by white males. So, if affirmative action was ended, what makes you think that it would not happen again?"

Another student asked a speaker about her plan to change the existing sex education curriculum. He said, "Don't you think that the teaching of sex education in this much detail would actually promote to kids that it is acceptable? I mean, you can do it, as long as you do it right? Doesn't that go a long way apart from promoting abstinence?" This same student asked a different speaker who had stated that he listened to rap music and turned out fine, "So you think that just because you turned out good that everybody else would too?"

Overall, it was the intensity and adversarial nature of the comments, marked by forcefulness and/or recurrence, that contributed to my decision to categorize them into this group. Interestingly, all of the comments in this category were supplied by only four of the eight students in the sample. Apparently, these students were comfortable playing a more adversarial role than the rest. The

comments in this category were emphasized such that I almost expected to hear them followed with, "No further questions, your honor."

A grammar of personal experience. Comments and questions in this category are those which either request a personal stance on the part of the speaker, or offer personal information. For example, one audience member asked, "So how do you guys feel about all the money that's going to foreign aid that doesn't go to NASA or welfare or other social issues?" Another student asked for a personal opinion when she said, "Do you think that the 3-strikes law and the way that it forces judges to set certain sentences, do you think that it shows a lack of trust in judges?" Because this comment was an isolated comment, not related to the topic before or after, I assumed that it was a question of pure curiosity in the speaker's personal position.

Similarly, another audience member asked,

I was wondering for you, how would you feel to say to the parents out there who don't supervise their kids the entire time, their kid in a record store going home with a record like this unaware that the CD that their 13 or 14 year old has bought contains lyrics like this [profane and violent]. What would you say to that parent?

Although this is a somewhat leading question, the fact that she asks for a personal response classified the comment in this category.

This next example demonstrates how two audience members contribute to this sharing of personal experience by playing off each other's questions.

- AM1: Do either of you believe that gays or lesbians are born that way or are they made throughout their life?
Refuter: Are you asking personally or for the argumentation speech?
AM1: Personally
Refuter: Personally I think they're born with it.
Advocate: I also think it's biological.
AM2: Do you think that there's a lot of pressure on the kids if they have homosexual parents?

Advocate: I think there's a lot of pressure on them especially if they have a single parent or an unhappy home . . .

AM2: And what if they adopt the kid?

Advocate: Yea if the homosexual adopts the kid or have in vitro or something they do have pressures that are different than other children -- I think that the pressures can be offset by a good environment that is much more in the line of the child's happiness.

This next dialogue, again with two audience members, is another example of a grammar of personal experience.

AM1: Do either of you feel that rappers bring their lifestyle into the lyrics in their music? And if so, then aren't they glorifying their type of lifestyle of killing and selling drugs? Influencing not just children and stuff -- they're saying that they have a lot of money because of their lifestyle and aren't they glorifying this type of lifestyle? So isn't that like bad then?

Refuter: That's not bad, that's just their way of life.

AM2: This is kind of a general question for both of you. Do you think that this album "Cop Killers" has caused some kind of, almost like lost respect for others? Do you think that there's less respect for others around because of what this music is promoting?

Refuter: I don't think so, I believe that people have disrespect toward one another because of the way they were brought up -- because of what their parents believed.

Similarly, this next dialogue occurred between two students regarding the discontinuance of standardized testing for entrance into graduate school:

AM: When you were talking about the predictive validity of the graduate school entrance test, these tests were comparing people's scores on the test with their graduate GPA. That's what success is?

Advocate: Yeah.

AM: Do you think that that's a valid measure of success?

Advocate: No. I think there are all kinds of success in graduate school.

All of the comments in this category include a personal aspect, an opening, if you will, to discussions of personal involvement in the situation. On several occasions, audience members and speakers offered unsolicited personal

experience. For example, one woman offered her personal experience with the welfare system in this next dialogue:

Refuter: I'd also like to say that the \$609 figure is wrong. As of June of this year, a mother and child on welfare get only \$479 in Santa Clara County. That doesn't include food stamps. It just got cut 2.3% as of June 1st.

Advocate: I got my information because I went over to the welfare building and they looked it up on the computer and they told me this.

Refuter: They're wrong. I am a welfare mom and I have one son, and that's what I'm going to get as of June 1st. And I never got \$609.

This same woman who offered the information that she is a welfare mom later said, "the average family that's on welfare is like 2.2 kids. The thing you see on TV with the women having five or six kids, that's not the average. Now, I have one child, and I'm not having any more children, so when they start talking about families that have nine or eight children, it's not the average overall."

Another audience member responded with a personal position on the topic of rap music lyrics. He requested the floor, so to speak, by answering a question directed to one of the speakers. He said, "Can I respond to that? I'm just saying that a kid, no matter what age, will get out of music what they [sic] bring into it. As far as somebody, and how he is influenced by music lyrics has a lot to do with parenting and where they're from. It's more from inside than from outside...."

This final dialogue demonstrates the length to which one student provided personal information about marijuana use.

AM1: Marijuana is addicting, and I know that from first hand experience. I was addicted to it for 12 years and I know that quitting was one of the hardest things I ever had to do in my life, so I didn't go on experiencing other drugs like cocaine or crack, but I could not stop smoking pot and it was a physical thing. And I've had a lot of stoner friends who couldn't quit either.

Advocate: Well, I'm sure it's a psychological thing too. Just in your mind, not in your body, though.

- AM1: I compare it a lot to alcohol. I mean, it's not as severe. I would rather have the person next to me on the freeway smoking a joint instead of drinking a six-pack, but the psychological process of getting off it is a 12 step program just like AA.
- Advocate: I guess it just depends on your will.
- AM1: No, it has nothing to do with will. The will was there. I really wanted to quit, but I couldn't.
- Advocate: Well from everything I've read, it's not addictive at all. It's just a mind thing because it really isn't addictive in your body.
- AM1: Well I remember evidence that THC releases a chemical in your brain, and when you don't have the THC releasing that chemical in your brain, that is a part of the physicalness [sic] that you feel, and I was told that from a psychiatrist who had gotten off of it and was addicted to it for 15 years. I saw medical evidence... because I thought it was all in my head too, but I saw evidence that it was a real thing. I don't recommend smoking it for any long period of time, though.
- AM2: [to AM1] Just even occasionally?
- AM1: No, not even occasionally. I mean, if you can do it occasionally and you can put it down and walk away from it, that's one thing, but when you do it every Friday or Saturday night and that turns into, "well, I worked hard today and I'm going to smoke when I get home."

From the discourse of the eight students selected for this research question, these three primary themes emerged: a grammar of clarification/curiosity, a grammar of challenge, and a grammar of personal experience. As these categories demonstrate, the students seemed to have few options (perhaps due to time constraints) for in-depth interaction with the advocate and refuter. In the next chapter I will provide reflection about the emergent themes of both research questions, and I will interpret these themes with respect to the forms of communication delineated earlier in this work.

CHAPTER V

Interpretations, Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Overview

In this chapter I will interpret the categories which emerged in chapter four with respect to the two research questions. The grammars of practice in which students engaged have implications for the forms of communication created, and thus for social constructionism as a metatheory. These will be discussed first. Specifically, section one (interpretations and implications) will examine the emergent grammars in terms of the forms of communication that students created given their propensity to risk resources, acknowledge plurality and treat each other as non-natives. Aspects of Pearce's (1989) forms of communication (as discussed in chapter one) will be used as a framework to examine the students' grammars of practice.

The next section in this chapter, examines the impact of this study as a whole from my position as a practical theorist. Cronen's (1995) five guidelines for practical theory are used to organize my reflections on the process and product. Suggestions for future research emerge from some of the limitations acknowledged in this section, as well as from some creative thinking about how to approach the notion of cooperative argument from a pedagogical perspective.

Interpretations and Implications

It is important to recapitulate some of the key aspects of Pearce's (1989) forms of communication. Recall that Pearce's four forms are ethnocentric, monocultural, modernistic and cosmopolitan. Each of these forms is created as

interlocutors risk resources to different degrees, treat each other like natives or non-natives, and acknowledge plurality and mystery. The ways that conversants merge these elements leads to coordination and coherence (or lack thereof) between them. The grammars that emerged in the analysis of the students' discourse *in* and *about* argument will shed some light on what forms of communication the students were engaging in.

How Do Students Achieve Coordination?

Remember that conversants coordinate to the degree that their actions merge with the actions of others based on similar systems of *rules*— the process of which (re)creates the rules of interaction that guide them. These rules constitute shared meaning and are, of course, contextually based. This (re)creation of rules leads to *practices* (or grammars) associated with the context. Looking at the discourse of the students, it is most useful to assess their coordination by looking at their practices— the way they *do* argument.

Recall that there were three primary categories of responses to the second research question which direct attention to discourse in action. The first of these categories is a grammar of clarification and curiosity, and the second is a grammar of challenge. I group these two because I see them as different points on the same continuum of clarification and curiosity— the grammars of challenge being slightly more aggressive forms of clarification or curiosity. The responses in these categories indicate that students seemed to share the rule that questions which probe for more information, directly or tangentially related to the subject matter of the speech, were fair game. The overwhelming majority of responses fell into this category. Thus, students would almost automatically

begin asking questions which clarified the data or the speaker's experience with the topic. My interpretation of this is that students share a common curiosity, and that there was some degree of expectation built into the context. In fact, I was not surprised by these categories given my emphasis during most of the semester on the credibility of sources and strength of evidence to support claims. I expected students to build their speeches carefully and with attention to details, and these expectations probably had a lot to do with the emergence of these grammars. While I was slightly surprised by the aggressive tone in some questions of challenge, the rules were indeed set forth during most of the semester.

The remaining category of responses to research question two was a grammar of personal experience. Here, students seemed to follow the rule that it was safe to share personal facts or thoughts. These moves to disclose were less frequent than responses of clarification, curiosity or challenge, but certainly emerged and may indicate that students were following a rule of confidentiality and/or trust.

Overall, the students did seem to coordinate by virtue of following similar rules. There were only a few random responses outside of these primary three categories, which suggests that these students had well developed expectations of what kinds of questions were acceptable during class. As will be discussed in a later section of this chapter, future researchers could focus on the shared meanings the students themselves might have reported if asked. Follow-up interviews with students after an intervention such as this would be helpful for exploring how the students themselves would describe the rules of argument.

How Do Students Achieve Coherence?

As I described in chapter one, coherence involves sharing resources or stories which allow us to mesh our meanings. Coherence can be seen when conversants follow similar rule sets and share resources, thus creating shared meaning. As was demonstrated above, the students in my class did seem to follow similar rule sets for the most part—strong categories of grammar emerged while students engaged in argument. But students also shared grammar as they wrote and spoke *about* argument, as was seen in the responses to research question one. Here, I will specifically examine the resources that students called upon to make sense of this process called argument.

Students were asked similar questions at various points throughout the semester. These questions included, “what makes an argument memorable?” “have your feelings about argument changed over the course of the semester?” “what have you learned so far?” and “arguing is like....” These questions elicited a variety of responses from which emerged some rather repetitive categories. For example, students apparently felt that traditional argumentative structure was very important. The appearance of this traditional structure was one of the things that made arguments memorable for them, and also one of the things that they focused on learning throughout the semester. Students reported feelings of increasing mastery over the skills necessary to prepare and present arguments which followed this traditional pattern. While the ability to understand and play by these “rules” for traditional structure allows coordination, to the degree that students share the ability to use traditional structure as a common frame of reference for what makes “good” argument, they achieve coherence.

Similarly, students learned to share notions of what constitutes cooperative argument. The emergence of categories like “argument as love” or “argument as learning” not only demonstrate that students have shared vocabulary for cooperative argument (which allows coordination based on the terms), but also that they might actually share resources for how to approach argument—the basis of coherence. Students also shared grammars of domination and grammars which emphasized structure at the end of the course, pointing to the notion that they share these conceptualizations of argument as well. Perhaps it was these resources that allowed students to achieve coherence as they asked each other questions of clarification and curiosity, and as they challenged each other. To the degree they understand that the “rules” involve striving for traditional structure, they will share interpretations of challenges and curiosities as ways to adhere to the agreed-upon rules. Thus, coherence will emerge through the practice of asking the questions that bring about traditional argumentative structure.

In contrast, resources like “grammars of love,” and “grammars of co-construction,” may be the precursors to practices like the sharing of personal experience. While I cannot know the links between these resources and practices based on the data I gathered, it was certainly my hope that students would engage in practices based on shared resources of openness and curiosity. It is perhaps more likely that they shared resources of competence which would state that there is a time and a place for different forms of argument, and the classroom is a place for traditional structure, rather than open curiosity.

While it was my hope that there would be stronger categories of responses to the question designed to elicit metaphors about argument, no such thing emerged. The categories that did arise were rather superficial, probably due to

the way that I posed the question to students. However, at the midterm course evaluation data collection point, there was evidence that at least some students were seeing argument as a process—referencing baseball and the making of a quilt. At the final course evaluation data collection point there was evidence that some students were seeing argument as a co-constructed process (i.e. a musical composition). As resources, these metaphors (and the metaphors of love and learning that emerged at the end of the course) are fantastic openings for dialogic or cosmopolitan coherence in argumentative situations. Overall, the students did seem to achieve coherence, although it appears that this occurred mostly because they were able to coordinate from a basis of resources that privilege traditional argumentative structure rather than dialogic argument.

How Do Students Acknowledge Mystery?

To acknowledge mystery would be to express an appreciation for the unfinished nature of any interaction and/or to suspend belief in one's own resources. This might show itself in the form of questions that indicate a suspension of belief in one's own resources, or (in mild form) questions seeking more information. There is then, to a small degree, an indication of mystery in the responses of some students. In the responses to research question one, some students reported that they desired to take an open or "learning stance" in argument, while others clearly said that "argument was co-created." These responses may be inroads to an acknowledgment of mystery. If students are willing to be open to the other and to the idea that the future will unfold as the participants co-create the argument, they may be willing to suspend their own resources for a time.

However, as students actually *engaged in* argument, they did not strongly demonstrate a risking of resources. Even where students offered personal stories and experiences, they did so as evidence to support their own positions on topics. There was no notable evidence that students were willing to suspend their own beliefs. While the expression of personal information may have been an invitation on some level for others to reciprocate, no exchanges of this sort occurred. This does not mean that students did not grant legitimacy to resources that challenged their own— it simply means that they did not express themselves that way in the context of the classroom.

Seeking Dialogue

So, what “forms of life” did students create with their resources and practices in my argumentation course? My purpose in the sections above was to delineate the resources that students were using and the degree to which they achieved coherence. This was a means to uncover the form of communication in which they were engaged. While it was my hope that they would actually engage in dialogue (or cosmopolitan communication) during the final speech rounds, it appears instead that they coordinated their actions in more monocultural or even ethnocentric patterns.

The following table is provided as a summary of the four forms of communication. It shows how resources of others are treated, and how mystery is acknowledged.

Form	Resources	Native/Nonnative	Mystery
Monocultural	Not at risk.	Everyone is native. We are all alike.	Mystery happens in ordinary life.
Ethnocentric	Not at risk.	"We" are natives. "Others" are non-natives and inferior.	Mystery is "outside" of everyday life.
Modernistic	Not at risk by virtue of always being at risk.	Everyone is non-native, and therefore native.	Mystery is to be explained.
Cosmopolitan/ Dialogue	Most at risk. Those which acknowledge that we are in the constant process of co-constructing our futures are not at risk.	Treat others as non-natives in that we have different resources that are worthy of curiosity. Treat others as natives in that we all have resources that are made real through our interactions.	There is always more than what we see and make real. The world is unfinished.

Summary of forms of communication

Based on the chart above and on the previous sections in this chapter, it seems clear that students engaged mostly in ethnocentric and modernistic communication. Each of the four forms will be treated in turn.

Showing monoculturalism. As was explained above, while there is some indication in the students' grammar that they might be willing to risk resources, they actually engaged in very little of this practice. However, the simple fact that they asked questions removes the possibility that they were engaged in monocultural communication. Monocultural communication is a specialized form of interaction in which resources are not questioned.

In addition, although the students show a high degree of coordination based on shared rules for how to *do* argument and in their patterned dances of question

and answer, they do not achieve the degree of coherence necessary for monocultural communication. As I will demonstrate in the next sections, their discourse is actually more ethnocentric and modernistic.

Showing ethnocentrism. Because the students did not demonstrate much *actual* risking of resources, they can already be categorized as creating ethnocentric communication to some degree. In addition, some of the questions that they asked of each other were asked in a tone of challenge. I referred to this earlier as the “cross-examination” mode. This category emerged as such, particularly because of the apparent desire on the part of the speaker to expose some weakness or inconsistency in the argument of the other. This mode of interaction is clearly ethnocentric. It holds at its core an assumption that the speaker is already wrong and the audience member's job is to show them the “correct” way. This is a key element in ethnocentrism. Further, this mode of interaction assumes that there *is* only one right answer, and that the speaker has missed it. This is a far cry from an acknowledgment of mystery. In a different mode, the speaker with an inconsistency would be questioned with sincerity and openness to a world of possibilities.

Modernism. The students also engaged in modernistic communication. Recall that in this form, students would demonstrate high degrees of risking resources, simply for the sake of doing so, and without much actual risking. Questions and curiosity represent the search for Truth, and as such, also represent a collective resource. Further, modernism is the language of science—the language of proofs and evidence and causal claims. Modernism was created in the students' discourse when they challenged one another and demonstrated the hunt for evidence, causality, sound reasoning, and fallacies. Many of their

questions to one another indicated a search for the “real truth.” In this way, the students were natives sharing rules of interaction and coordinating seamlessly. Even an appreciation for plurality was not widely demonstrated in the students’ discourse. Issues were either treated superficially (as in the case of clarification and some curiosity questions) or positions challenged. Even the offering of personal experience can be seen as evidence to support a claim rather than a spontaneous sharing of stories. When viewed from this lens, all of these examples support the idea that these students were engaged in creating a modernistic world.

Hints at cosmopolitan or dialogic communication. What would it look like if students were to create cosmopolitan communication or engage in dialogue? They would have risked resources and demonstrated curiosity. They may have played with “what-ifs” and asked questions of personal experience. In this form of interaction, I would have expected to see demonstrations of circular questions and reflections of one another’s arguments and positions.

While these patterns were not glaringly apparent, they may have been hidden behind the scenes. For example, based on the grammars that emerged for research question one, I have no doubt these students could and would have engaged in dialogic argument if they felt that the context was conducive. Many expressed grammars which were aligned with dialogic principles such as “argument as co-constructed,” and “argument as love or learning.” Some even employed the grammars of our unit on systemic techniques in the category, “a grammar of systemic terms.” Further, a grammar of empowerment emerged. Here, students reported substantial personal change as a result of the class. Some of these comments clearly demonstrated a risking of resources— a willingness to

expose oneself by speaking one's mind. This is inherently risky activity for someone who generally "sits-out."

In addition, the category of "questions of clarification and curiosity" that emerged in response to research question two can be interpreted as an entrée into the patterns demonstrated by the reflecting team. Although the grammars were not really structurally similar to the grammars used by the reflecting team, this discourse of curiosity may pave the way for students to engage in more probing questions outside of the classroom.

On the contrary, when engaged *in* argument, as discussed above, students did not demonstrate grammars of practice that were in alignment with the tenets of cosmopolitan communication. Instead, the resources of traditional argumentation were more apparent. Going back to their grammar of competence, my best explanation for this (without additional data) is that they may have felt the argumentation course was not a place to engage in dialogue. These students knew quite well that they were expected to provide hard facts and data and to have flawless reasoning. Further, many expressed a desire to learn traditional structure and form. I assume that these factors were strong contributors to the dichotomy. They also may not have had enough practice to refine their ability to engage in dialogic argument. However, all in all I believe that they coordinated and achieved coherence quite well. While there was no conversation after a speech that simulated an after dinner conversation, the students were certainly civil to one another and demonstrated skillful turn-taking. Perhaps this is an inroad to cosmopolitan communication.

Did it work?

Bateson has been known to say that the difference that makes a difference is a little difference. Perhaps in this case the difference was simply too great. Perhaps the distance between the traditional grammars of competition associated with argument and the systemic grammars of cosmopolitan communication was too vast. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest that the "argument as war" metaphor is pervasive in our culture. They ask readers to "imagine a culture where arguments are not viewed in terms of war, where no one wins or loses, where there is no sense of attacking or defending, gaining or losing ground. Imagine a culture where argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way" (pp. 4 - 5). They go on to say that "In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently. But *we* would probably not view them as arguing at all: they would simply be doing something different. It would seem strange even to call what they were doing, 'arguing'" (p. 5). This reflects the essence of what may have been too great a difference in my classroom. Students clearly expressed a desire at the beginning of class to learn how to "win" an argument and they might not have felt like they got their money's worth without some good, old-fashioned debate. With the overwhelming presence of "war-like" metaphors for argument in our culture, and the "other" 15 weeks of instruction in basic argumentative principles and structure, perhaps this 2 week intervention was too much of a difference (or too little of an intervention) to make a difference.

On the other hand, as noted above, the systemic techniques demonstrated in my classroom “work” to the degree that they involve people in new forms of communication with respect to controversial issues. While I wouldn't argue that there is *substantial* evidence that students adopted systemic forms of argument in practice, I am hopeful (based on the responses to research question one) that this experience set the stage for these students to be more open in the future to different resources and modes of engaging in argument. However, there is still much to be learned from this experience. In the next section I turn to an examination of my learnings as a practical theorist.

Learnings as a Practical Theorist

In this section, I will assess the relative success of my endeavor—specifically, the ways that I can improve on this kind of intervention in the future, and what seemed to work about the intervention. I have used Cronen's (1995) five features of practical theory as a guiding framework for this section.

Feature One

Recall the first of Cronen's features is that “practical theory is concerned with the way that embodied persons in a real world act together to create patterns of practice that constitute their forms of life” (p. 231). To this I reply that my aim was true, but that I missed the bulls-eye. Due to my interest in improving the quality of public communication, I was clearly concerned with the way that “embodied persons in a real world act together to create patterns of practice.” What I missed was suitable data collection methods that simulated more “real world” interaction.

For example, rather than speeches about argument, I could have allowed more time for students to engage in informal arguments, and/or conducted interviews or focus groups with students about their approaches to argument. I could have asked them to discuss a memorable argument and what made it memorable, and then probed for additional information about the metaphors that they use to inform their argumentative practices. Lindlof (1995) notes that focus groups approximate naturalistic conversation. This form of data collection would have supplied richer data that would more closely resemble conversational discourse, and would have provided the opportunity for people on opposing sides of an issue to interact in a less pressured environment. In addition, it would have been a good idea to begin the course with a discussion of the role that communication plays in shaping public life. This would have shifted the focus for the course toward practices which constitute more cosmopolitan forms of public life in general, and thus would have been more synchronous with this goal of practical theory.

Feature Two

Second, Cronen states that, "a practical theory provides an evolving grammar for a family of discursive and conversational practices. The grammar of practice should be internally consistent and defensible in light of data" (p. 231). Again, I admit that I missed the mark. My grammar must evolve. As the instructor, I utilized incompatible forms of grammar during the course which, when uncontextualized, certainly made it more difficult for students to engage in cosmopolitan communication. In the beginning of the course, I allowed students to use confrontational forms of argument and even encouraged an oppositional

metaphor from the beginning through my introduction of the terms, “advocate” and “opponent.” (I even chose a text entitled Advocacy and Opposition.) I then proceeded to introduce systemic principles, circular questioning and reflecting three-quarters of the way through the course, while students were simultaneously preparing for their advocacy and refutation speeches. Allowing (or even promoting) this duality must have made it difficult for students to pick up cosmopolitan grammatical forms. While I do not believe that I ever supported “war-like” metaphors or argumentative forms, attention to subtleties like these would have improved the overall course and research designs.

There are several ways that this can be (and has) changed. My theoretical framework was somewhat inconsistent, which resulted in a dualistic grammar. I preached Toulmin's model and flawless reasoning patterns—even encouraged students to pay meticulous attention to the quality of their peers' supporting materials, and then requested that students ask questions about personal involvement and hypothetical futures. I wanted students to engage in cosmopolitan communication while encouraging ethnocentric communication to some degree. As mentioned, I should have discussed different forms of communication from the start and what constitutes those different forms. I also could have discussed the Brockreide (1972) article in the *beginning* of the course, since students seemed to respond very positively to the notion of arguers as lovers or learners. This kind of a framework would have set the stage for a more broader grammar of practice. Further, I could have engaged students in more discussion about the compatibility (or lack thereof) of these different forms of communication and their impact on relationships and public life in general.

Setting the stage. As a remedy to this irony, I now begin each new course I teach with a discussion of tenets I adopted from Foss and Foss's (1994) text, Inviting Transformation. These four tenets are *safety*, *value*, *freedom* and *openness*, and they serve as a guide for students and me, and set the stage for a more cooperative environment in the classroom as a whole.

I discuss the notion of *safety* as being free from harsh criticism and judgment. This concept is intertwined with value in that it accentuates the rights of the students to *be* valued. When a student is safe, they can have their opinions, perspectives, talents and frustrations, and we work together as a class to learn together and help each other. Foss and Foss (1994) state that

your communication contributes to a feeling of safety when you let audience members know that the ideas and feelings they share with you will be received with respect and care. You also help create a safe environment when you do not hurt, degrade or belittle your audience members or their beliefs. (p. 5)

I describe *value* as the notion that all students bring invaluable experience to the classroom, and that our goal for the course is to draw upon that experience. We discuss the importance of seeking understanding of other class members, and valuing each person's unique perspective, abilities and challenges. I also utilize Foss and Foss's language that "valuing them [audience members] means more than recognizing their right to participate in conversation: it involves encouraging their participation—inviting them to share perspectives with you and listening carefully when they do" (p. 5).

I discuss *freedom* as the opportunity for each person in class to express their opinions and beliefs. I encourage speakers to select topics that are meaningful to them and then to present those topics in a respectful manner. Audience

members are, of course, free to challenge the speaker, but I encourage them to keep the notions of value and safety in mind when they do so.

Finally, *openness* is discussed as a “genuine curiosity about and deliberate seeking out of perspectives different from your own or from the standard view” (p. 6). This is aligned with the goals of reflecting, and encourages an appreciation for plurality and a risking of one’s resources. Therefore, I now routinely “set the stage” for more cosmopolitan forms of interaction from the very beginning of the course which may be a key to helping students incorporate a wider variety of grammars. Overall, the introduction of these tenets serves the purpose of clarifying expectations for classroom interaction in advance, and emphasizing cooperation.

It is important for me to note here that I firmly believe that proper argumentative structure and cosmopolitan communication are not incommensurate. I believe that students can easily learn traditional advocacy models, sound reasoning practices and how to critically assess evidence, *and*, how to engage in cosmopolitan communication via circular questioning, reflecting and a variety of other skills. I am *not* advocating that students learn only the grammars of circular questioning and reflecting in order to improve the state of public discourse. I am simply suggesting that attention to the forms of communication in which students engage, and how those forms shape public life should serve as the primary guiding framework. Traditional argumentative structure is very valuable for critical thinking and should not be abandoned, but it may be more powerful when discussed in the context of systemic principles.

Feature Three

Cronen's third tenet of practical theory is that, "these practices constitute a family of methods for the study of situated social action wherein professionals *join with* [emphasis mine] participants and clients. As such, practical theory respects the centrality of the grammatical abilities of persons in conjoint action" (p. 231). This guideline points me in the direction of several necessary structural changes in my course that would allow for more *conversing*—more time to *join with* the students in order to create systemic change. Recall that Pearce (1994b) states that critical change takes place as a result of merely interacting with the system in a new way. Thus, more interaction (and less lecturing) would have allowed more time for conjoint action. Granted, there is always limited time—and I am constrained by the necessity of fulfilling the obligations of the course as directed by the university, and trying to provide students with the information that they will need for future courses. However, there are several ways that I could have structured the course in order to encourage more interaction.

Working together. First, I could have employed a more collaborative learning approach—one in which students had greater opportunity to work together and to engage in conversation about new forms of discourse. Bruffee (1993) discusses the importance of engaging students in conversations designed to introduce them to what he terms, "nonstandard" discourse—discourse which pushes the boundaries of one's understanding⁹ (pp. 123 - 125). It is through engaging in this kind of discourse that students become acculturated into new knowledge communities which are defined by shared discursive practices. In this case, students needed more exposure to cosmopolitan communication practices and could have benefited greatly from engaging in conversation about

the relative merits of various forms of communication overall. Bruffee (1993) stresses that learning actually occurs *through* the process of engaging in conversation about new ideas and practices, rather than as the *result* of those conversations. Regarding his own acculturation into the world of collaborative learning he states, “although we learned a lot from what we read, we learned a lot more from what we said to one another about what we read. Each of us began to change, and we discovered that the most powerful force changing us was our influence on one another” (p. 20). Thus, the process of interaction and interdependence— sharing resources, if you will, became the source of acculturation into a new knowledge community. This kind of collaborative learning approach is also more internally consistent with my theoretical stance as a social constructionist. It grants legitimacy to the resources that students bring to the learning environment (acknowledging plurality), encourages all of us to risk our resources, and allows us to co-evolve in our abilities and ideas.

A collaborative approach is also believed to set the stage for reducing conflict in general because it encourages cooperation amongst students. Through interaction students develop better understandings and acceptance of their differences—one of the key steps in comprehensive conflict management curricula. (See specifically, Sadalla, Holmberg & Halligan, 1990.)

Skill building. A second structural change I would like to make emerges via a systematic approach to skill building. I now believe that my expectation for students was unrealistic given my teaching methods. Encouraging students to engage in cosmopolitan communication is a skill, and a taking a more systematic approach to skill building may have been beneficial. In the future, I would follow six steps. First, students need motivation to learn a new skill. This was provided

through lecture about the metaphors which guide argument. I could have improved upon this stage of the process by involving students in discussion about their own motivations for improving their arguments. The second step in skill building is to introduce the general principles guiding successful performance. Again, this step was addressed via lecture and demonstration in both circular questioning and reflecting. The third step in this model is that students should be able to differentiate between satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance. This was addressed when students were given a chance to try out their own circular questions and reflections after the demonstration. However, students could have been exposed to more models of “good” and “not as good” circular questions and reflections so that they could better learn to differentiate between them.

The fourth step requires that students gain the ability to produce the parts of the skill in isolation. Again, the demonstration was divided into two parts with circular questioning covered during the first half, and reflecting covered during the last. Each student was asked to speak during at least one of the two parts, which means that very few students had an opportunity to try out both skills. Having more time for each of the demonstrations would have been the best remedy. The fifth and sixth steps in the skill building process are where the most dramatic improvements should have been made. The fifth step gives students the opportunity to perform the skill, while the sixth is that they should be able to transfer the skill into a realistic situation. There simply was not enough time for step number five, although it certainly would have improved their later performance. As far as step number six is concerned, we discussed the “hows” of applying these skills in real life argument on the class day following the

demonstrations, but students did not have an opportunity to actually perform the skill with supervision other than during the unit on systemic techniques. Students simply may have needed more time to practice and integrate these new skills in order to perform them in argument. In the future, giving the students more time is the most important change I would make, but this quick analysis also points to various other assignments which may have been useful additions to the course.

Additional assignments. For example, perhaps students could have worked in pairs to find issues that they felt strongly about, and then worked together to propose solutions to those problems. This practice would have given them more “hands-on” time for skill integration. Another idea is that students could have worked with other people immersed in argument as a “mediator” of sorts. They could have tape-recorded, transcribed and analyzed their own questions and reflections and then proposed ways to improve their own performance. This would have given them more motivation to understand and integrate the new skills; a better understanding of the general principles behind the skills (i.e. that these skills can be used to open up new forms of interaction in real-life conversation); more practice in performing the skills fluidly; and direct experience with transferring the skills into a realistic situation. A follow-up class discussion could have focused on what worked for the students as mediators, and their experiences with performing these kinds of skills during a real-time argument.

I have since integrated into my public speaking course another assignment which I believe would be very helpful in overcoming the limitations of this study. This assignment has the work of the National Issues Forum at its roots,

and requires students to facilitate a course discussion on a controversial topic. Students work in teams, select an *Issue Booklet* from a series, and prepare a one hour facilitation on the subject. Each student presents a “choice” by delineating the key facts and/or stances that inform that choice. They then engage audience members in a discussion on the merits of that choice, what they like or dislike about it, and what kinds of personal experiences inform their perspectives. (See appendix G for a copy of the assignment sheet.) This assignment requires students to practice a neutral and curious stance with respect to a controversial issue. The point of the facilitation is to get audience members to engage in conversation about highly contentious issues in a manner which resembles cosmopolitan communication. The students are thus given an opportunity to be in the teaching role—a role which Luotto and Stoll (1996) assert provides the greatest learning opportunities. And from a social constructionist perspective, this facilitation experience provides the opportunity for actual practice of cosmopolitan communication which, in turn, constitutes the greatest opportunity for a change in subsequent practices.

Integration into the course design. What would all of this look like as part of the course plan? There are several ways that I would make changes. First, I would begin the course with a discussion about forms of communication and how they constitute public life, and a discussion of safety, value, freedom and openness as guidelines for our interaction during the course. Second, I would rely on more collaborative and hands-on assignments (like those described above) during the semester. Third, I would allow more time for skill practice in circular questioning and reflecting. This would give students the opportunity to

risk their resources and explore plurality in their own grammars rather than in the slightly awkward forms which I imposed.

Fourth, I would try to structure in more time for large or small group discussions about issues important to the students. When students are given opportunities to engage in discussion about those issues which stir controversy for them, they are directly creating public life. This would allow more time for practice and exploration, and would also provide better data with which to assess the success of my practical theory. This would probably include a shift away from the advocacy/refutation model that I used at the end of the course. These changes together would provide a more comprehensive approach to the course, from a more congruent and consistent grammar.

Feature Four

Cronen's fourth tenet is that "practical theories are assessed by their consequences. They are developed in order to make human life better. They provide ways of joining in social action so as to promote (a) socially useful description, explanation, critique, and change in situated human action; and (b) emergence of new abilities for all parties involved" (p. 231).

In examining the consequences of the intervention, I must say that it was not as successful as I would have liked. The course design overall was out of alignment to some degree with my goals as a social constructionist and stood in the way of cosmopolitan grammar. As a practical theorist, this points to an opportunity to improve my design and approach in future courses. While I liked the intervention that we did introduce ("we" being the instructors who assisted, and me) I hoped for stronger grammars of dialogue. The theory itself, that social

constructionist informed techniques would be a useful addition to an argumentation course, was a worthy cause. I also believe that it has produced a useful description of the argumentation course and the assumptions and skills that are perpetuated there and the consequences to the state of public discourse.

In addition to the above, I would like to expand the audience for this discussion. I am pleased that the members of my thesis committee were interested enough in this project to engage with me in several discussions about the merit of this undertaking. However, additional discussion should have taken place with my students, and I look forward to more conversations about this topic with others dedicated to the improvement of public discourse. I am pleased to be a part of a handful of such groups that are doing just that and would enjoy spreading the word to my scholarly community in order to get feedback and suggestions about the research design. Waitzkin (1993) suggests these sorts of conversation as one useful way to ensure the quality of qualitative analysis. Bruffee (1993) might add that this sort of collaboration helps build new knowledge communities. In my experience, this endeavor has helped me to shape my own views about the possibilities of blending traditional argumentative structures with a social constructionist theoretical framework. I'm sure it can be done. Perhaps there are better ways of doing it.

Feature Five

The fifth and final guideline provided by Cronen (1995) is that, "a practical theory coevolves with both the abilities of its practitioners and the consequences of its use, thus forming a tradition of practice" (p. 232). From this perspective, I can only say that my method must evolve. Although the students of my

argumentation and advocacy course did not demonstrate strong grammars of cosmopolitan communication in their conversational talk, this study still served a very important purpose. As a practical theorist, I found that it served as “real time” theory building which points me in a specific direction— toward revisions in both content and process. Fortunately, in the 18 months since this project was conducted, I have improved my abilities in both content and process immensely.

Regarding content, I have since continued my own research about conflict patterns and moral difference, have had the opportunity to teach interpersonal communication several times in a variety of settings, have become a trained mediator, have conducted several training programs about facilitation skills and have experimented with similar assignments in my public speaking courses. Through all of these experiences, I have gained working knowledge of content which informs my practices. I would likely include skill based segments in class on listening (from an interpersonal perspective) and about the differences between positions and interests (from conflict and mediation literature) which would help to set the stage for cosmopolitan interaction.

Regarding process, I have also gained much experience through teaching. The beauty of taking a practical theory approach is that each and every class session is an “experiment” of sorts. Everyday is an opportunity to interact with my students and assess the “success” of a given unit or exercise. It is this constant learning model which makes me feel much more prepared at this time to improve on my design.

Further, even the emphasis of the Public Dialogue Consortium has shifted quite a bit from conducting formal interventions like the Kaleidoscope, to more naturalistic forums wherein people will have the opportunity to engage in

cosmopolitan forms of interaction about otherwise contentious issues. We have done extensive training of city officials and citizens in the City of Cupertino in precisely these kinds of skills and have learned quite a bit as we go along. We have taken the opportunity to engage in conversations about theory and method with several experts in the field of communication and representatives from several groups who are also dedicated to the improvement of public discourse, and have incorporated many of their suggestions. We have also evolved as trainers and have welcomed experts into our group for assistance in this area.

All of these experiences in the time since this project was conducted have given me more extensive background, greater confidence, and admittedly, have humbled me. However, this reflection from a practical standpoint also gives me the courage to proceed. I have much more to learn, but also assess this project for what it is—one point in a much larger process.

Suggestions for Future Research

An important “finding” of this research is the exciting possibility that there are many opportunities for improving this product and process. Therefore, while this endeavor has certainly been useful for exploring the grammars that students engaged in during argument, there are other approaches to this study that would have yielded quite different and interesting results. These approaches constitute areas for future research.

First, the intervention itself can be seen as a research site. Rather than focus, as I have done, on the grammars that *result* from the intervention, future researchers might assess the intervention itself. This would yield a better understanding of the actual impact of the intervention (as a teaching method)

and possibly more ideas for how to improve the process. Key questions here would include, “was the intervention designed in such a way as to bring about substantial and useful changes in the students’ grammar?” And “how appropriate were the teaching methods based on my goals as an instructor?” The answers to these questions would set the stage for more appropriate future interventions and for improvements in course design.

Another suggestion is for future researchers to look at the same data from different perspectives. This, of course, would yield a very different kind of study. For example, a future project could look specifically at the metaphors that the students employ, or could apply a traditional CMM framework to the data which would yield an assessment of rule structures and logics of interaction—again providing a new perspective from which to improve future courses.

Finally, I would suggest that several course design changes be made and tested, and that these changes be assessed using a practical theory perspective. These courses could include practical applications of new and different techniques like those suggested in the above paragraphs (i.e. facilitation or deliberation models, choice work, etc.). Importantly, such techniques will be critically assessed by those who use them, helping to create a tradition of pedagogical practice for teaching a dialogic approach to argument.

Conclusion: Looking Toward Better Models of Public Discourse

Olson and Goodnight (1994) say that, “social controversy occupies the pluralistic boundaries of a democracy and flourishes at those sites where arguers criticize and invent alternatives to established social conventions and sanctioned norms of communication” (p. 249). They also describe social controversy as “an

extended rhetorical engagement that critiques, resituates, and develops communication practices bridging the public and personal spheres. The loci of such controversy include participation in governance, distribution and use of economic resources and opportunities, assumption of personal and collective identities and risks, redress of common grievances, assignments of rights and obligations, and the process of social justice" (p. 249). This points to the absolute necessity for social controversy as a means for change in society, *and* to the necessity of preparing students to *engage* in social controversy. Recall also the purpose of this endeavor, that Pearce (1995c) asserts that the state of public discourse is declining and that the patterns of interaction practiced in the public forum are in need of reform. A communication competency model would suggest that it is important for students to understand how to select effective and appropriate modes of interaction for achieving their desired results. Having a wider variety of options from which to choose should help students be more competent in their interactions, and, if framed properly, may also have the effect of encouraging students to engage in cosmopolitan forms of communication around controversial public issues. The resources that students employed when talking about argument and the ways that they achieved coordination and coherence are certainly promising evidence of the possibilities of change.

Endnotes.

¹ The author is a member of the Public Dialogue Consortium.

² Lakoff and Johnson's text, "Metaphors We Live By" (1980) also supports the notion that metaphors powerfully and dramatically shape our perceptions.

³ The Kensington Consulting Centre can be contacted by writing to: KCC International, 2 Wyvil Ct., Trenchold St. London, England SW8 2TG

⁴ The Public Conversations Project can be contacted by writing to: The Public Conversations Project of the Family Institute of Cambridge, 51 Kondazian St., Watertown, MA 02172.

⁵ The National Issues Forum can be contacted by writing to the Kettering Foundation, 200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799. You can also telephone, (513) 434-7300.

⁶ The word "grammar" is being used here in the Wittgensteinian sense, rather than in the morphemic or syntactic sense.

⁷ It is important to note that true "neutrality" is not possible from a social constructionist's perspective. As Tomm (1985) remarks, any "literal objectivity of external entities is an illusion. No object or phenomenon is ever totally separate from whoever is considering it....the systemic entities investigated in therapy are 'brought forth' or 'constructed' by the therapist through his [sic] interaction with the family....Circular questioning entails this kind of second order cybernetic process" (34-35). This suggests a kind of inherent reflexivity in the interviewing process— an equilateral interconnectedness between all members of the system.

⁸ Each of the five features that Cronen (1995) discusses regarding practical theory is explored in more detail in the final chapter of this work.

⁹ This sort of discourse is similar to Kuhn's (1970) notion of revolutionary science, in that it is outside of the normal scientific paradigm. This kind of discourse creates new ideas and ways of interacting that may then become standard.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: ARGUMENTATION AND ADVOCACY COURSE CALENDAR SPRING 1996

Week	Day	Date	Lesson	Chapter
Week 1	TH	1/25	Course Overview & Introductions What is Argumentation? Discuss Speech #1	(buy course packet, and textbook) 1
Week 2	T	1/30	Speech #1 (2 - 3 min)	
	TH	2/1	Choosing Topics Argumentation Basics Ethical Argumentation	2
Week 3	T	2/6	Propositions and Definitions Doing Research Break-Out Sessions	3
	TH	2/8	QUIZ #1 (Chapters 1, 2, 3) Analyzing Propositions	4
Week 4	T	2/13	Building an Argument Research and Evidence Module Due	5
	TH	2/15	Building an Argument (cont.) Outlining	5 12, pp. 219 - 224
			Propositions of Policy Due for Speech #2	
Week 5	T	2/20	Presenting an Oral Argument Vocal and Physical Delivery and Visual Aids Visual Aid Module Due	12, pp. 226-230
	TH	2/22	Evidence Evidence Assignment Due	6
Week 6	T	2/27	QUIZ #2 (Ch. 4, 5, 6, 12 pp. 219 - 230) Presenting an Oral Argument (cont'd.) Introductions and Conclusions	12, pp. 225 - 226
	TH	2/29	Speech #2 (13 people, 5 min ea.)	
Week 7	T	3/5	Speech #2 (12 people, 5 min ea.)	
	TH	3/7	Reasoning with Your Audience	7
Week 8	T	3/12	Reasoning (cont'd.)	7

	TH	3/14	Fallacies Discuss Speech Rounds	8
Week 9	T	3/19	QUIZ #3 (6, 7, 8) Arguing a Proposition of Policy	11
	TH	3/21	Propositions of Policy (cont'd.)	11
Week 10		3/25-3/29	<i>SPRING BREAK!</i>	
Week 11	T	4/2	Propositions of Fact and Value Break-Out Sessions	9, 10
	TH	4/4	Credibility, Language, Style Knowing Your Audience Circular Questioning Advocates Outlines Due	12, pp. 230-233 12, pp. 212 - 215
Week 12	T	4/9	Circular Questioning (cont'd.) Reflecting	
	TH	4/11	Reflecting (cont'd.) QUIZ #4 (8, 9, 10, 11) Refutation Outlines Due	
Week 13	T	4/16	SPEECH 3, 4 Advocacy, Refutation (4 pairs)	
	TH	4/18	SPEECH 3, 4 Advocacy, Refutation (4 pairs)	
Week 14	T	4/23	SPEECH 3, 4 Advocacy, Refutation (4 pairs)	
	TH	4/25	SPEECH 3, 4 Advocacy, Refutation (3 pairs)	
Week 15	T	4/30	SPEECH 3, 4 Advocacy, Refutation (3 pairs)	
	TH	5/2	SPEECH 3, 4 Advocacy, Refutation (3 pairs)	
Week 16	T	5/7	SPEECH 3, 4 Advocacy, Refutation (3 pairs)	
	TH	5/9	Break-Out Sessions	
Week 17	T	5/14	Review for Final Exam	

FINAL EXAM DATE: (To Be Announced)

Appendix B:

Agenda for Systemic Techniques Unit

Introduction to Metaphors for argument

Argument as rape/ domination

Argument as seduction

Argument as love/ learning

Application of Metaphors

Positions

Strategies

Thoughts about others

Preferred outcome

Introduction to techniques.

Systemic principles

Goals of Systemic Techniques

Circular Questioning: Goals, Examples

Reflecting: Goals, Examples

(Extra handouts)

Circular Questioning Demo

See scenario below

Students offer their own circular questions

The training team provides feedback.

Brief review of reflecting and reflecting demo.

Students offer their own reflections.

(If time, students reflect in groups.)

De-Brief

Applying the techniques in your own arguments

Questions/ comments

Appendix C:
Handouts and overheads for
Circular Questioning and Reflecting

Systemic Principles

- People co-create their patterns of argument through their communication.
- Getting “stuck” in unwanted, repetitive patterns of communication reduces our communicative effectiveness.
- People can create new, healthier ways of communicating that will enhance their interpersonal relationships, and ultimately, enhance the ways that the entire population communicates.
- The ability to get “un-stuck” is one of the primary means of improving argumentative patterns.
- People are not their positions.
- People have their beliefs for “good reasons.”

The Goals of Systemic Techniques

Recognition: The acknowledgment that individuals on both sides of significant issues have legitimate interests and commitments.

Respect: The realization that all participants have good reasons for their beliefs based on their own life experiences.

Understanding: Making explicit the assumptions and values that each participant is bringing to the argument.

Social Awareness: The realization that the parties involved, by the way they communicate with one another, determine the nature of the conflict.

Forward Movement: Disengaging from negative, repetitive patterns of interaction and finding new, potentially constructive ones.

Circular Questioning

Goals of Process:

- To help participants acknowledge the part they play in constructing the argument.
- To get participants to acknowledge the fact that there are other people who have legitimate concerns and experiences that lead them to adhere to their positions.
- To draw attention to the relationships between the arguers and their positions.
- To draw attention to the complexities of any communication situation.
- To get participants to practice ways of interacting that allow them to move forward.
- To get participants to move out of their own positions and “walk in the shoes” of another.

Stance of Interviewer:

- The interviewer is not an expert on the topic, but rather a student, full of curiosity, looking for the ways that patterns of communication are co-created.
- The interviewer constantly looks for ways of moving forward, looking at the “big picture” rather than calling forth the negative patterns that the participants are comfortable in.

Circular Questions Can Have Any of these Features:

1. They can focus on differences between things.
"How is George's position different from your own?"
2. They can ask for comparisons.
"Who has the most to gain if your plan is adopted?"
3. They can pose alternative ways of looking at events.
"If George were no longer called a racist, how might he respond differently?"
4. They can ask people to think about the outcomes of particular kinds of interactions.
"If you continue on this path, where do you think you'll end up?"

Guidelines for asking Circular Questions:

1. Ask questions to get participants to reveal their vocabulary. We can learn a lot about a person's outlook, by examining the words they use to describe things.
"How would you describe your role in the conflict?"
"How would you describe George's role?"
"What would you say are the most important elements of your disagreement?"
2. Ask questions that explore the boundaries of the vocabulary. These are designed to get participants to think beyond their usual stance.
"Is there anything that George is trying to say that you have difficulty hearing?"
"Who would have the most to lose if your position were to prevail?"
"What would you gain if you gave up your position in this conflict?"
3. Ask questions that imagine possible futures.
"What would change if you and George discussed this issue differently?"
"What would have to happen for you to shift your position?"

Reflecting

A reflecting team may join the interviewer in order to offer a wide variety of new perspectives. Reflections are offered as hypotheses—new ways of interpreting the disputants' positions,

Stance of reflector:

- Open and curious
- Hypothesizing—never getting too attached to a particular interpretation.
- Looking for new and positive ways of interpreting the participants' positions and vocabulary.

Goal of Process:

- To help participants move out of their well-rehearsed position, and see it from a third person perspective.
- To call attention to a wide variety of possible outcomes.
- To challenge a person's position
- To imagine a wide variety of possible futures.

Guidelines for Reflecting

Like Circular Questions, Reflections fall into three categories:

1. Statements that acknowledge the participants' vocabulary, and/or their experiences.
"I was struck by George's use of the term, 'racist'".
"I was struck by George's story about his experiences in a gang."
2. Hypotheses that explore the boundaries of the vocabulary. Again, these are designed to get participants to think beyond where they usually go.
"I wonder how George distinguishes between racism and judgment."
"I wonder whether George has ever been accused of being a racist himself?"
3. Hypotheses that imagine possible futures.
"I wonder what would change if you and George and Carol could find a way to agree."
"I wonder if George would respond differently if the word racist was not used."

Appendix D:

Scenario for Class Activity

Scenario:

The two individuals participating in the demonstration today, have very different views on the issue of gun control. They are friends, but know that they cannot agree on this topic, and have just agreed not to talk about it any more.

Against gun control: This person is driven by statistics that say that gun control does not effect the level of violent crime, and strongly believes that gun control will only take guns out of the hands of law abiding citizens—leaving guns only in the hands of the criminals. He or she also uses the constitution argument, and says that it is the right of the people to bear arms. Also, people should be able to have guns for self-defense.

Pro Gun Control: This person has personal experience with violence in the streets and is very adamant about the need for gun control. She or he had a friend that was shot in a gang fight, and thinks that if guns are banned, violence will decrease. Regarding the guns for self-defense argument, this person believes that if we had effective gun control laws, that people would not need guns for self-defense.

During the role-play, jot down a few questions for each participant. Try to make your questions circular, rather than linear.

During the reflecting team portion of the role play, write down some of your own reflections here.

Appendix E: Consent Form

Name of Participant:

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of incorporating specific communication techniques into the argumentation and advocacy course. Impact will be assessed via an exploration of students' discourse and written material during the course. Research materials may include: video taped speeches and class discussions; audio taped speeches and class discussions; peer and self critiques; selected quiz question answers; and selected evaluation form answers. It is expected that the results of this study will contribute to existing research literature by broadening and extending the application base of these specific techniques and a social constructionist theoretical framework.

Anonymity

All of the respondents in this study will remain anonymous.

Procedures

Students will be video taped and audio taped during each round of speeches and during some class periods. Midterm and final course evaluations, peer and self-critiques, and select quiz question answers will also be collected. Students have been informed about the research uses of these materials. Participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or choose not to answer any question at any time.

Video and Tape Recording

All speeches and some class sessions will be audio and video tape recorded for transcription. The tapes will be used only for research purposes.

Researcher's Address

If you have any questions, you may contact the principle investigator, Dr. Shawn Spano, at the following address: Department of Communication Studies, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA 95192-0112.

Please Read The Following Before Signing

"Participation is voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time by withdrawing my consent on the use of materials that I have submitted or the use of video or audio tapes. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."

Signature of Participant/Date

Signature of Researcher/Date

Appendix F:
About Argument Assignment Sheet

Speech 1: About Argument (10 points)

Purpose of the Assignment:

The purpose of this assignment is threefold: First, I want you to get to know each other; Second, I want you to start thinking about how argument plays a role in your life; Third, I want you to get comfortable speaking in front of the group. Think of this as an opportunity to explore your thoughts about argument and share them with the class.

Essentially, I want you to tell the class about an argument that stands out in your mind. Tell us who was involved, what the argument was about, and what it felt like for you to argue. What made this argument memorable? Was it an argument that you felt especially good about? Especially bad about? Why? How did it go? Then, tell us about what you would like to get out of this class. What do you hope to achieve during the course of the semester? What would you like to learn about argument?

Requirements:

1. Your speech should be prepared in advance.
2. Your speech should be about 2 - 3 minutes in length.
3. Your speech should be well organized. Your thoughts should flow together and you should include a strong first sentence and a strong last sentence.
4. Your delivery should be extemporaneous. Do not memorize!! Rather, speak from key word note cards.

Speech 1: Evaluation Form

Student Name:

Content

Ideas flowed smoothly	EX	G	NI
Main points clear	EX	G	NI
Effective first sentence	EX	G	NI
Effective last sentence	EX	G	NI

Delivery

Extemporaneous	EX	G	NI
Dynamic	EX	G	NI

Speech Grade

Content	/7
<u>Delivery</u>	<u>/3</u>
Total	/10

Appendix G:
Facilitation Assignment Sheet

SPEAKING ASSIGNMENT 2

INTERACTIONAL GOALS: DISCOVER BELIEF AND KNOWLEDGE; BUILD COMMUNITY; ARTICULATE A PERSPECTIVE

This assignment is meant to help you learn the skills needed to facilitate a discussion. Although the traditional notion of public speaking involves individuals and/or groups presenting information, a more inclusive approach to presentational speaking recognizes that individuals are asked to facilitate discussions to help a group discover what it believes, values, and/or actions to take. The facilitation model that I use comes from the National Issues Forum (NIF).

NIF and its 3,000 local partner organizations annually sponsor thousands of public forums and small group discussions in which citizens deliberate significant national issues. In order to provide a setting in which deliberation can take place, the NIF annually identifies a few significant issues that seem to be emerging on the national scene such as poverty, the family, youth violence, or affirmative action. For each issue three or four choices are identified and written information is provided about the issue and choices.

Each group has 5 members with each person choosing a portion of the facilitation: introduction; choice 1; choice 2; choice 3; reflection. I'd like to briefly describe the role of each:

INTRODUCTION--3 sections (15 minutes)

1. **Welcome** the group and **describe the issue** to be discussed. When doing this it's important to provide background information about the topic, a brief overview of each choice, and a description of why it's an important topic for the class to explore. The introducer will also explain that the purpose of the facilitation is to discover together what we believe to be the best course of action in a deliberative rather than argumentative framework. To do this there are certain groundrules that the group would like the class to follow.

2. The **groundrules** are presented on a visual aid to the class. Examples of groundrules are:

- listen with respect to the views of others
- only one person at a time speaks
- weigh the pros and cons of each choice
- give equal "air time" to others in the group

It's important that the introducer get "buy in" about the groundrules. This can be done by asking the class if there are any groundrules they disagree with or would like to add or delete. Once the class agrees on the groundrules, the moderator introduces an "ice breaker" exercise.

3. It's important to get the class reflecting on their own experience as it relates to the topic. Therefore, the last thing the introducer will do is to ask a **"personal stakes" question** (this also serves as an ice breaker). The personal stakes question is designed to connect the issue to people's lives and concerns by asking them to talk about their personal experiences and to tell their stories. This makes the issue real and genuine; human rather than abstract. Some personal stakes questions on the issue of "freedom of speech" might be: Have any of you had an experience where you felt your right to free speech was violated? Have any of you had an experience where you were glad that your right to speak freely was protected? Do you know of anyone who felt their first amendment rights were violated? Describe the situation.

THE CHOICES--3 sections for each choice (15 minutes each)

Three students will take one choice each. The format for each choice is the same.

1. The speaker will begin by describing what the **advocates** of this choice think. For those who support the choice, how would they describe the problem? What broad actions does the choice address? The speaker will spend about 3 to 4 minutes describing the advocates' perspective.
2. The speaker will then present a 2 to 3 minute summary of what the **critics** of the choice think. Why do they think this is an inappropriate choice? What negative consequences do they see?
3. Once the choice and the critics' response has been discussed, the moderator **facilitates a discussion**. The purpose of the discussion is to stretch our thinking about the choice. Here are some sample questions: What are the benefits of this choice? What are some of the values that underlie this choice? What do you find most difficult about this choice? If we followed this course of action, what would be the effects on your life? What might be the consequences of this choice for other people? The class discussion should last approximately 10 minutes.

REFLECTION (15 minutes)

After working through the choices, the class needs to describe where it stands on the issue. The job of the reflector is to help the group **move from an "I" position to a "we" position**. To encourage this movement, the moderator will want to get the

class to think in terms of where we are now as a group. The kinds of questions that the moderator will ask are: Is there a choice that we all agree on or would we like to create a new choice? If so, what would this new choice contain? Is there something that we can all agree on regarding this issue? What tradeoffs are we willing to make? What are we not willing to give up? How far have we moved toward a shared sense of purpose? By the end of the facilitation the class should be more aware of the complexity of the issue and where they stand overall on the issue.

As a public speaking assignment, you are learning how to moderate and facilitate a conversation. More specifically, you'll learn about the importance of:

- creating a safe and open environment
- providing organization and structure to the group
- keeping the group focused on the issue or objective
- keeping lines of communication open by seeking information and opinions from others
- encouraging dialogue and deliberation instead of argumentation and debate

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

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