Chapter 4. Building Lifeworlds, Developing Literate Action

Chapter 3 introduces two concepts (possibilities of objects; adumbration) that, along with the concepts of Chapter 2 (practice, *What-Comes-Next*, information), draw attention to the intersection of social and individuated understandings needed to view the lived reality of literate action development. The cases of Marianne and Nick in Chapter 3 also highlight what literate action development looks like from the perspective of the lived reality. These cases, while a useful starting point for envisioning the lived reality, are also located in a rather truncated period of time: throughout the blog writing unit. In this chapter, I look at literate action across a wider span of time and a wider swath of activities. Drawing on two further cases—Holly's sentence production and Don's work with "points" in class—I show how the productions of literate action, rooted as they are in the ongoing, local production of social order, contribute to and expand the lifeworlds that we come to find ourselves in. At the heart of this work is the claim that new chains of reasoning, new understandings of and work with literate action are always unavoidably scenic: that is, the ways in which we bring our understandings of the world to bear is always, in some way, materially present in the moments of literate action that we undertake. It is often possible, in other words, to chase down the ways in which past social situations that come to impact the present are made materially available in a given instance, provided that we know what we are looking for. Drawing on my yearlong knowledge of Holly's and Don's literate action, I am able to trace the material recurrence of objects upon which development rests through the moments under study.

The Possibilities of the Sentence: Holly

The search for literate action development across a broader swath of both time and activities will begin with Holly's work in Emily's classroom to develop her literate action via attention to sentence-level work. In particular, I will be focusing on her work with the ⧼Do Now⧽ on November 13, and her revision work that I interviewed her about at the end of January. Holly's November 13 ⧼Do Now⧽ is a transformative moment for her: her work with the sentence structures and, later, sharing them with the class leads her to focus on what her teacher, Emily, will label "sentence sense" in her subsequent writing. Although this is of course later reinforced with future ⧼Do Now⧽ activities, what Holly shows on November 13 is the start of an increased engagement with and attention to sentence-combining activities.

Antecedent: November 13 "Do Now"

The ⧼Do Now⧽ activity, in Emily's classroom, unfolds in a sequence of three inter-

related moves. In the first stage, students were provided with handouts and Google slides on a television at the front of the room and told to engage in sentence combining activity. Students were usually given between three and four minutes to work on this activity. During the second stage of the activity, students turned their attention to one another. In the third stage and final stage of the activity, Emily brought the attention of the class together and asked for volunteers to share the writing they did throughout the first stage.

Holly's work with sentence-combining on November 13 began like her other ⁋Do Now⁋ activities throughout the academic year to this point. Holly came into class, sat down, and looked to the slide on the big-screen television at the front of the room for guidance on what to do, coordinating that slide with the pages from Killgallon and Killgallon's sentence-combining text (see Figure 4.2). Using these texts in concert and with occasional instructions from Emily, Holly worked out two sentences (see Figure 4.3) that matched with what Killgallon and Killgallon (2000) (and, by extension, Emily's class) would label an "S-V split" and an "opener."

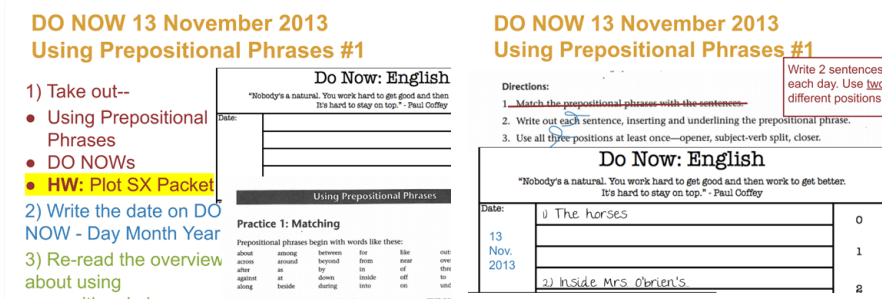


Figure 4.1. Slides with "Do Now" instructions.

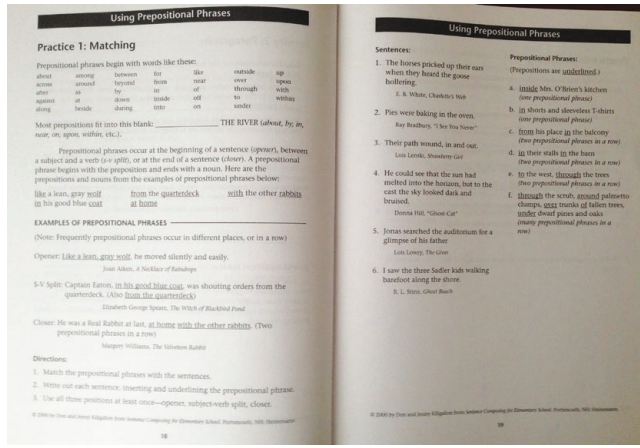


Figure 4.2. Killgallon & Killgallon Text.

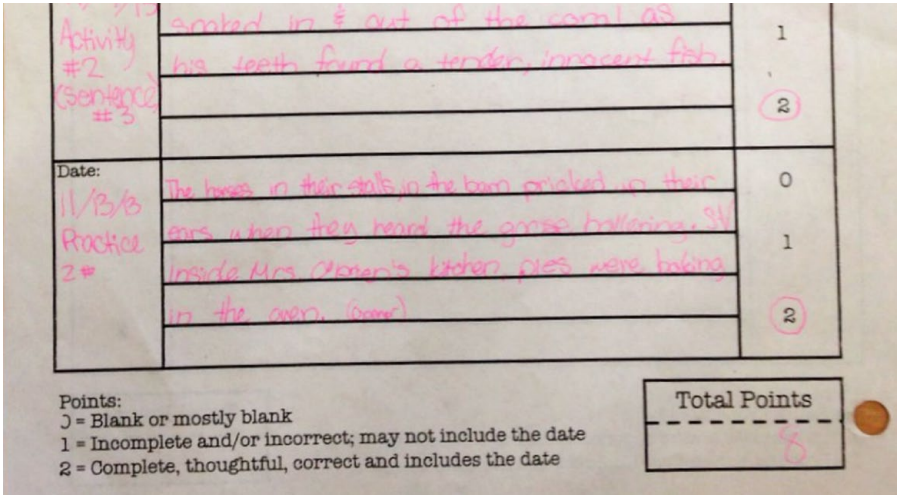


Figure 4.3. Holly's "Do Now."

The work so far—the written assignment, Holly's structuring of the task, and her participative actions—is no different than her work in earlier ⧼Do Now⧽ activities. Holly reaches an understanding of what is being asked of her by the teacher without noticeable hesitation or trouble—she completes her task at about the same time that those around her do, and she does not ask for clarification or help from either another student or Emily. Holly is making sense of her ⧼Do Now⧽ activity in ways that "count" in the ongoing production of social order.

The work that Holly has done to this point serves as a starting point for a change in her participation later in the class period. Throughout the first two and a half months of the academic year, Holly was a quiet student, participating when called upon and in small group work, but rarely speaking up voluntarily in class. During the third stage of the November 13 ⧼Do Now⧽ activity, however, Holly shifted her normal ways of participation, and in the process suggested a comfort with the sentence-combining activity that she had not displayed before. In order to more effectively guide the reader through the exchanges in the third stage of the activity, I present them in Table 4.1 (Holly's participation is in bold).

Holly's work during the third stage of the ⧼Do Now⧽ can be most effectively understood by centrally attending to two particular segments of the exchanges. The first segment is underscored in the "Initiation" column. During the opening of the activity, Emily ("T" in Table 4.1) asks a particular student to read their sentence aloud, adding that "if you [other students] had it a different way, please raise your hand." Other students began speaking, requiring Emily to re-start the exchange, and when she did, she reframed her structuring of participation. Instead of asking students to raise their hand only if they had written their sentence a different way, Emily adds that if someone "*knows* a different way," they may also participate.

Table 4.1. I-R-E exchanges about the "Do Now."

Initiation	Response	Evaluation
T: Okay so um I'm going to have (student) start and then if you had it a different way I want you to raise your hand.		
T: Wait, (student), until it's quiet	S: (starts to speak)	
T: Okay (student) did an opener one so he'll read and then if somebody did it a different way or knows a different way you can read yours.		
	S: Inside Mrs. O'Brien's kitchen pies were baking in the oven	
		T: Yep so the inside Mrs. O'Brien is opening it, now—
	S: Isn't Mrs. O'Brien a (???)	
T: All right who can do it a different way? How about Holly? Wait, wait until it's quiet.		T: I don't know, it's unclear and I've never read that book so I don't know.
T: And which, which method was that?	**H: Pies inside Mrs. O'Brien's kitchen were baking in the oven.**	T: Okay
T: Did anybody know another way? So we heard S-V split, we heard opener, and could we do it one more way? How about (student)?	**H: I think that was S-V split.**	T: It is.

This slight change in instruction opens up the possibility of Holly's participation. Holly raised her hand to participate in the activity when Emily asked for volunteers, but was not called upon. Another student read the same sentence structure (an "opener") that Holly had used, but because of Emily's

extra instruction during her re-start, she had the opportunity for additional participation.

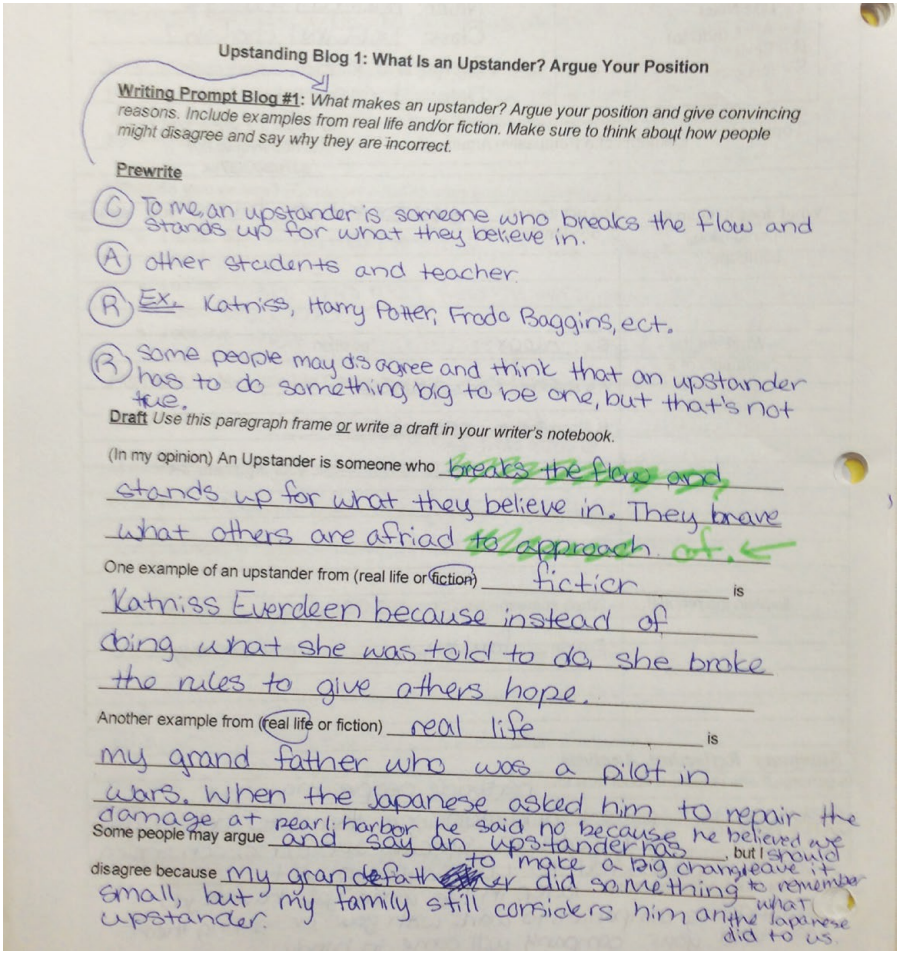
The second item to centrally attend to is Holly's response, which is boldfaced in the "Response" column of Table 4.1. After the first student response provides the answer that Holly had written about, she reviews her sentence and, without any writing, alters her sentence in an S-V split form to participate in the third stage of the ⧼Do Now⧽.

This work by Holly showcases two important elements of her work in the class. First, she is beginning to participate differently in class, suggesting a transformation of her perceptions of what is available to her in terms of class participation. Second, through her increased participation during this particular activity, Holly showed an understanding of and interest in sentence-combining activities that she had not demonstrated previously—though she has always completed her ⧼Do Now⧽ activity in the past, she had not previously constructed a new sentence extemporaneously in order to participate in a class discussion. In order to understand the ways in which Holly's literate action undergoes a developmental shift, we must turn to the next place that such attention to sentence-level work turns up: blog writing.

Co-Constructing Developmental Moments: January Blog Writing

Several weeks after Holly's November 13 ⧼Do Now⧽ shift in participation, Emily began the blog-writing unit that I describe in Chapter 3. Holly's blog writing can be traced across several lessons. Figure 4.4 shows Holly's first draft of a blog entry for her "What is an Upstander?" blog entry. In this draft, Holly's writing is directed by several factors. First, Emily has provided students with various sentence frames to shape their writing. While this is not necessarily a problem for students (in fact, many students use these as guides for their writing), it does limit some of the options that Holly has when she engages in writing. Second, Holly only has a limited amount of space for her entry: it is limited to a single page, and her answer to the "What is an Upstander?" question is broken into several pieces, each of which has a limited space to be described. This limitation is similar to the limitations that Marianne and Alexis' worksheets had as they pulled facts out of their books in Chapter 3—it shapes how she constructs a sense of the task demanded of her.

Figure 4.4 shows a draft of Holly's blog entry. Perhaps because of the sentence frames provided by Emily, the connection between the blog and the "Do Now" is not quite made in the initial draft. Neither in her writing or her organization around and for the writing does Holly appear to be drawing on her understanding of 'sentence sense' through the terminology established in the ⧼Do Now⧽.



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

C) To me, an upstander is someone who breaks the flow and stands up for what they believe in.

A) other students and teacher

R) Ex. Katniss, Harry Potter, Frodo Baggins, ect.

B) some people may disagree and think that an upstander has to do something big to be one, but that's not true.

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

(In my opinion) An Upstander is someone who breaks the flow and stands up for what they believe in. They brave what others are afriad to approach of.

One example of an upstander from (real life or fiction) fictior is Katniss Everdeen because instead of doing what she was told to do, she broke the rules to give others hope.

Another example from (real life or fiction) real life is my grand father who was a pilot in wars. When the Japanese asked him to repair the damage at pearl harbor he said no because he believed we

Some people may argue and say an upstander has, but I should disagree because my grandfather did something to make a big change leave it small, but my family still considers him an upstander. what the Japanese did to us

Figure 4.4. Holly's "What is an Upstander?" draft.

However, if we compare the revised blog entry (Figure 4.5) to what Holly wrote in her initial draft, a few important changes emerge. Holly's initial draft is organized into six sentences. Her revised draft—which emerged after several passes of revision—expanded into eight sentences. The additional words (as well as the word replacements) provide clarification for the reader, adding detail and specifying claims beyond the framework and space initially provided by Emily's worksheet. In this space, we seem to see Holly engaged in another project—that of transcribing (and, with it, revising) her blog work for electronic publication on *Kidblog*. However, it is at this point that Holly's attention seems to be changing. In the previous work, Holly is merely accomplishing specific kinds of work. As Holly moves her writing from the page to *Kidblog*, however, her attention to the text seems to change.

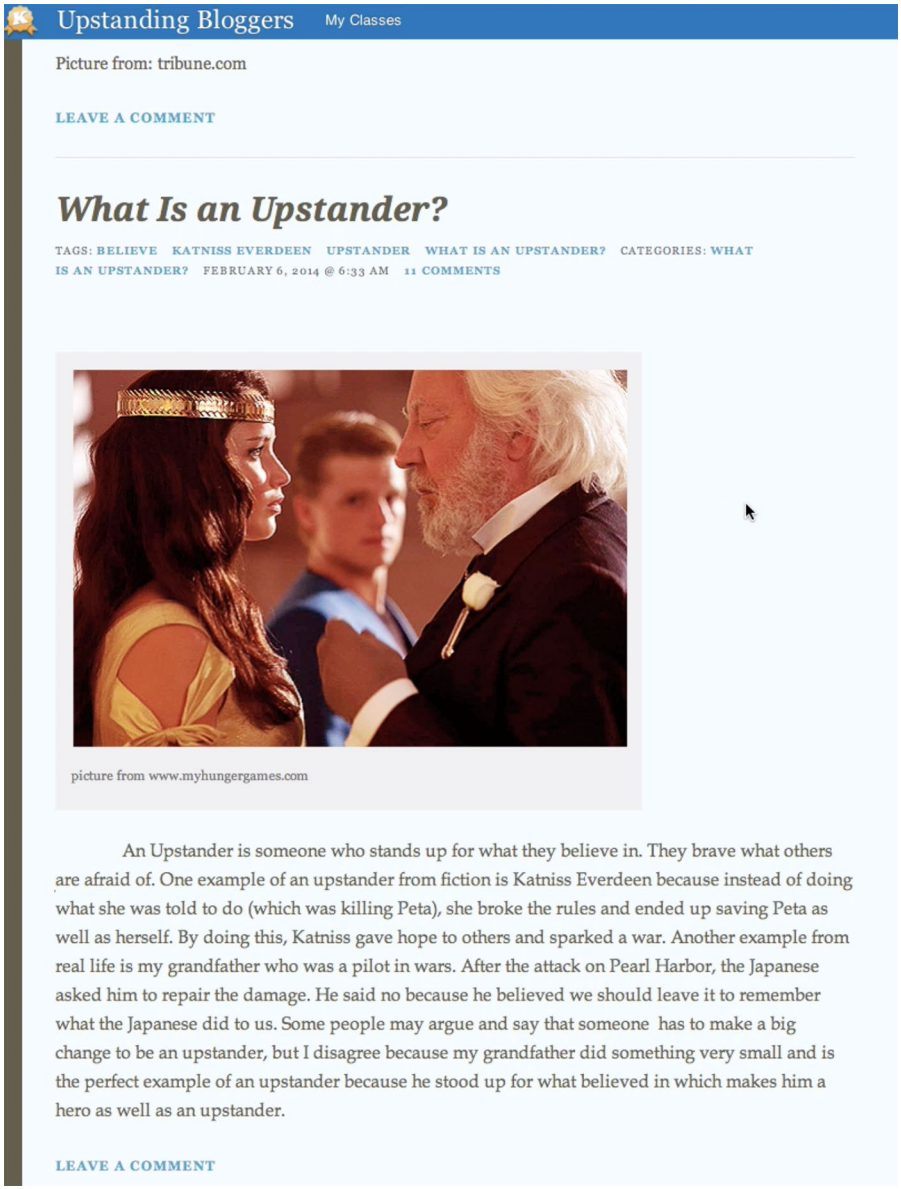


Figure 4.5. Holly's revised blog entry.

Holly seemed to put in more extensive work moving her text to *Kidblog* than her peers did: she added 38 words to her text, rather than simply copying over her writing and making changes suggested by Emily. The additional 38 words came in a variety of forms: new sentences, parenthetic relative clauses, verbal phrases, compounded predicates, and additional clauses (as well as a Creative

Commons-licensed image) provide undeniable sentence variety compared to Holly's initial draft. But the sentence variety itself is just a symptom of a larger shift in Holly's participation in the production of social order. Holly, through her revisions, turned her attention from completing particular tasks to attending to the needs of a particular audience—in this case, Emily.

Holly, in response to my questions about her revisions, mentioned that she liked to "use the S-V splits and stuff" in order to "surprise" Emily, the audience that she has in mind. What is clear from her actual revisions is, of course, that she did not use prepositional phrases to open, split, or close the subject and verb of her sentences in any way that mimicked her work in the ~~{~~Do Now~~}~~ activity—either on November 13 or later. However, what Holly does indicate is an attention to two elements: the sentence-level details of her blog entry, and the needs of her audience. Furthermore, these two elements are co-constructed into being during the space of revision between drafting and publishing. Holly's perception of sentence-level activity as important is directly related to her perception of Emily as an audience, but only becomes mobilized as Holly wrestled with the opportunities that a shift between rough draft and final publication offered.

The available data does not suggest that Holly's syntactic flexibility has dramatically transformed, nor that her knowledge of sentence structures gleaned from the "Do Now" activity has helped her make sense of the sentence that she is writing. What she appears to have done is realize new possibilities for action at the sentence level in her work across multiple drafts: that is, the sentence has become something it is possible to revise, something that can "surprise" a reader. She seems to have taken up this value through the work of revising her blog entry while she transcribed it from page to *Kidblog* entry. Furthermore, we can trace similar work across future multi-draft publications in Emily's classroom, which suggests that the transformation of between-draft moments as opportunities for sentence-level revision has the staying power to count as literate action development.

The Possibilities of the Points: Don

Contrast this activity with the activity of Don, the point-keeper for the class. Don is a very active student who regularly talks with other students throughout the class period. However, Don does not push at the edges of classroom boundaries. He is a strategic speaker, rarely addressed by the teacher for speaking out of turn. He also participates regularly in class.

Don is a capable writer and artist. His writer's notebook is littered with detailed sketches of people from some kind of cartoon or video with which I am completely unfamiliar. His writing is also regarded as superior according to classroom benchmarks, and he regularly receives high marks for his efforts. However, Don does not self-identify as a writer; rather, making stories is something that he does with friends. The link between academic writing and personal writing, for Don, has not yet been made.

Don had spent the second part of the lesson—the completion of the sentence-combining "Do Now" activity—awarding "points" to different groups who were participating in the activity. These group points could benefit student grades later in the year. After the groups finished and Emily moved on, Don was not quite done at the board, as Emily asked him to "add up all the points so [she] could see who the winner is." He was caught between the instructions to pull his agenda out of his backpack and revise the week's entries and tallying the points for the week. He chose to finish his point tallying before moving back to his seat and, as a result, had an entirely different experience than a fellow student seated not far from him. Examining this activity in the context of the broader classroom action that Don engaged in will reveal the developmental opportunities present.

Don's work at the board began as the class shifted to the third part of their daily warm-up, the class discussion. Emily called on her first student to read his answer. Upon hearing it, Emily said "So he did an S-V split and closer, and that worked perfectly. And then I've got to remember that group five gets a point" before calling on someone else. While she was saying this, Don got up from his desk and moved to the front of the room to start recording points, bringing his notebook and "Do Now" sheet with him. He walked up the middle aisle of the classroom, moved to the left-hand side of the board, spun, and picked up a marker to write down group five's point. As Emily calls on students, Don recorded points for different groups, interacting with nearby students and occasionally dancing as he does so. At one point, Emily remarks that Don is "doing a good job with that."

At the point in the year that this activity happened (May 21), Emily had elaborated her "Do Now" to include not just a sentence combining but an imitation: a chance for students to reproduce the sentence structure they discussed through their own experience. After providing an example of her own—involving her brother getting into trouble with her parents for staying out past curfew—Emily encouraged her students to take one minute and write down an imitation of their own. When she gives students this minute, Don put his marker down and returned to his desk. Once sitting at his desk, Don realized that he left his notebook and "Do Now" sheet at the front of the room, and got up again to retrieve it. By the time Don returned to his desk, Emily is ready to discuss the sentence imitations with the class. Back at his desk, Don took a drink of water from his water bottle and had a brief exchange with a student next to him. Before he could turn to his imitation activity, however, Don was called to the front of the room by Emily to continue awarding points. Don left his notebook and "Do Now" sheet at the table this time.

It is here that Don is asked to do two things at once: revise his agenda and add up his points. Don responds to the twin pressures by finishing his notes at the board and then returning to his desk to finish his agenda revising. While Don is adding up points, Emily reviews late library book returns, and resolves a time conflict between their "river teeth" activity and a National Honor Society event. Don's time lost on the new activity was somewhat attenuated by Emily's need to

address two students who, in her view, were not attending to the assignment. Don arrived back at his seat at the end of that address, and was able to quickly fill in the changes to the week's entries in the agenda before Emily shifted the discussion to a survey that the GATE ("Gifted and Talented Education") program brought into the classroom. By the time Emily begins handing out the survey instructions, Don has completed both activities.

Don's orchestration of tasks allow him to prioritize the writing that he has to do in order to participate in a range of social action in the classroom. Don's actions in this literate act show a change in the prioritizing of activities that he carries with him into multiple writing opportunities (i.e., "river teeth," anthologies, etc.) throughout the remaining weeks of the school year. This shifted awareness of the importance of different elements of writing tasks makes itself known via the attention given to each of the final activities of the year. This attention reveals an increasing awareness of the interconnectedness of the kinds of writing that Don finds himself doing, as well as the management of social arrangements needed to accomplish each of them.

Looking at what Don does through our existing concepts, it seems that Don is using his practices to wrestle some new information—that is, a quick succession of writing tasks that he is faced with on a regular basis as the Point Keeper—into a more manageable *What-Comes-Next*. Don's rapid movement from Point Keeping to agenda-revising suggests that he has established a kind of synergetic production of practice that allows him to move forward and participate in class with practices that, though necessarily adumbrated in ways noticeably different from those of his classmates, are not problematically so.

Don manages this deeper integration of writing tasks by recognizing new possibilities in particular objects. Some of this recognition is not effective—such as when he brings his notebook and "Do Now" sheet to the front of the room with him, and forgets it there when he returns to his desk—but his attention to the integration of his activities follows from the relationships that he sees (i.e., the unifying principle) in the objects he works with. This unifying principle is not itself visible, but can be inferred from the interrelationships of objects that Don works with sequentially. Consider, for instance, Don's movement from his "Do Now" writing to his Point Keeper work. When the discussion begins about the warm-up, Don's sentences are written, and he is able to attend to the work of the Point Keeper without falling behind on a graded assignment (Emily scores warm-up activities) just before a high-stakes event about that particular assignment (there is a quiz at the end of the week on the sentence structures of the "Do Now"). When Don returns to his desk after the point-totaling is complete, he finishes updating his agenda before the next activity begins.

These new possibilities can also be seen in the work that Don chooses not to take up. Don's decision to forego reading his sentence as part of the group work suggests that he sees his writing—though a necessary component of participation at the time—as a problematic object to take up in his co-production

of the social order of the classroom, not because of problems in the moment but because of problems that can arise in subsequent moments. In other words, Don is participating in specific ways so that he can see and act on a broader sequence of activity. Don also manages to maintain this work moving forward through the remainder of the academic year. Much like Alice in Chapter 1, Don's work to begin integrating a range of practices comes rather late in the academic year. As the "river teeth" unit develops in Emily's class, Don's practices remain more tightly knit in this unit than in previous ones, so his progression through the sequence of activities in Emily's classroom echo with the same preparatory purposes: Don continues to be ready for the next task by the time the current one wraps up for the class as a whole. This keeps Don from falling behind schedule in the flow of writing activity in Emily's class, to be sure, but it also suggests that Don is controlling for potentially problematic adumbration in his perspective on the unfolding social order of the classroom. The movement from being responsive to this problematic adumbration as it arises to taking steps to keep it from arising suggests that Don saw the competing demands on his time as elevated uncertainty, as information that he worked to reduce in his subsequent literate action. To do so, he turned to the scenically available talk, tools, and texts around him to coordinate his literate action and create a manageable *What-Comes-Next* in these complexly-layered moments.

The literate action development that Don goes through here is, like Holly, a recognition of new opportunities in previously-unexamined spaces of social and literate action. Holly came to see the space between drafts as an opportunity for sentence-level attention in response to the needs of her audience. Don saw pacing his literate action in relation to the unfolding social order of the class as a way to meet the demands of consequential tasks that were competing for his attention. Instead of the space between drafts, Don looked to the space within tasks.

Extending a Series of Moments: Stretching Concepts through Time and Lifeworlds

This chapter has explored the effectiveness of the five concepts established in Chapters Two and Three across broader spans of time and social activity. In Chapter Three, Marianne and Nick's candidate moments of literate action development occur in a tightly-scripted series of opportunities provided by Emily. Holly's and Don's literate action, though still rooted deeply in the co-construction of the classroom, ranges across multiple classroom activities such as classroom warm-up activities, readings, and agenda-writing. Additionally, these activities range far past the timespan covered in Marianne and Nick's examples. Whereas Marianne and Nick's work spans several weeks, the literate action development chronicled in Holly and Nick's work spans several months. Holly's and Don's literate action, in other words, enabled us to see what the concepts developed in

Chapters Two and Three uncover within a broader swath of lifeworld over a longer span of time.

So, how did these concepts hold up to such a task? Did they shed important light on the lived reality of literate action development? Have they continued to be useful ways of understanding the literate action that people engage in in a given moment of time and how that action contributes to the ongoing development of literate action over a broad span of time? Based on the findings that emerged from the study of Holly's and Don's literate action, the answer seems to be "yes." Below, I articulate the value that each of these concepts brought to the study of literate action development from the perspective of the lived reality.

The first concept articulated in Chapter 2 was that of practices—the socially recognizable work that enables writers to make their actions sensible to others and themselves. Practices are broadly used in writing research, but in the ethnomethodological respecification of my study the emphasis was placed on the tactical work of such practices: the way they emerged from scenically available materials and co-constructed social order. Attending to the practices of Holly and Don highlighted the ways in which transformations emerge and endure, just as they did with Marianne and Nick. The broader spans of time and activities are not blocked off by a focus on practices. Rather, attending to practices has shown how each of these writers builds a lifeworld and orchestrates those growing lifeworlds with others in their continued engagements with and through literate action.

One of the central tasks that practices performs is to reduce the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next*. Recognizing the work of Holly and Don to tangle with *What-Comes-Next* through their practices across broader stretches of time (Holly) and increasing co-present activities (Don) highlighted the ways in which our practices and the transformations of them build upon scenically available material. Information, likewise, proved a generative concept, as it provided some language for what Holly and Don were working through when the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next* increased beyond what recurring practices were capable of contending with. Working in tandem with the concept of practices, *What-Comes-Next* and information directed attention to the tactical work of any given moment, the incredible flexibility that such practices offer, and the conditions through which actors realize new possibilities for action that they make scenically available in the further ongoing, serial production of local social order involving literate action.

The final two concepts, adumbration and the possibilities of objects, rounded out an analysis that kept the lived reality both at the heart of studying literate action development and grounded in the materiality of unfolding social order. Adumbration proved up to the task of tracing the lifeworlds of Holly and Don through the ongoing revisions of their practices. This concept directed analytical attention to the practices that Holly and Don saw as scenically available to them in a given moment and, by extension, the ways in which they used that availability (or lack thereof) to build out their lifeworlds in enduring ways.

Moving Toward Coherence: Building a Conceptual Framework

This chapter expands the initial work of Chapter 3, demonstrating the ways in which moments of literate action more distanced in time, space, and co-constructed purpose (such as Holly's sentence-combining activity) can be made scenically available in the present moment as key elements in the take-up of new possibilities of arrangements of objects as they are talked and acted into being in both individuated and intersubjective ways. The constellation of concepts tentatively finalized in Chapter 3 that drive toward an understanding of the lived reality—*What-Comes-Next*, practices, information, the possibilities of objects, and adumbration—prove up to the task of tracing literate action development across slightly broader spans of time than demonstrated in Chapter 3. The particularities of the moments in this chapter—such the ways in which they work across jointly-produced activities at various points in the past—make these moments perspicuous in revealing the reach and power of these operationalized concepts.

It would appear now that a set of concepts exist for envisioning and making sense of literate action development from the perspective of the lived reality. This approach has evaluated the candidacy of specific moments of literate action for being developmental in nature in a way that allows for a robust articulation of the features of that lived reality that might turn our attention more effectively toward development as occurring amidst the ongoing work of social ordering that participants are always already engaged in. The emerging understanding of these concepts and how to work with them, however, remains deeply rooted in the particularities of each of the four moments described in this chapter and in Chapter 3, as well as Alice's example in Chapter 1. In the next chapter, I take important steps to render the findings in these chapters and their implications for the concepts being brought to bear on understanding the lived reality of literate action development *portable*, able to be brought to bear on a wider range of situations involving literate action throughout the lifespan.