

Chapter 3. The Possibilities of Objects: An Individuated Perspective

In Chapter 1, I noted that current research, methods, and framings of writing development were insufficient for constructing a robust understanding of writing development through the entirety of the lifespan, although treating development as an act of participation (Applebee, 2000; Boscolo, 2014) seemed to offer the optimal starting point. My respecification of the concept of development through an ethnomethodological lens opened up new possibilities for reframing and expanding writing development as a matter of participation in social action (what I have come to call *literate action* development). In Chapter 2, I began working out some necessary concepts for enacting a new vision of literate action development, and detailed the mundane accomplishments of Emily's classroom in order to take on that work. Since I was working from previous ethnomethodological work, the focus of these chapters was the *joint* production of social order: that is, how the individuated actors in the classroom came to understand what was happening throughout the class period. In order to understand literate action development, however, we need to attend to an individuated perspective on that joint work. That is, we must turn our attention to how a single individuated actor might develop their literate action amidst, with, and through the joint accomplishment of ongoing social order.

In this chapter, I build on the concepts of practices, *What-Comes-Next*, and information to suggest two additional concepts that can help us see the complex work of an individuated actor in a social situation: the possibilities of objects, and adumbration. These two concepts, as we shall see in the cases of Marianne and Nick, offer a useful way to work the boundaries of the individuated actor and the social situation, so that we can adequately track the serial production of social order by an actor that leads to development.

Both the possibilities of objects and adumbration emerge from the ethnomethodological and phenomenological work that I have been touching on, either directly or indirectly, through the first two chapters of this book. The concept of "possibilities of objects" emerges from Garfinkel's *Toward a Sociological Theory of Information*. In that text, Garfinkel, drawing from transcendental phenomenology, develops a concept of the "object-in-general" (2008, p. 133), which he uses to think through the relationship between meaning-making and the objects that we make meaning of. Garfinkel suggests that objects themselves contain *possibilities*, which he (2008, p. 133) synonymizes with "candidacy"—that an object can be specified in a number of ways.

Consider, for example, my dining room table. This table can be a number of things. At the moment, as I type these words, it serves as a workspace, holding my laptop, several books I am referencing, and a drink next to my laptop. In several hours, it will be used as a place where my family eats a meal. Later in the evening,

it may be draped with a blanket to serve as a “fort” while my son and I play some kind of game.⁴ In each of these instances, a different “possibility” of the table is recognized: it is used as part of a broader social situation involving other people (myself, my wife, my son) and other objects (my laptop, dinner plates, a blanket).

The table has not changed in form, but we have recognized different possibilities in it, and acted upon those possibilities. Perhaps most importantly for understanding the production of social order, we have recognized these possibilities jointly. Through the constitutive ordering of talk and objects, we render the table into a particular kind of object—in Garfinkel’s words, we *thingify* it. Looking to the possibilities of objects—and what Garfinkel calls a unifying principle, or the way that we come to shared understandings of what possibility we are taking up—allows us to see the social work that goes into recognizing objects as components of an unfolding social situation. From there, we can draw on the concept of *adumbration* to frame individuated perspectives on unfolding social order, and by extension maintain the delicate balance of the individual and the social the first two chapters of this text begin attending to.

Adumbrated Perspectives on Social Ordering

The starting point of the lived reality, as I argue in the first two chapters, must be ethnomethodological: that is, it must orient to the joint production of social order. But this is only a starting point, as understanding literate action development through the lifespan has to be *individuated*, focused on the ways in which actors organize themselves for writing, engage in writing, and produce writing in different, but patterned ways over time. The lived reality, in other words, is social and individual—it sits at the complex intersection of social order and individuated understandings.

What remains absent from my account of this intersection so far is productive language for making sense of the ways in which the individual and the social meet. This intersection has been highlighted with Alice’s example, but not adequately conceptualized. In order to make sense of this, I introduce the term *adumbration*, a term rooted in Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, which can frame our understanding of the upcoming analysis of Marianne and Nick’s work. An object we encounter (including the production of social order) can only be seen as shaded—that is, we cannot grasp it in its entirety from a given perspective.

I draw on this term to make sense of how individuated actors perceive the production of social order in any given moment. A student may take out a pen or pencil when asked to, and by extension contribute to the production of social order in the classroom, but the particularities of taking out that pen or pencil from a backpack—if it is difficult to grasp, for instance, or if it is in a different pocket than the student expected—will lead to an individuated participation in that

4. I am rarely provided with all of the details of the games we are playing, thus my vagueness here. But forts are not an uncommon part of such games.

production, and by extension an individuated set of actions as the situation continues to be co-constructed. Perhaps dropping or being unable to find the pencil pulls the student's phenomenal field away from the teacher, and so they miss the instructions about what to do next. They must then complete other activities—such as following the lead of a nearby classmate—to continue participation in the expected production of social order.

As framed, this example may lead the reader to understand individuation as a push against a broader social norm, but this is a misleading effect of my simplified example. Each and every member of that group has individuated understandings, individuated participation, in the practices that co-construct the class. While one student may have dropped their pencil, another may be daydreaming, another may be talking to a fellow student, and another may be raptly taking notes. No one of these students is participating in social order more or less than the other—they are co-constructing social order in their individuated work. This individuated perspective, however, is *adumbrated* in the sense that each actor only sees so much of the production of social order, and must base their next actions only on what they perceive. It is this individuation that provides the opportunity for developmental transformation—and, as we shall see below, it is through the co-participative nature of ongoing social order that such small transformations by individuals are easily overlooked.

Adumbration can shape how we understand individuated actors to see the co-construction of possibilities in an object (or, as we will see below, a network of objects). Individuated experiences of the co-construction of social order are necessarily perspectival, necessarily shaded off by that which they do not experience in the complex work of the ongoing production of social order. This adumbration impacts not only the arrays of possibility they see at work in an object but how that operation is followed up in subsequent situations. To return to the student who dropped their pencil, let us assume that while reaching for the pencil, they missed a teacher's introduction of a new topic, and as a result assumed they were talking about the topic they were on when the pencil was dropped. The "unifying principle" of the co-construction of the social order has changed in the class, but the student is unaware. Now, should the student avoid saying or doing anything that gives away their obliviousness, they will have an opportunity to follow the continual unfolding of the situation, see that the "criterion of continuity of experience" (Garfinkel, 2008, pp. 137-138) no longer holds value for them, and can adjust their operator as needed to continue participating in and making sense of social order. This adumbrated aspect of participating in social order, as Marianne's case demonstrates below, can have interesting developmental consequences. We can think of the lived reality, then, as adumbrated co-participation in the practices of ordering an array of objects that reduces the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next*. Development within the lived reality, as we saw in Chapter 2, may be located within elevated levels of uncertainty, which can trigger a revision of practices at work. The cases of Marianne and Nick provide some inroads into the

complexity of such development, and from them we can determine some characteristics of how development moves forward as part of a sea of ongoing practices.

The Possibilities of a Fact: Marianne and Helen Keller

During a three-month span throughout the school year, Emily's students engaged in blog writing. The blogs were relatively brief, isolated on the internet (via a blogging site designed for young students in school), and written across the course of several drafts. The work for the blog entry at the center of this analysis occurred as part of a research day at the school's library. The students went to the library, did some reading, collected facts, and used those facts to create a blog entry.

During their research day in the library, Emily provided students with several resources—both paper-and-pencil and online—to go about finding information that they would later use to contribute to their blogs. In the end, students collected much more information than they actually published. Marianne's work during this period emerged as a *perspicuous setting* in this instance: the work that she does to collect records on and do some writing that will later be repurposed toward her blog entry become caught up in observable interaction, allowing the unfolding social order that the writing is produced within to be visible.

Writing, for Emily, was a central tool of classroom management, learning, and participation in her classes. She was particularly interested in using digital writing, bringing technology into the classroom to get students to understand how the digital world worked in terms of writing. The work she does with her students in this example is part of her "Upstanders vs. Bystanders" unit. It was a theme promoted by the California Writing Project around the time that I observed her. The students were writing a blog called "Who is an Upstander?" They had to identify someone from history who was an upstander, not a bystander, and how they changed the world in positive ways.

Marianne met with the rest of her class in the library on February 10. They had two sheets to guide their work during that period: a white sheet for identifying who they wanted to study, as well as questions they had about them; and a blue sheet for recording facts as they found them in the library. Emily told students that they were to collect ten facts on their blue papers by noon. They could use the books, magazines, or the computers. They could also, if they chose to, work with a partner. Alexis and Marianne, who had been developing a friendship throughout the school year, decided to work together. They immediately got their sheets, found some books, and cleared a spot at a table to work from. They started with writing down the information required for MLA citation, which was a requirement of the assignment. At this point in the year—about six months in—this kind of activity is common in Emily's class. Students are regularly given opportunities to take books and other resources and record notes about them, always starting with an MLA entry.

As she is entering MLA information, Marianne realizes that one of the books she collected contains an entire chapter on her subject, Helen Keller. She and

Alexis, at this moment, make the unstated decision that they have sufficient texts to begin their work (i.e., they stop collecting new books). They then settle into the kind of work that they've done before, which I referred to in my own notes as ~~worksheet activity~~ as I developed an ethnomethodological perspective on the incident. The students were given, by the teacher, a set of tasks to do, and some sort of place to record the work they do on those tasks. These worksheets were organizing objects for Marianne and Alexis: they were the sense-making mechanisms through which social order came to be established.

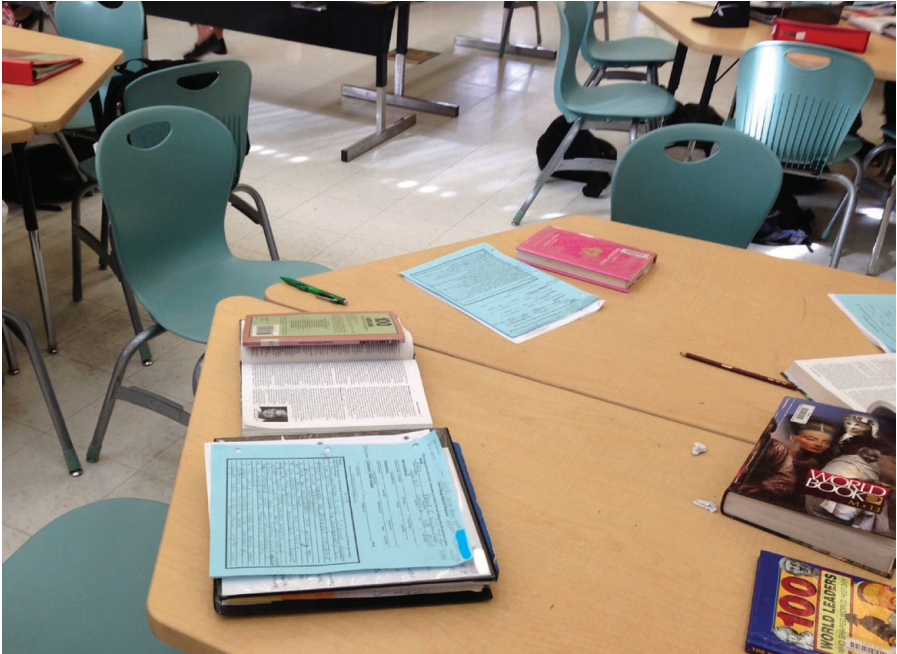


Figure 3.1. Marianne's desk work.

In Figure 3.1, Marianne's work is at the top of the table, with Alexis' work at the bottom. The individuated actor that I am attending to here is Marianne, but Alexis' work became part of the distributed production of facts on the worksheet. Note that they have the blue sheets on top, and the books next to them. This configuration of objects enables them to construct facts through their reading, their discussion, and their writing in near-simultaneity. Essentially, they have organized their space, themselves, and their resources for and through the worksheet.

Alexis and Marianne discuss some of the facts that they find with one another as they read. The flow of activity involves one of them stating a fact aloud and receiving affirmation from the other about that fact—either a “cool” spoken aloud, or a quiet “uh-huh” as silence returns. The constitutive ordering of this activity, then, is organized across physical space, worksheet organization, and turns at talk. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 show Marianne's sheets in detail.

BOOK

Author's Last Name: dehn First Name: ralph Title: american born comes!

Editor: hinton Year: 1995 Print: print Pages: 67

ENCYCLOPEDIA

Author's Last Name: OF KNOWN First Name: _____ Title of Article: _____

Encyclopedia Title: _____ Year ed.: _____ Print/Web: _____

PERIODICAL (Article)

Author's Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ Title of Article: _____

Periodical Title: _____ Day Month Year: _____ pages: _____ Print/Web: _____

INTERNET / WEB SOURCE

Title of Article: _____ Website Site: _____ Web: _____

Date You Looked - day Month Year (31 February 2014)

Notes:

(REMEMBER: Do not write in complete sentences. Do not copy word for word unless you place it in a quote. Write the page numbers if using a source with pages.)

1. most important part of a whole life March 2010

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100. american born comes! 1995

Figure 3.2. Marianne's blue sheet.

These texts participate in the unfolding production of social order in the class. Marianne and Alexis use the structure of the sheets to shape their reading of texts, and their understanding of their tasks during the class period. Note the ways in which the space of the lines in both Figures 3.2 and 3.3 shape, for Marianne, the ways in which she can translate the facts she uncovers in her reading. The space does not dictate completely what Marianne can write—at several points, for instance, Alexis allows her writing to flow into multiple lines as she elaborates the facts she uncovered—but it does influence the ways in which their individual reading is taken up.

After several minutes of this work, Marianne returns attention to the larger goal that Emily indicated at the start of class: accumulating ten facts. They each proceed to count how many they have. This talks the goal of the activity—completing ten facts before noon—back into their understanding of the actions they are performing. They realize they don't have enough, and so they go back to work accumulating new facts. It's at this point that a candidate moment of development begins to unfold in Marianne's work. In the space provided from the sheets that she has to work from (see Figures 3.4 and 3.5), Marianne transforms what she finds in her books to what she needs for the assignment. She writes first that Helen Keller, at a young age, nearly died of an illness, but survived without being

able to hear or see. She states this fact, writes it down, and moves on. Later, she encounters the fact that Helen Keller also spoke, and so she builds that fact into the textual space of the worksheet activity as well. After slotting in that fact, however, she realizes the anomaly that has arisen. She doesn't see how both of those facts can be true of Helen Keller at the same time. How was she able to speak if she couldn't hear or see? What can she make of that?

RESEARCH PROJECT: Who Is an Upstander?

Common Core State Standards
 Writing 7.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.
 Writing 7.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

Writing Assignment
 Research someone you believe *might* be an upstander. Find facts/evidence to support your idea. As you research, consider what people may say against you and gather evidence to prove them wrong.

Explore
 In the library spend 10-15 minutes looking through the books and other resources. Find a person who you believe may be an upstander. Write your choice below and get it approved by a teacher.
 After exploring, I want to research Helen Keller
 I believe he / she is an upstander because... She is a miracle worker and fights for what she believes in.

Questions: What do you want to research about your person? Remember, the goal is to argue he or she is an upstander.
 Who? What? Where? When? How? Why?

1. Who was Helen Keller?
2. What was she like?
3. How did she achieve greatness?
4. Where does she live?
5. Why was she a miracle worker?
6. How old was she?
7. What did she do?
8. How did she help?
9. How did she inspire people?
10. How does she talk when she is deaf?

Figure 3.3. Marianne's white sheet.

This anomaly becomes socially available through Marianne's thinking-out-loud: "Oh, she could talk. No, she can't." Alexis, who appears to be engaged in her own work, responds "No, she can't," without turning to the reading that Marianne was working through. Marianne confirms Alexis' response with a "Yeah," as a moment of silence develops. Alexis, turning more of her attention to Marianne, then says "Everyone *can* talk—" which appears to be the start of a more complicated observation that is not completed by Alexis. At this point, the school librarian, who was clearly frustrated at the level of noise in the library, was walking by, and attended only to the word "talk" when she responded "There's no *reason* to talk!" This interjection by the librarian interrupted Alexis, but both the turn at talk by Alexis and the interjected turn by the librarian did not raise a response from Marianne, as she continued to read. Shortly after the

librarian moves to another part of the room, Marianne says “She did.” Then, reading aloud, she says “She used her voice to speak by imitating the sounds . . .” and trails off, turning away from the exchange with Alexis and more fully toward the chapter she was reading.

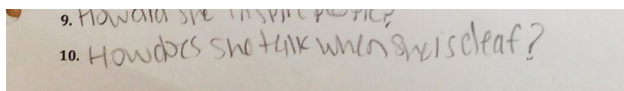


Figure 3.4. Marianne's question (white sheet).

We see, in this work by Marianne, new information emerging out of the unfolding orchestration of activity. Through the production of facts via social, physical, and textual ordering, Marianne realizes an anomaly that needs resolving in order for social order to continue: could Helen Keller talk, or not? This anomaly interferes with the production of her putting words on the page: the facts that she records lack a coherence that she has to work to construct. This anomaly, then, leads her to produce more writing in later social, textual, and physical orderings of the world around her. It is important to note that the ambiguity here rises above the always-present uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next*. What Marianne has been presented with here is what I am labeling *information*—an uncertainty in some aspect of *What-Comes-Next* that requires resolution via transformations of practices in order to continue co-constructing social order. If we zoom out to attend to the ongoing production of order in the classroom, then Marianne's work to continue classroom social order requires that she work through, in some way, this information. Marianne *could* do this by leaving the anomaly in place: writing down the two contradictory facts and leaving those facts untouched as she continues to fill in her sheet. This would resonate more strongly with the work that Marianne has done on multi-draft writing and research throughout the semester, which might be best described as acts of translation: that is, Marianne would read her texts through the language of the worksheet, using the space available, the verbal instructions by Emily, and the directions on the page to select what aspects of which texts should move from her reading to her worksheet. In this instance, however, the increased anomalous aspects of *What-Comes-Next* have disrupted Marianne's practices, and require new practices in order to take on further social order.

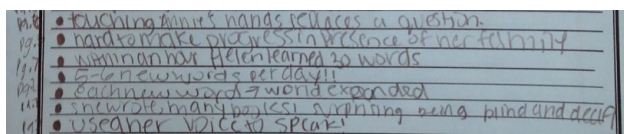


Figure 3.5. Marianne's facts (blue sheet).

The working out of this additional information enables Marianne to realize new possibilities in the objects that she is working with. Figure 3.4 highlights the

aspect of the worksheet in which Marianne first calls attention to the anomaly she identifies. As she attempts to define Helen Keller as an upstander, she brings her understanding of how Keller learned to speak to bear on this, indicated in Figure 3.5. Throughout the drafting and publishing of Marianne's work as shown in Figures 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8, she maintains, from the start, the link between Helen Keller's disabilities and her accomplishments as a writer. This, according to Marianne, is what makes Helen Keller an upstander. This upstandingness gets underscored by the fact that Marianne accomplished to resolve the anomaly that she came across becomes the central understanding that Marianne uses to make sense of and then write about Helen Keller's life. Marianne makes her "hook," in Emily's words, the fact that Keller wrote books even though she was blind and deaf. Marianne also tries to wrestle into coordination with that point the speaking that Keller learned to do. She is showing how both of those accomplishments by Keller make her an upstander.

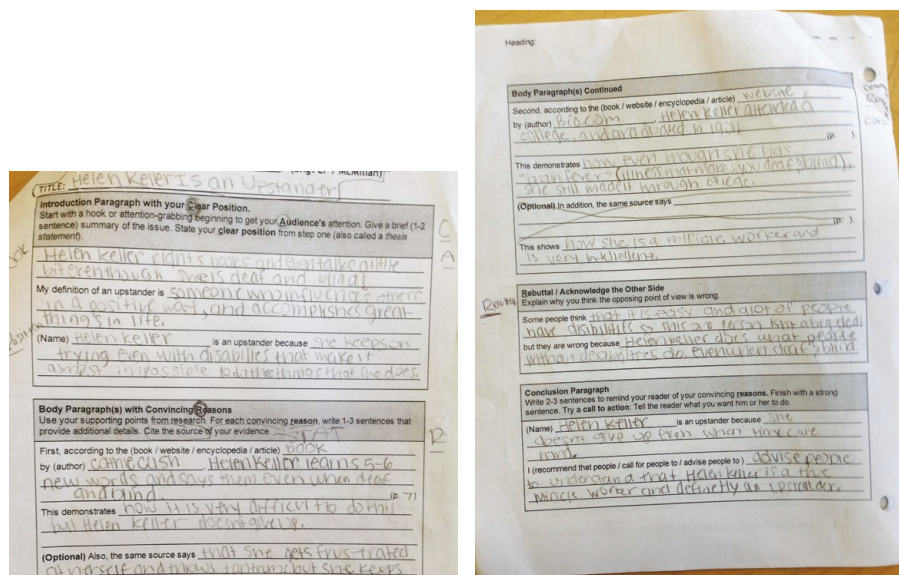



Figure 3.6. Marianne's blog writing draft, hand written.

If we put these pieces—the production of knowledge and the production of the blog—side by side, what we see is Marianne constructing a new understanding of subject matter that she is faced with through the orchestration of talk, tools, and texts in a particular situation. The results of this work become the central focus, and the central challenge, of the writing that Marianne finds herself doing later. The complexities that she pushes up against in construction in her worksheet activity, in other words, have offered her an opportunity to orchestrate her writing practices around and through that fact in a future writing situation.


Upstanding Bloggers
My Classes

Helen Keller Is an Upstander

TAGS: [HELEN KELLER](#) [INSPIRATION](#) [TRYING](#) [UPSTANDER](#) [WHO IS AN UPSTANDER](#) [WRITER](#)
CATEGORIES: [WHO IS AN UPSTANDER](#) FEBRUARY 20, 2014 @ 1:38 PM 3 COMMENTS

Helen Keller wrote many books and even talked while deaf and blind. My definition of an upstander is someone who influences others in a positive way and accomplishes great things in her life. Helen Keller is an upstander because she keeps on trying even with disabilities that make it almost impossible to do the things that she did.

6 new words and even said them while deaf and blind. This demonstrates how it is very difficult to do this but she doesn't give up. Also, the same source says that she became frustrated at herself and threw tantrums but she will keep on trying no matter what. This shows how Helen Keller is a miracle worker and wants it accomplish this.

Second, according to the website "Bio.com", Helen Keller attended a college and graduated in 1904. This demonstrates how even though she has "brain fever" (illness that made her deaf and blind), she still made it through college.

Some people may think that it is easy and a lot of people have disabilities so this one person isn't a big deal, but they are wrong because Helen Keller does what people without her disabilities do even when she can't see or hear.

Helen Keller is an upstander because she doesn't give up even when times are hard. I advise people to read her [books](#) and understand that Helen Keller is defiantly an upstander and is extremely intelligent.


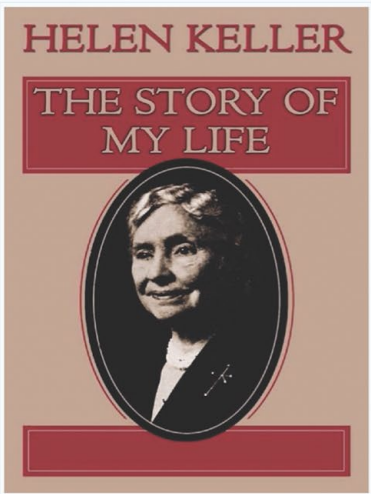



Image from: "globalresearch.com"
Image from: "mycreativepersuits.com"

Figure 3.7. Marianne's published blog post.

We can trace the flow of Marianne's writing about Helen Keller from her initial question to a blog post (Figure 3.7). Based on my observations of Marianne and

her writing throughout the year, I see this moment as Marianne's first significant change from what we might call "reporting" in her research. Rather than reporting the facts from her texts (which focus largely on Helen Keller's development as an author), Marianne integrates her own interesting finding—Keller's efforts at spoken language—into those facts, using both to account for her "upstanding-ness." It is an early and uneven attempt, as we can see in her subsequent writing, but it is a first for her, and it is through the constitutive ordering of mundane action for another first time that we are able to see it.

Figure 3.8 shows three documents illustrating the tracing of a fact across drafts. The leftmost document is a handwritten draft titled "Helen Keller Is an Upstander". It includes sections for "Introduction Paragraph with your Clear Position," "My definition of an upstander is," and "Body Paragraph(s) with Convincing Reasons." The middle document is a printed page titled "Upstanding Bloggers" with the same title, showing a more formal version of the text. The rightmost document is a printed page titled "Helen Keller Is an Upstander" with the same title, showing a third version of the text. Blue arrows trace the flow of information from the handwritten draft to the printed page, and then to the third printed page.

Figure 3.8. Tracing a fact across drafts.

We also need to examine the ways in which the possibilities of objects are realized in this work by Marianne. Her traditional work, to this point, has been to read the texts she is assigned through the ways in which she makes sense of the requirements that Emily provides her. But in this instance, the account of Keller's life cries out for closer inspection, leading Marianne to recognize new possibilities in the text than her recurrent practices would seem to have supported. The complexity of Keller's literate life raised the uncertainty in her work that transformed into information through her interactions with the talk, tools, and texts around her. In this transformation, Marianne established new configurations of objects around her that realized new possibilities in those objects, not only through individual objects (such as books about Keller) but through interactions between and among objects (such as how her new knowledge of Keller transformed her understanding of the structured assignment provided by Emily). The new possibilities opened up by the facts of Helen Keller for Marianne lead her to

new and lasting configurations of objects (and, by extension, the realizations of possibilities of those objects). Nick's work, traced out below, articulates the ways in which these transformations can be realized not only in concrete objects such as books but in the configurations of interaction among actors in an unfolding social situation.

The Possibilities of Uncertainty: Nick's Note-Taking Activity

Before the students had begun research in preparation for their own blog writing activities, Emily used a novel the students had read (*The Outsiders*) to introduce students to the concept of an "Upstander." On January 22, Emily had her students develop definitions of several terms in preparation for the "Upstanding" blog writing unit: upstanders, bystanders, victims, and bullies. Using a mix of modalities and examples from *The Outsiders* to get all students on the same page, Emily tasked students with reaching definitions of the terms as the class discusses examples and characteristics of each term.

Emily passed out the sheet shown in Figure 3.9 to help students orient their writing activity with what she was asking them to do. Emily had students box the word "definition," because she told students that they would be asked for that later on. Emily projected the sheet the students were working from on her television screen so that she could fill it in as they moved through it. In a back-and-forth among students and teacher, Emily and her students identified examples and characteristics of each term from the characters in *The Outsiders*. Once examples were provided for each term, Emily gave students three minutes to write their own definition of the terms down.

Throughout the activities outlined above, Nick engages with the instructions of Emily and interactions with his friends. In video of this classroom activity, Nick can be seen writing down what the instructor asks him to write down, and using the time between the end of his writing and the start of Emily's next instruction to interact with the students around him. It is this interactional pattern that I wish to trace in Nick's writing: his movement in ~~the~~ writing activity, from the interactional work of completing an in-class activity, to his interaction with his peers. This movement between these two sets of practices is interesting in my ongoing tracing of development not because of the pairing of both worlds but the sequencing of their presence in the unfolding social order in the classroom, and the consequences of that sequencing in Nick's literate action development.

The work Nick does here can be isolated from the ongoing flow of social action in Emily's classroom with the concepts previously articulated. Nick is engaged in what might be called note-taking practice: he is listening to his instructor, copying down the notes that she puts on the television screen, and doing so in a way that perpetuates the ongoing social order of the classroom. This practice of note-taking, of following along with the work that Emily is highlighting via the television, moves the ~~the~~ writing activity forward, in part. Nick's movement from

writing down notes to talking with his peers shows him participating in multiple kinds of social order through an anticipation of *What-Comes-Next*. That is, as Nick finishes copying down a portion of the notes, he can use (1) the remaining blank spaces on the page and (2) the continual instructions from Emily to determine that there will, soon, be other passages to copy down onto his worksheet. This reduction of uncertainty allows him to fill the space between note-taking events with unrelated talk amongst his neighbors.

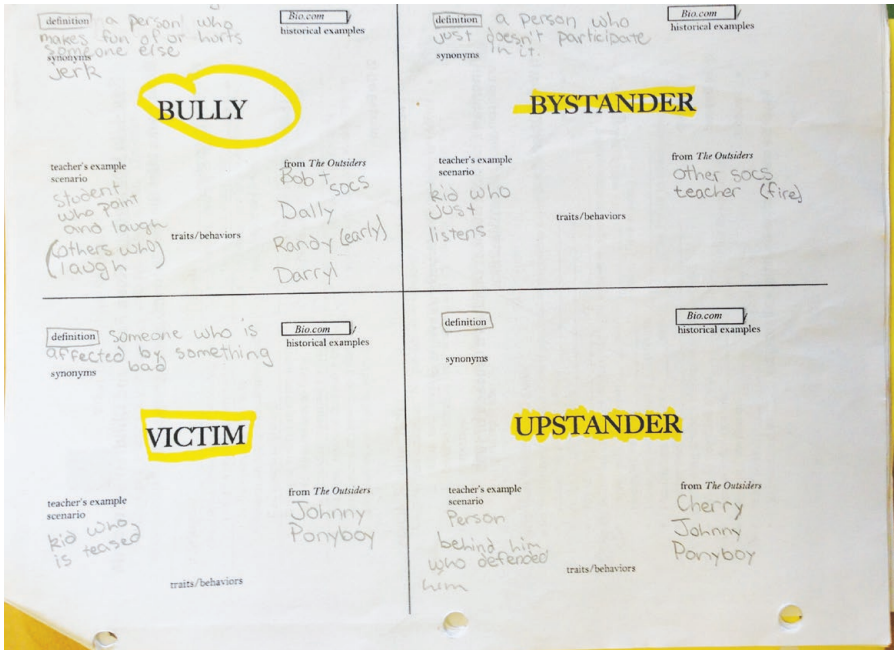


Figure 3.9 Nick's notes.

Nick's interactions with others do not keep him from participating actively in class in ways that "count," according to the class, as participation. Nick raises his hand on occasion when the teacher asks a question (though he is not called upon), and, as mentioned earlier, dutifully writes down what the teacher asks him to. Furthermore, near the end of class, when Emily asks students to define each of the terms at the end of class, Nick defines three of them. During this lesson, Nick engages in several literate acts, but it is most beneficial for our purposes to focus on the final minutes of the activity, when Nick draws from his available notes to write definitions about each term. During this sequence, which takes approximately three minutes, Emily gives students the chance to work with others in their group—Nick has two others at his cluster of desks—in order to come up with definitions and, if possible, synonyms for each.

Emily's encourages her students to "work together!," and Nick engages with one of his group members. Although he does listen in as Emily gives some clari-

fying examples to a group near him early on in his writing (the video shows him turning his head and leaning toward the group), most of what he writes under each “definition” emerges from talk with the neighbor to his immediate right as he works through the first two terms. By the time he has finished writing definitions on his sheet, however, his partner has left to speak with Emily at the front of the room, leaving Nick by himself to finish the remainder of the worksheet. This time “alone” does not preclude his interactions with other students in the class: he has several turns at talk with students in other groups, including Alexis, who is located several rows of desks closer to the front of the room than he is.

Nick’s writing becomes a set of preparatory materials in the ongoing work of the class: he follows his instructor in taking notes so that he can later write definitions, which are in turn a preparation for prewriting about his blog entries. In each of these writing incidents, Nick manages to complete his assigned work—to participate in the ongoing production of classroom order—while also participating in the ongoing production of peer interaction with, through, and around the note-taking. At this point, Nick has not encountered anything anomalous in the unfolding of *What-Comes-Next* that leads him to shake up his normal production of social order. Nick’s participation in this segment of activity remains similar to the kinds of participation he has engaged in throughout the semester: participating in classroom activity that count in the co-construction of social order while also engaging in what Brooke (1987) might call “underlife” practices that complement the ongoing flow of social order in the classroom.

This work on Nick’s behalf is indeed *work*: it is time- and attention-consuming, and the orchestration of lifeworlds that Nick is engaged in here keeps him from engaging in some of the more long-ranged thinking that Emily has encouraged throughout the academic year. This work, for instance, is a stepping stone into later blog writing activity, but at no point does Nick cease to indicate that he is not attending to the work at hand as *merely* the work at hand: he does not make any rhetorical moves to step away from the immediacy of the issue to consider the larger issues to which this work of preparation is attached.

This is not to say that Nick is doing something wrong or incomplete, but rather to highlight the adumbrated perspective that Nick is working through. Nick sees the task before him, completes it in ways that are accountable in Emily’s classroom, and does so while maintaining the pattern of peer interactions that he and his peers have come to expect. Much like Marianne, Nick’s work to complete a worksheet is caught up within the local production of social order and, by extension, so is the candidate moment of development that emerges from this work in subsequent weeks.

Nick, being in the same class as Marianne, finds himself also writing several blog posts about upstanders and bystanders, and frequently turns to the work that he does in his worksheet in order to complete these blog entries. Essentially, this worksheet creates the underpinnings of complex intertextual ties that span

a broad swath of Nick's school writings in the coming weeks. This was, in part, Emily's design, as her assignments are designed to scaffold students into a full blog post. Nick's work takes advantage of this scaffolding, and the language of his blog posts can be followed back along a material, intertextual chain that has its origins, in part, in his worksheet.

If we look at Figure 3.9, however, we note a topic that Nick fails to define in his worksheet: that of an upstander. The unfolding of the end of class in that period suggests that perhaps Nick ran out of time to complete the ~~✎writing activity✎~~, and instead had to shift gears into the ~~✎Exit Ticket✎~~. Whatever the reason, Nick does not have this paper to turn to in his own packet when the class co-constructs a ~~✎writing activity✎~~ that builds on the definition of an upstander to identify potential examples. Thankfully for Nick, a draft activity leading to the text shown in Figure 3.10 provides an opportunity for him to co-construct a new definition.

Heading:

Upstanding Blog 1: What Is an Upstander? Argue Your Position

Writing Prompt Blog #1: What makes an upstander? Argue your position and give convincing reasons. Include examples from real life and/or fiction. Make sure to think about how people might disagree and say why they are incorrect.

Prewrite

③ An upstander is someone who stands up for other.

① Students + teachers

② Why people disagree

Draft Use this paragraph frame or write a draft in your writer's notebook.

(In my opinion) An Upstander is someone who stands up
against people who are doing the wrong thing.

One example of an upstander from (real life or fiction) fiction is
SpongeBob because he is always helping out and being nice in Bikini Bottom.

Another example from (real life or fiction) real life is
Mother Teresa because she went around the world helping people who needed it.

Some people may argue that SpongeBob is not an upstander, but I
 disagree because _____

Figure 3.10. Nick's blog draft.

Nick is able to develop a definition of an upstander in the first step of this worksheet, which began as a ~~✎writing activity✎~~ in Emily's class and continued as a homework assignment. Emily and her students worked together to produce

language for working through the demands of the worksheet. Nick develops this definition from its first iteration to the first sentence of his draft (Figure 3.10). In his initial definition, Nick writes that “An upstander is someone who stands up for other.” In the first draft of his blog entry, Nick transforms that sentence into “An Upstander is someone who stands up against people who are doing the wrong thing.” It is interesting that, although his definition changed from one entry to the next, his examples relate more closely to his first definition than his second. Nick doesn’t talk about Spongebob Squarepants and Mother Teresa as those who stands up *against* others, but rather as people who are “always helping out,” whether it be at Bikini Bottom or around the world.

Nick’s examples—Spongebob Squarepants and Mother Teresa—are more common pairings than the reader might first surmise. Emily provided students with a list of people to research (this is what led Marianne to pick Helen Keller), so Nick was able to select Mother Teresa from that list, and Spongebob Squarepants from his television habits. But the mix of Spongebob and Mother Teresa is less important than the work that Nick seems to be doing to anchor examples to a somewhat-fluid definition of upstander. Note the lack of a definition of an upstander in Figure 3.9. Nick walks away from that series of textual activities without an artifact to turn to that had a definition of an upstander on it, and the lack of this intertextual tie correlates with his struggles to define an upstander as the blog activity develops. What had occurred without an elevated level of uncertainty in the ~~writing activity~~ captured in Figure 3.10 is now shaping an elevated uncertainty of what counts as an upstander in the ongoing production of social order that makes up the blog draft. As Nick attempts to keep writing going, in other words, he is working out his sense of a definition. Figure 3.11 shows Nick’s actual blog post.

Nick’s blog post demonstrates a third definition at work: “In My Opinion an upstander is someone who helps other people out when they are in need of it.” Nick’s third definition moves in the direction of his examples, and away from the language of standing up “against” people or standing up “for” others—helping is central to Nick’s understanding of an upstander. The work that Nick does here to develop a new definition of upstander through his subsequent writing and discussion highlights a demand that his adumbrated work in the co-construction of social order created for him. Nick’s work to balance both social participation and “official” literate practices in his classroom lead him to the need to produce a definition of upstander that will fit in with the Spongebob and Mother Teresa examples he has set up for himself in his subsequent worksheet activity. As Nick develops a definition in his later work, he finds himself in the position of having to revisit his definition multiple times—each time bring more tightly together the interpersonal work among him and his classmates and the writing work of the worksheets that he finds before him. Nick, in other words, orchestrates his lifeworlds a bit more tightly, and in doing so tweaks the history of his co-participation in Emily’s classroom in durable ways.

My Upstanders Blog

Tags: [spongebob](#) [upstander](#)

Categories: [What Is an Upstander?](#)

February 6, 2014 @ 6:18 AM [0 Comments](#)

What Is An Upstander?

In My Opinion an upstander is someone who helps other people out when they are in need of it. One example of an upstander from fiction is Spongebob SquarePants because he is always helping other people out in Bikini Bottom. Spongebob is always volunteering to test Sandy's experiments with her and always agreeing to work late for Mr. Krabs. Another example from real life is Mother Teresa because she went around the world helping people out who needed it. Mother Teresa even won an award for being an upstander. The award was called the [Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding](#). Some people may argue that Spongebob is not an upstander, but I disagree because there is one episode where he says he will help Mr Krabs, Sandy and go to Patrick's birthday party but they are all on the on the same night. He ends up helping all of them but they find out about all the commitments he made and they said that it would have been fine if he said no to them.



imi

Figure 3.11. Nick's blog post.

Nick's literate action development—the pulling together of previously-disparate lifeworlds through the organization of material environments and patterns of social interaction—can be seen as an adumbrated modification of the “unifying principle” he shares with his fellow students in adumbrated ways. From the start of his worksheet activity described above, Nick participated in ongoing social action in Emily's classroom with the same operator: that is, his answer to the question “what is going on here?” remained “worksheet activity,” and his answers to the question “what do I do next?” build on that answer. But in working out his answers to “what do I do next?” Nick transformed his literate action. Rather than completing his worksheet and turning to his peers to pass the time until the next required worksheet activity, or engaging in collaborative work when exhorted to by Emily, Nick made sense of information (a heightened uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next*) by drawing on the writing and discussion of his peers. The full implications of Nick's re-orchestration of his lifeworlds could not be seen over the

long term—Nick ended up moving to another classroom late in the year—but the work that he did in subsequent classes, particularly as he worked on subsequent blog entries, suggests that this re-orchestration proved durable enough to be considered developmental.

Insights into the Lived Reality: Recognizing New Possibilities in Objects

The cases of Marianne and Nick have provided interesting additional insight into the lived reality, and additional dimensions to think through when considering how literate action development might be understood from that perspective. Both of these students came to realize the new possibilities inherent in objects they were co-constructing with others from one moment to the next, and both carried those new sets of possibilities forward through the work of their blog writing. We can see that the ways in which they go about the literate action that creates texts has begun to change—Marianne in terms of the relationships she co-constructs with and through texts, Nick in terms of his interactional accomplishments during small group work.

Each of these students has an *adumbrated* perspective on the unfolding co-construction of social order within the class, and it is this adumbrated understanding that provides the individuated opportunity for literate action development in the ongoing production of what Garfinkel (2002) refers to as *immortal, ordinary society*. From these insights, we can take some tentative steps toward an integration of object possibilities, practices, *What-Comes-Next*, and adumbration into a framing of the lived reality of literate action development. The work of these students to reduce the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next* highlighted several important aspects of the production of possibilities of objects when focusing on literate action. As Marianne demonstrated, textual interaction is an important site of constructing sites of literate action—not just the texts written, but the texts read and, perhaps even more importantly, the *way* in which these texts are read, co-constructed, in unfolding situations. Because Marianne was able to talk through the complications of Keller's literate life with Alexis, Marianne's understanding of Keller became a scenic feature of social order that would transform her notes, her rough draft, and eventually her blog post. Likewise, Nick demonstrated the role of interaction at sites of writing, and the ways in which those interactions also become scenic features of a moment that leave their imprint on the future production of text—in Nick's case, through a worksheet, to another worksheet, to a rough draft, and finally to a blog post.

These interpersonal and intertextual transformations are possible only when viewing practices as *adumbrated* in the eyes of participants, and when locating the mechanisms in that adumbration in the structuring of possibilities of objects in moment-to-moment interaction. That is, the “unifying principle” that Garf-

inkel (2008) discusses is not entirely shared amongst members of a group in an unfolding social situation—each member’s understanding of and action through unifying principles is individuated to a certain extent, and that individuation offers opportunities for a new approach to taking up the possibilities of objects that may not violate the unifying principle but still offers new individuated insights through it. In the next chapter, I follow this up with two additional cases: Holly and Don. Holly’s transformation of her understanding of the “unifying principle” of revising a blog entry, and Don’s transformation of how he follows the shifting “unifying principles” at work across a range of tightly-packed activities demonstrates the ways in which social order is both a shared achievement and an opportunity for individuated literate action development.