

Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit And Student Talk:
A Case Study in an Urban High School

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

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by

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This dissertation is a case study of students' reasoning in a small group. It is argued that Hegel's concept of Spirit provides a useful heuristic for observation of classroom reasoning and that such a frame is needed given the dominance of administrative frames of assessment and evaluation which hinder effective pedagogy. It is also argued that the type of emic analysis demonstrated here is necessary to address unknown issues regarding students' capacity for reasoning and the development of ethical life.

Twelve students in a small restructured school in the Bronx were allowed to freely discuss social issues and issues of relevance to social studies in a classroom setting. One classroom transcript is analyzed by examining chains of student dialogue. Instances of an emergent logic of mutual recognition and the formation of Spirit were identified. Under circumstances of unconstrained conversation students were shown to create

a social order built around their emergent collective understanding and mutual recognition. Over time they also demonstrated deep shared cognitive engagement with critical global and local issues. The students showed increased trust and manifestation of individuality under the circumstance of free exchange of ideas.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In New York City more than half of high school students do not graduate within four years (Swanson). While economic stress on the family and the economic inequality in the school system in New York City public schools has been well-documented (Kozol) and these factors must therefore be seen as significant contributors to the graduation rate, education research reports the near-universal use of pedagogical practices within schools which are seen by researchers as detrimental to student learning. As will be described in Chapter 1, pedagogical practices in schools in the United States are described as “monological” (Nystrand), as engendering “resistance” (Giroux), lack of “engagement” (Newmann, Marks), and “passivity” (Goodlad) in schooling. These findings suggest a lack of meaningful cognitive involvement of students in the learning. This lack could only have been exacerbated by the new state and national curricular standards, which have resulted in preparations for testing dominating classroom activities in the United States (Ball). This evidence strongly suggests that students leave schools in such high numbers, in part, because of conditions they find there.

In response to this crisis this dissertation is an action-research case-study of a pedagogy derived from Hegel's philosophy. That is, it is a case study that explores an ambitious and one might think, an obsolete theoretical source. It is an inquiry as to whether or not Hegel's Philosophy, in particular the interlinked concepts of Recognition, Spirit, and Ethical Life can provide a useful social ontology, a heuristic, for engendering and comprehending the social processes of education. It is an example of the reasoning students exhibit in classroom discussions and of the role of the author in leading those discussions, interpreted through the lens of Hegel's concept of "Spirit." Its purpose is to contribute to a conversation about the proper aims and means of education to overcome the crisis in education described above. It is hoped that a case study of student reasoning in situ will be useful for the evolution of the self-conscious study of the micro-processes of students' reasoning in class rooms. Given the dire state of schooling in this country, particularly in underserved urban areas, the need for empirical studies of student reasoning in group discussions is crucial. The first chapter is an outline of key efforts to understand schooling within educational research in the post-war era. For Hegel, consciousness, including social science research, in its effort to know reality, inevitably distinguishes the thing-in-itself from its consciousness of the thing. This distinguishing internal to consciousness is the basis for immanent critique.

This logic is manifest in educational research and that, in teleological fashion, educational research has striven to find and know its object, the social practices of schooling. In so doing it shall be argued that it has tended to produce useful knowledge for the transformation of education. In this dissertation, drawing on recent interpretations which point to the pivotal role of the concept of “Recognition” in Hegel’s thought, I outline Hegel’s social ontology as described in *The Phenomenology of Mind*.¹ I argue that Hegel’s social logic provides a model which accounts for the generation of a social subject which need not overpower individuality or individual agency and in so doing, has pragmatic utility for pedagogy. As such, the insertion of these Hegelian concepts has relevance for the current state of discussion as to the possibilities of a critical pedagogy. Indeed, I argue that Hegel’s ontology of social life, can account for the concrete manifestation of student engagement in classroom dialogue, and can therefore serve as a guide for the generation of agency in a social context. This pragmatic role is against the standard view of Hegel’s thought as solely contemplative. A revisioning of the possibilities of Hegel’s thought for social practice is becoming common in contemporary Hegel literature. (e.g., Redding, Rose, Gallagher)

¹ I have mostly drawn on Terry Pinkard’s *Hegel’s Phenomenology The Sociality of Reason*, Paul Reddings’ *Hegel’s Hermeneutics*, Gillian Rose’s *Hegel Contra Sociology* and Robert Williams’, *Recognition Fichte and Hegel on the Other* for the perspective on Hegel’s concept of recognition developed here.

It shall be argued that the effort to know schooling must transcend its position as an observer and directly engage with its object in the form of action research. It is a theme of this dissertation that such reform will require a close interaction of theory and practice of teaching in order to engender socially recognized alternative forms of pedagogical practices, given the evident and increasingly identified, although inadequately understood, educational dilemmas. In his monograph, *Hegel's Phenomenology: the Sociality of Reason*, Terry Pinkard argues that the “self-understanding” of modern people is characterized by the desire for what Hegel calls “absolute knowing” which is, for Pinkard, “the human community’s coming to a reflective non-metaphysical understanding of what it must take as authoritative grounds for belief and action.” The first chapter will also briefly delineate institutional arrangements which have obstructed the “absolute knowing” of the social processes of education.

The fourth chapter describes the case study. Over two months in the Spring of 2003 two groups of approximately ten high school sophomores in an urban high school in one of the most poorly served public school systems in the country were given the opportunity to discuss social issues for approximately one hour per week in their social Studies class. Although they were encouraged to attend the sessions, the size and membership of the groups varied slightly because students were allowed to work independently

on assigned projects and readings in another room under a colleague's supervision. Most students attended the sessions. Six of the discussions were video taped by a professional videographer, all of the discussions were tape recorded. The author led these discussions by introducing a topic related to his selection and interpretation of concepts included in the mandated curriculum. As can be seen in the transcripts of the session analyzed here, students were then given some freedom to direct the conversation.²

The transcript shows the emergence of a social order in the class. This social order is evident in altered intentional states on the part of students. After some ambivalence, marked by resistance with the initiation of the discussion, they show moments of the emergence of centrifugal tendencies out of centripetal tendencies. When questioned by the author when students seemed to lose interest, students in each instance reported this experience to be enjoyable ("mad interesting"). In terms of formal concepts derived from mainstream education research, the conversations can be seen to have led to enhanced "engagement," (Newmann, Marks) "higher order thinking", (Newmann) and enhanced "membership" (Newmann) in classes that had been chaotic.

² The author discovered that he in fact quite oft

Students also displayed interpersonal struggles as well as the emergence of mutual recognition. Thus, though not without significant interpersonal strife these conversations also show an alteration of power relationships, which can be explained by the logic mutual recognition. Via these free conversations, some students, were able to overcome their subordinate social status within their peer group. More impressively, dominant students found their dominance subordinated to the demands of the logic of the conversation. Their social dominance did not translate into conceptual dominance; although it is clear from school life outside of class that these conversations did not radically transform status hierarchies amongst students; they did provide moments where the logic of group reasoning, not status, was paramount; and as such occasions for students of lesser standing in the group to be heard and acknowledged by the group. Such free conversations did allow for the production of social experiences whereby the pull of mutual recognition was able to trump social hierarchy.

As to the content of their conversations, the included transcripts help to limn students' conceptions of their social worlds. In several places, these conceptions provided "teachable moments" which in future pedagogical acts, might foster greater depth of student knowledge as well as greater student satisfaction. By engendering a shared intentional focus, such free discussion could ironically serve to result in more extensive

incorporation of conceptual knowledge. The conversations also show students' sense of their inability to influence events in the outside world. Such feelings can only lead to educational despair and are a major challenge to notions of "authentic learning" predicated as they are on effective engagement with the outside world. This makes the pleasure students expressed and displayed in these conversations all the more impressive.

Conversational transcripts of relatively free dialogue are rare in the education research literature. Researchers seeking alternatives to the standard lesson format rarely find them. It is hoped that such a genre will begin to be part of a discussion among theorists and teachers which can begin to document new ways for students and children to work together in schools. Such an evidentiary base is nearly non-existent for schooling.

These transcripts also serve as a form of "self-study" for the author. They reveal moments where the author's attempts to infuse curricular concepts into the discussion interrupted the development of students' immanent reasoning. While at cross purposes with observing the free emergence of student reasoning in a social setting, these interjections by the author were also a reflection of the pressing need that these students pass the mandated year-end state social studies exam.³ The errors in the carrying out

³ Students in my classes took the Global Studies regents exam in June of this year. Their passing rate was 65% which equaled that of my colleague who worked hard to cover the

of the study, point to some of the dilemmas involved in action research. Most critically the need to reflect regularly and deeply on the events of the days class. Because the video tapes were generated by the Department of Education for their internal use, I was unable to view the video tapes until after the sessions were over. While this study was intended to represent a turn toward a more conscious integration of theory into practice it also is an example of its difficulty. This tearing of reflection from practice points yet again to the need for space for reflection-in-practice within schools.

Thus, It shall be argued that Hegel's conceptions of Spirit and Absolute Ethical Life provides the means for teachers to self-consciously and in concert construct more efficacious pedagogical methods: that is it provides a model for the examination of the micro-processes of schooling in situ which can result in positive educational effects, which are shown here in examples of student reasoning. It shall be shown that these concepts provide a theoretical frame which can address dilemmas posed by concepts of "resistance" and "engagement;" problems only recently conceptualized within educational research. Secondly, it shall be argued that Hegel's concepts of mutual recognition and Spirit provides a frame which can

state curriculum. He also did not give the test to all of his students. I encouraged everyone to take it, for the experience.

address limitations in Critical Pedagogy and contemporary pragmatism in education theory.

CHAPTER 2

ON KNOWING SCHOOLING

“The basic grammar of schooling, like the shape of classrooms, has remained remarkably stable over the decades. Little has changed in the ways that schools divide time and space, classify students and allocate them to classrooms, splinter knowledge into “subjects” and award grades and “credits” as evidence of learning.” (Tyack and Cuban)

“ . . . solid knowledge on the best techniques for the promotion of thinking does not exist.” (Newmann 1992)

“ . . . the most powerful forces to have shaped educational scholarship over the last century have tended to push the field in unfortunate directions—away from close interactions with policy and practice and toward excessive quantification and scientism.” (Condliffe-Lagemann, xi)

These quotations from educational researchers from diverse perspectives share a concern that educational practices have remained remarkably unchanging over the past century, staying beyond human agency or knowing, as manifested in educational research. In this chapter I first explore the institutional history of educational administration and educational research. Then, I demonstrate how education research has, often in spite of itself, shown a teleological development towards its object, the social processes of education, but that it can not know this object because, on the one hand, of its adherence to a Neo-Kantian model of science which will not allow it; and on the other developments within postmodernism, which equate reason with domination. Knowledge of schooling will require a dialectical leap, seeking knowledge from new suppositions. Education researchers have intuited this imperative as seen in the new push towards pragmatism in education research and, where I conclude this chapter, with the faint but often repeated calls for action research.

Administrative Centralization

In *Tinkering Toward Utopia*, David Tyack and Larry Cuban tell the story of administrative centralization of schooling in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. They identify a group of school reformers

they call the “policy elite” made up of “ ... city superintendents, education professors, state or federal officers, leaders in professional organizations such as the National Education Association (NEA), and foundation officials.” These reformers believed that education science could lift the reform of education “above politics.”

“The new educational ideology of progress through science, efficient management, and professionalism gave the appearance of turning educational policy into a process of rational planning, surely not political bargaining” (Tyack and Cuban, 18).

As a result of their efforts, the size of central school boards membership was reduced, and a model of policy making patterned after business corporations was adopted. Now school boards would delegate decisions to licensed superintendents and staff who were assumed to be experts. They encouraged the U.S. Bureau of Education to create a blueprint for all manner of school concerns, including certification of teachers, and curriculum. State education bureaucracies increased enormously. They argued that local schools should meet minimum requirements to receive state aid. They encouraged schools to track students by ability level, which they saw as enhancing educational opportunity. They argued that schools should enroll more students and that the school year should be lengthened. These reforms have become part of the normal conditions of schooling in the United States (Tyack and Cuban,

19-21). These new conditions of schooling, Dan Lortie claims, stripped teachers of control of their working lives.

In *School Teacher*, Dan Lortie's 1975 monograph, he argues that administrative centralization and the rise of research universities containing education departments prevented teachers from gaining control over either daily practice or pedagogy (12). Increased school enrollments and tracking did not result in a structure where teachers worked more closely together. Rather, individual teachers either taught a particular group all subjects or taught a single subject to one group of students for a period. This "egg crate" structure, teachers work in the same building but in relative isolation from each other, while the new role of school principal meant constant supervision from an administrator appointed by the school board (14). The rapid expansion of schooling in the late nineteenth century, coincided with a vast increase in the proportion of women entering the ranks of teaching. Rules forbidding female married teachers had the effect of institutionalizing a high turn over rate for teachers, discouraging support for teacher innovation as replacement teachers must be interchangeable. As the principal and superintendent claimed expertise over running the schools, subject matter professors and education professors claimed expertise over disciplinary knowledge and pedagogic practice. "Thus," concludes Lortie,

“teachers never did gain control of any area of practice where they were clearly in control and most expert” (12).

The separation of administrative control from daily practice did not result in clear conformity to district rules. It is common in schools to find policy statements that bear little resemblance to what schools actually accomplish (Goodlad, 46-50). Thus, there is much evidence that in spite of the adoption of a model of “scientific management” within school systems (Carlson) much of modern schooling remains administratively opaque. It is another irony that despite the strong centralized controls in schooling, Lortie reports that teachers face a great deal of uncertainty due to a “lack of systematic codification of practical experience.” Unlike other university-based professions, he argues:

Teaching has not been subjected to the sustained, empirical, and practice-oriented inquiry into problems and alternatives... research in education... has concentrated on learning rather than on teaching and has generally employed models and techniques at some distance from the realities of the classroom (69-70).

As a result of the inadequate base of empirical knowledge about what works in a variety of teaching settings, teachers must be able to work under stressful conditions of uncertainty as to their effectiveness — an unintended consequence of the rise of the research university education department.

Intellectual Separation and its Consequences

In her monograph (quoted at the beginning of the chapter), *An Elusive Science: the Troubling History of Education Research*, Ellen Condliffe-Lagemann describes the processes whereby education research came to be located in and framed by research universities. With the growth of high school enrollment in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the increased demand for teachers and administrators led to increased interest in teacher education in the emergent research universities, which in turn had been spawned by the “new endowments and a new interest in science and empirical research” (Condliffe-Lagemann, 9). In this context universities quickly moved to define and control knowledge production in the emerging field of educational research, as well as teacher training. Condliffe-Lagemann describes the location of teacher training within universities as a process involving competition with “normal schools” and the other modes of teacher training then extant (Condliffe-Lagemann, 11). Once education research was established within research universities its self-conscious knowledge claims and grounds were shaped by university norms and practices.

Within research universities, education researchers borrowed methodologies and concepts from the then also emerging social sciences. The move toward quantitative methods, narrowly conceived, was influenced

by the desire to gain prestige for education research. It also exacerbated the location of knowledge generation in laboratory-like settings outside of schools. Edward Thorndike, a leading proponent of this quantitative direction in education research, advocated the strict separation of education research from practice and the subordination of teachers' knowledge generation to university researchers. He also advocated the tracking of students, believing as he did in innate human capacities. This valorization of "pure" science over knowledge in practice has been identified in other professions (Schon). These developments occurred in spite of the emergence of an alternative direction for science put forward by Dewey, who advocated a practice-based empiricism. According to Condliffe-Lagemann, Thorndike's vision of nomological, experimental, quantitative, university-based research was able to thrive in university settings because of the culture of science then on the rise, which the research universities in turn helped create (Condliffe-Lagemann, 21).

Once established in research universities, uncertainty arose as to the proper role of education research, since its institutional location in research universities and its laboratory-based methodology meant that the concerns of schools would not be immediately present. An exception that proves the rule excluding school concerns from educational research is Philip Jackson's *Life in Classrooms*, originally published in 1968 and reissued in 1990. In

that text Jackson felt it necessary to remind education researchers of the central concerns of their field: “If an interpretation of what goes on in classrooms does not point directly to how teaching [and learning] might be improved or how classrooms might be better managed, why bother with it?” (Jackson 1990, p. xviii). While he may be lauded for his proscription, it nevertheless is indicative of the separation being outlined. Moreover, Jackson’s career, as described in that text, illustrates the institutional history that has shaped science in education. He writes that he began his research career as a cognitive psychologist working in laboratories. Exposed to Jane Goodall’s work with apes in their natural environment, it occurred to Jackson that he might study students learning in their school environment. Jerome Bruner’s career followed a similar trajectory out of the laboratory. Both had to overcome the tradition Thorndike helped to establish that studied learning independently of social settings.

Knowing Schooling

After several decades of educational research conducted apart from the school setting, and focused on learning rather than teaching, Coleman’s 1966 study “Equality of Educational Opportunity” inspired a renewed concern with schooling as an important institution in American society. Famously, Coleman’s large-scale quantitative study showed that school

facilities have little effect on student achievement. This finding, as well as similar findings by Christopher Jencks, focused interest on what transpired in schools. The expression “black box,” came to be applied within the education research community to refer to the opacity of knowledge of life inside schools (Karabel and Halsey, 44).

Furthermore, the major research paradigms of education research in the 1960s and 1970s, Functionalism and Marxism, shared with the Coleman and Jencks’ studies concern with the causes of inequality. Although diametrically opposed in their explanations for the cause of social stratification, i.e., either individual merit or social class, each discovered that they could not explain how schools generated inequality (Karabel and Halsey, 44). In spite of the fact that each developed concepts with which to explore social stratification within schools⁴ both paradigms pointed to the need to discover how schools sort students by looking at them more closely.

Once life inside classrooms became of greater interest for educational researchers, new methodologies were brought to bear on classroom life. Still, researchers persisted in setting an agenda apart from the concerns of teachers. Drawing on developments within sociology in the 1960s that developed orientations and methods for the study of small groups (e.g.,

⁴ In the case of Marxism, Bowles and Gintis developed the notion of the “correspondence principle” to account for the transmission of inequality. Thus social relations within schools were seen to correspond to social relations in the workplace. Functionalists’ often focused on the sorting functions of educational institutions.

Ethnomethodology, Symbolic Interactionism, Sociolinguistics) and within Anthropology, the so-called “New Sociology of Education” sought to apply and develop the Sociology of Knowledge to understand how social structuring takes place within schools. In the foremost example of this work, the volume edited by M.F.D. Young, *Knowledge and Control*, Young made the famous claim that instead of taking educators’ problems as the foci of their study, “there is no alternative but for the sociologist to ‘make’ his [sic] own problems, among which may be to treat educators’ problems as phenomena to be explained” (Young 2). Foremost among the phenomena that Young advocated exploring where “What counts as educational knowledge,” and to link this selection and organization of knowledge to larger social structures. As such, for Young, the “ sociology of education is no longer conceived as the area of enquiry distinct from the sociology of knowledge” (Young, p. 3). Thus, in her chapter of Young’s volume, Keddie argued that educators unconsciously sorted students by social class.

Advocates of the New Sociology of Education pointed to its usefulness to educators as a justification for their project (Young 1). On the other hand, by “making” rather than “taking” educators’ problems the sociologists working in this tradition are in danger of continuing to occlude dimensions of the knowledge of the social process of education which began in the

United States with the location of the production of educational knowledge in research universities.

During approximately the same period as “the New Sociology of Education” was being developed in England, sociolinguists, ethnographers, and ethnomethodologists on this side of the Atlantic began to study the use of language in schools in the late 60s and 70s. An important discovery of this group was the so-called *IRE* script (Cazden, Mehan). The script limns the dominant pattern of exchange between teachers and students. The letters, *IRE*, stand for a teacher “Initiated” question, followed by student “Response” and is completed with the teacher’s “Evaluation” of the students’ answer. Typically teachers’ questions take the form of “test questions” i.e, questions which seek specified information, which allow the teacher/administrator to prevent students from steering the curriculum away from administratively controlled ends. Test questions, or “known information questions” are seen to retard students’ responses, and thereby facilitate the transmission of a closed curriculum. Observers report that the *IRE* script is the most common pattern of classroom discourse at all grade levels (Cazden, Tharp and Gallimore).

The patterns uncovered by sociolinguists share qualities with patterns uncovered by the comprehensive study of schooling led by John Goodlad and a team of researches in the late nineteen-seventies. Goodlad, et. al,

observed 38 American schools, in 13 communities and seven regions of the United States. He surveyed students in low and middle socioeconomic communities as well as rural and urban communities. Goodlad and his research team found that typically 70% of instructional time consisted of teachers lecturing students. 5% of instructional time required a student response, usually straight recall of information. Less than 1% of instructional time “required reasoning or perhaps an opinion from the students” (Goodlad, 229). Goodlad described the tone in schools they observed to be for the most part one of “affective neutrality.”

In the late nineteen-eighties Martin Nystrand and his co-authors undertook an empirical study of the effects of dialogic instruction on achievement and learning. Borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin, the authors deployed the twin concepts of *dialogism* and *monologism* in order to understand how students create meaning together in classes. Dialogism for Bakhtin refers to the idea that speakers’ utterances respond to previous utterances and also anticipate subsequent utterances. Therefore, discourse is a social production, each speaker’s utterances being responsive to what has been said. This alteration of voices is the source of dialogism. Reason is never generated from a single subject point of view, but is co-created. It is this alteration of views that incorporates tension and dynamism into discourse.

Bakhtin characterized monologism in its extreme form as denying, ... the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and responsibilities ... Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge it in any *decisive* force...Monologue pretends to be the *ultimate word* (Nystrand 12).

Monologism is thus characteristic for Bakhtin of official discourses, when these official discourses suppress the voice of others. Nystrand et al, have found it useful to apply the concept of monologism to describe the dominant forms of schooling because they too are seen to deny student voice. For the study upon which their monograph, *Opening Dialogue*, is based the authors observed 58 eight-grade and 54 ninth-grade language arts and English classes four times each. The schools were located in Midwestern urban and suburban communities. Overall, they found that recitation and lecture averaged 85% of class time in both the eighth and ninth grade classes in their sample. They also found that discussion took 50 seconds per class in eighth grade and less than 15 seconds per class in ninth grade (42). With regard to urban schooling, the authors found that classes were far more "lifeless" with teachers spending much of their time trying to manage rather than teach their students (52).

The I.R.E. script and the image of classroom life derived from Goodlad's research present a standard image of schooling in the United States that has been described with a fair consensus in the educational

research community. Given the centralized administrative controls and the location of knowledge generation of teaching in the research universities it is not surprising that schooling in the United States would be reported to manifest fairly uniform structures. Tyack and Cuban have termed these lifeless structures of schooling as “The Grammar of Schooling” because like the “grammar of speech” it does not need “to be consciously understood to operate smoothly” (Tyack and Cuban, 85).

Resistance and Student Engagement

The discovery of basic patterns of classroom life allowed for investigations into more fine-grained aspects of classroom processes. Foremost among the results of such studies must be the increasing recognition among researchers of the effects of power within classrooms.

Beginning with Paul Willis’ 1977 study *Learning to Labor* the issue of student resistance to power within schools has been a major focus of education research, although mostly by researchers from a radical perspective.⁵ This concept was developed in the context of an ethnography of working class schooling. Willis described the attitudes and behaviors of a group of male students, “the Lads.” The Lads prided themselves on

⁵ Goodlad, an example of the mainstream of educational researchers, emphasizes passivity rather than resistance within schooling.

“resisting” the manifest intentions of school authorities by routinely breaking school rules, conspicuously flouting authority, evading school work, and conspicuously displays of sexual prowess. Student opposition to the social practices of the school was seen as rooted in working class culture, which values physical over mental labor and as such, was at odds with the culture of school. The Lads’ resistance served to insure their marginalization and, ironically, because self-induced, served to insure that the Lads, like their parents, would have a working class future.

Henry Giroux developed the concept of resistance by highlighting an emancipatory element within it. This can be seen in Giroux’s definition of resistance:

What is highlighted here is that power is never unidimensional; it is exercised not only as a mode of domination, but also as an act of resistance or even as an expression of a creative mode of cultural and social production outside the immediate forces of domination.... It is in these modes of behavior as well as in creative acts of resistance that the fleeting images of freedom are to be found...(108).

Once noted, the concept of resistance has been widely deployed in education research. It is seen to extend beyond issues of social class control to issues of race and gender. It has been generalized to describe all students’ resistance to rigidly classified curricula and rigidly framed relations with their teachers (Carnoy).

The development of the concept of resistance emerged in the literature before the reception of Bakhtin's thought within the English speaking world. Giroux does not refer to it in his 1983 *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition*. Nevertheless, Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and monologism seem essentially homologous. For Bakhtin, monologism can never be entirely successful because discourse, human being itself, is inherently dialogic.

More recently, mainstream educational researchers, also recognizing the institutional constraints of schooling and the resulting constrained experience of students, have responded by developing the concept of "student engagement." Newmann, et al, (1992) define student engagement as students' "psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote" (12). For these researchers, "student engagement" is necessary for the achievement of "meaningful cognitive demands" (14). In seeking to explain the lack of student engagement they emphasize that schooling is "coercive" i.e., that students are "subjected to a program of labor that the teacher prescribes. The benefits of this labor are rarely self-evident to the student" (14). They refer to "socio-cultural determinants" rather than calling it social class to distinguish between those who see "abstract thought as leading to rewards" and "those who are more

interested in manual and physical work” (17). Goodlad et al, and Newmann et al, also point to the competing objects of adolescents’ interests that potentially draw students’ attention away from learning. The authors also mention that the social-cultural determinants of student engagement raise doubts about the potential of schooling to achieve socially mandated ends, that is, to provide the children of poor people with an engaging education that will lead to a high school degree (17).

With a tone of some resignation, Newmann, et al, focus their reflections on actions that could be taken within schools to enhance “student engagement.” Their suggestions include efforts to enhance students’ sense of membership in school communities, assigning more challenging tasks that promote “higher order thinking,” and emphasizing depth of thinking over coverage of curricular content. They implicitly reject the transmission model of pedagogy in favor of a mode of pedagogy that fosters student involvement with a limited number of ideas and with a great deal of student construction of knowledge. They seek ways of reconciling these dramatic breaks in the “grammar of schooling” while arguing, unconvincingly to my mind, that teachers and students can introduce such changes within the confines of schooling as we have come to know it through their research.

Ways Out

As an anti-dote to the monologism of the IRE sequence Nystrand et al have proposed using “dialogic instruction.” Dialogic instruction involves the co-construction of knowledge with students rather than the monological transmission of the official curriculum. The authors assert that teachers can incorporate student voice into the official discourse of the class by asking “authentic questions,” that is, questions which are asked to learn information rather than to recite “known information.” In addition, they call for “uptake,” incorporating students’ ideas into the final understanding, “the gist” of the conversation. Finally, they call for “high level evaluation” of student response. This entails the teacher elaborating the important implications she sees in student responses (20).

The use of student dialogue as a form of meaning making is also a well-known cornerstone of Critical Pedagogy. Critical Pedagogy has evolved in many forms mainly from the font of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, although connections to the thought of Dewey are also evident. In spite of its diversity, there is a general consensus within critical pedagogy that education is not a natural process but should be seen within a “sociohistorical and political context” (Biesta 1998). In addition, critical pedagogies are seen to agree on “the imperative of transforming the larger social order in the interest of justice, equality, democracy, and human freedom” (Biesta 1998). Dialogue is a central avenue for Freire as well as

other advocates of critical pedagogy for engendering transformation of injustice (Aronowitz). A key component of dialogue for critical pedagogy is therefore that students are empowered, e.g., “The teacher/intellectual becomes a vehicle for liberation only by advancing a pedagogy that decisively transfers control of the educational enterprise from *her/himself* as subject to the subaltern student” (Aronowitz).

Reason, Domination and a Dialectical Solution

In the early 1990s in light of developments within poststructural and postmodern thought critical pedagogy came under attack because of its perceived instrumentalism (Biesta 1998, Gore). With this critique power was seen as transferred to students in a strategic manner to achieve certain preconceived ends: e.g., “. . . emancipatory dialogue would be pre-empted, in practice, by specific and substantive positions in ideology critique” (Blake and Masschelein). In a related vein critical pedagogy was itself critiqued for its,

“noncritical and automatic preference for the self-evident knowledge of the oppressed over that of the oppressors . . . The self-evidence of “the people,” or any social or cultural group, even when developed to reflexivity by a grand leader-educator, is not without terroristic potential” (Gur-Ze’-ev, 469).

Thus, there was always the danger that any subject position could or would become monologically instrumental. Critical pedagogy was seen as abstract

in that it had been developed as a university-based discourse and therefore was unable to provide sufficient guidelines for teachers (Gore, Ellsworth).

In addition to these other critiques, Ellsworth's raises the question of the relation between the group and its members. For Ellsworth members are always radically divorced from each other. She writes, "all knowings are partial, ...there are fundamental things each of us cannot know—a situation alleviated only in part by the pooling of the partial, socially constructed knowledge in classrooms" (310). It is for this reason that for Ellsworth any unity within the group is seen as oppressive, because it must necessarily represent the partial perspective of an oppressive authority. In this sense she sees that the expression of the alternative views can only take the form of "defiant speech." (310).

The viewpoint that Ellsworth expresses raises the question of the extent of human connection. As will be shown in Chapter 3, Hegel's philosophy provides a way we can theorize a unity which is inclusive of difference, and which in fact is the precondition of the kind of particularity that Ellsworth rightly seeks to protect.

Action Research

The difficulties of knowing schooling can be seen to relate to the separation of the direction and studying of schooling from schools

themselves. The empiricist tradition for Hegel, the dominant mode within universities and for normal consciousness, is a variant of the Understanding, *Verstand*. Understanding, *Verstand*, as ways of knowing is defined by the quality of seeing what is, as a fixed determinant thing.⁶ Empiricism as a mode that the Understanding can take, is further determined by the additional trait it of the Understanding of being unaware that it is applying socially constructed categories.⁷ Understanding is contrasted by Hegel with “the Dialectic moment” which, “is the self-sublation of these finite determinations on their own part, and their passing into their opposites” (*The Encyclopedia Logic*, 128).

An example of the empiricist tradition of relevance to this dissertation is an early twenty-first century article by Margaret Smith Crocco and Stephen J. Thornton, “Social Studies in the New York City Schools: A Descriptive Study” in which the authors examine Social Studies instruction

⁶ Hegel defines “the understanding” this way: “Thinking as *understanding* stops short at the fixed determinacy and its distinctness vis-à-vis other determinacies; such a restricted abstraction counts for the understanding as one that subsists on its own account, and [simply] is (*The Encyclopedia Logic*, 125).”

⁷ For example, “the Fundamental illusion in scientific empiricism is always that it uses the metaphysical categories of matter, force, as well as those of one, many, universality, and the infinite, etc. and it goes on to draw *conclusions*, guided by categories of this sort, presupposing and applying the forms of syllogising in the process. It does all this without knowing that it thereby itself contains a metaphysics and is engaged in it, and that it is using those categories and their connections in a totally uncritical and unconscious manner.” *The Encyclopedia Logic*, 77-78.

in “restructured” schools in New York City.⁸ The authors point out that nation-wide findings show that restructured schools are successful in terms of higher retention and graduation rates. They point out that rates of suspension are lower in them than those found in large New York City high schools. The authors also claim that New York City data match general findings on small schools:

- Students attitudes about school are better
 - Their self-esteem in terms of both personal and academic identity is better
 - Students feel they “belong” in such environments and exhibit a lower level of alienation
 - They participate to a greater extent in extracurricular activities
- Minority and economically disadvantaged students are better served.
(214)

Using the “constant comparative method” the authors found that instruction in Social Studies was often diminished in these schools. They reported that in most of the restructured schools in their study Social Studies was combined with English to form a course called “Humanities.” They found

⁸ The authors assert that it is difficult to define restructured schools, since there are many ways that schools classified as restructured have deviated from traditional schools. Newmann and Wehlage students of school restructuring mention the following qualities as central to restructured schools: site-based management and shared decision-making, students and teachers organized into teams responsible for students’ instruction, students participating in multiyear instructional or advisory groups, heterogeneous grouping of students in core subjects, and enrollment based on parent choice. (Newmann and Wehlage, 4)

that in most of these schools young teachers designed the Humanities curriculum. They were greatly concerned that many of the teachers had not had adequate pre-service preparation in designing inter-disciplinary curriculum. They also bemoaned the fact that the quantity of Social Studies curriculum in these schools was diminished in comparison with what the state and the National Council for the Social Studies called for. Holding up these schools to traditional Social Studies education these schools are found wanting, in spite of the general condemnation of traditional high schools within the research community.

Given their institutional commitments, Crocco and Thornton were unable to explore the degree to which students in the Humanities classes they studied were more or less engaged or if whether by some other standard the students were well served. What bothered the researchers was a perceived decline in an unreflective commitment to abstract notions of what the Social Studies curriculum ought to be and the fact that the in-service teachers had not received pre-service preparation in curriculum writing of the sort they were asked to do in teachers' colleges. One of the concluding sentences of their article states: "There is genuine cause for concern over how the needs of students in restructuring schools may have overshadowed the development of sound curriculum in the established school subjects" (231). This concern is expressed without an effort to assess what cognitive

gains have been achieved for students in these schools. Aside from a commitment to preserve “the social studies curriculum” from other potential foci of student attention, I suspect that for these authors the notions of teacher-generated curriculum threatens a perceived monopoly. Their concern is not balanced against a recognition of the gains within these schools in terms of school capacity and a sense of agency.

Locked into the paradigm of the logic of understanding, as well as their institutional commitments as university researchers, Crocco and Thornton can only see what these schools are, not what they are becoming. They also seem subject to the criticism of Weber who “pointed researchers in the right direction when he suggested that a critical element of the power of dominant groups resides in their capacity to impose their own educational and cultural ideals on the school” (Karabel and Halsey, 43).

There have been repeated historical attempts to restore local control of schooling as an antidote to these efforts. There have also been waves of interest in action research as a way to escape the fatalism with which efforts of school reform must contend. Although Karabel and Halsey refer to efforts by academics in England working for the labor government to conduct action research, (Karabel and Halsey, 26) action research has come to be almost exclusively identified in the literature with the teachers’ reflective practice. Interest in this type of work has also given rise to

opposition to it with university settings (Huberman). Much of this university-based resistance to action research revolves around questions of validity. Action researchers have responded by articulating different standards of validity, often connected to the effectiveness of research findings to have pragmatic effect on their schools (Anderson and Herr). The growing knowledge of the dynamics of classrooms operations might have been more clearly identified and addressed had there been a culture of teacher inquiry established within schools, a culture such as one Dewey , hoped might arise (Dewey, 1929).

The tensions between theory and practice within education research that this literature review recounts continue, as do calls for action research and calls for teachers to have a greater say in setting the education research agenda. Condliffe-Lagemann, past president of the Spencer Foundation and Dean of the Harvard School of Education, advocates educational research based upon reflection in practice. She concluded that, “research will not yield fundamentally new and deeper insights into the processes of education unless the experiences of both researchers and practitioners *working in the field* are brought back to the university for more leisurely, theory-oriented consideration” (243, italics added for emphasis).

CHAPTER 3
HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY AS A DIFFERENT KIND OF SOCIAL
THEORY

Part One: Monological Consciousness

The first section of the *Phenomenology of Mind*, "Consciousness," is Hegel's analysis of the ability of a solitary consciousness to know the external world. Because this dissertation is concerned with the social processes of making meaning in classrooms, that is with the actions of plural consciousnesses, the relevance of Hegel's argument in this section for this dissertation is not obvious. Aside from the great difficulty of dissecting aspects of Hegel's architectonics for practical purposes, as is attempted here, there are several reasons for this dissertation to consider this first section of *The Phenomenology*. One, Hegel is concerned to develop his argument without presuppositions. That is, he wants to show that his conception of knowledge, of Spirit, is self-grounding, that it does not depend on some prior claim; This is the same as arguing that there can be no grounds for knowledge other than the self-constituting and intersubjective acts of people (Pinkard 21). Two, in this first section Hegel begins to develop a conceptual structure, the elements of a social ontology, to understand the social

mediation of knowledge. In so doing, Hegel is also providing the grounds for a non-positivist understanding of consciousness, one that is socially mediated and rooted in experience and which the Sociology of Knowledge could not account for because of its deployment of fixed and a priori concepts, a legacy of its Neo-Kantian origins. In this first section, Hegel develops a way to think about the so-called Schellingian “lightning stroke of the ideal upon the real” (Redding 114). Three, in so far as Hegel demonstrates the impossibility of a solitary consciousness, of an ego knowing the world alone, this section provides evidence against the view of his thought as a representation of a “philosophy of consciousness,” or, of a “philosophy of the subject” if by those terms one means a monological consciousness such as found in philosophy from Descartes to Kant, and again in the Twentieth Century in the Phenomenology of Husserl.⁹ Four, insofar as “Philosophy of Consciousness” is defined as being that understanding of humans’ minds that is not mediated by modern conceptions of language, recovery of Hegel’s arguments in this section can serve as a way out of the conceptual cul-de-sac that the linguistic turn has run into.¹⁰

Moreover, access to these processes is normally presumed to be blocked by

⁹ The use of Phenomenology within education research has been limited by its focus on the experience of solitary students, its bracketing of social experience, as in the empathic but methodologically limited thought of Max Van Manen.

¹⁰ Habermas implies frequently that it is the so-called linguistic turn that makes accountable limitations of prior attempts at understanding subjectivity. The dilemmas of the linguistic turn in education research shall be briefly explored in the second chapter.

modernity which has been frequently seen as reified beyond all hope. In a move motivated by a similar concern, to that underlying this dissertation, Habermas hopes that a turn to conscious understanding of the processes of language, illuminated by modern language studies can offer a break against the forces of an autonomous rationalization. One suspects that renewed interest in Pragmatism is another effort to discover a conscious alternative account of Reason. This dissertation is an exploration of the possibility that Hegel's social theory might be another resource for resistance to autonomous social forces.

In the first chapter, "Certainty at the Level of Sense-Experience –the "This", And "Meaning," Hegel, begins by presenting his readers¹¹ with the first assumptions of a solitary consciousness striving to apprehend the world: "We have, in dealing with it [knowledge], to proceed too, in an immediate way . . . free from conceptual comprehension." Prima facie, this form of "immediate" knowledge appears to us to be the "richest" and the "truest . . . for it has not yet dropped anything from the object" (149). In fact, this seemingly immediate knowledge, the "bare fact of *certainty*, however, is really the abstractest and the poorest kind of truth. It merely says regarding what it knows: it *is*."

¹¹ As is often commented upon, *The Phenomenology* is addressed "to us," his readers who watch the unfolding of the experience of consciousness.

A further shock is that what appeared to be external to consciousness is, in fact, internal to consciousness: “we find . . . that in sense-experience pure being at once breaks up into two ‘thises’. . . one this as I, and one as object. . . . it is seen that neither the one nor the other is merely immediate, merely *is* in sense-certainty, but is at the same time *mediated*: I have the certainty through the other, viz through the actual fact; and this, again, exists in that certainty through an other, viz. through the I” (150).¹²

Although Hegel has demonstrated that what appears as external is, for consciousness, internal, he has yet to clarify how it is that consciousness is to comprehend what it takes as external. As consciousness tries to identify the external object it is frustrated. Using indexical expressions such as “here” and “now,” consciousness attempts to reach beyond itself¹³ Even with indexicals such as these, Hegel shows that when consciousness tries to use them to refer to a particular thing it is frustrated. For example, when

¹² Paul Redding has argued that the above-described quality of consciousness, its split into two objects, the object *per se* and the object *for consciousness*, is already a manifestation of the inexorably social nature of consciousness. Redding calls this the “double nature of consciousness” and suggests it arises because of the tension between the intentionality of the knowing subject’s object and how that object is for others. Thus the movement of consciousness, experience, although interior to consciousness, must be seen as an inexorably social process, provoked by others’ conceptions of the object, although the social origin of experience is not yet apparent to consciousnesses. It should also be noted that although Hegel shows the object of consciousness is internal to consciousness, he will also show it is also external. This need to think two opposed things at once, i.e., the object as internal and external to consciousness is an example of speculative reason. A similar demand will be required to comprehend the social.

¹³ “Indexicals” are defined in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* as: “a type of expression whose semantic value is in part determined by features of the context of utterance.” (366)

consciousness says “now” it discovers that what was once that “now” is no longer so. Thus, Hegel writes, the “truth of” sense-certainty, is the “universal,” which he defines as “a simple entity . . . which is by and through negation, which is neither this nor that, which is a *not-this*, and with equal indifference as well a that . . . ” (152).

Hegel claims the inability of sense-certainty to grasp the thing-in-itself is also a characteristic of language: “. . . in it [language] we ourselves refute directly and at once our own “meaning”; and since universality is the real truth of sense-certainty, and language merely expresses *this* truth, it is not possible at all for us even to express in words any sensuous existence which we ‘mean’” (152). We desire to say this particular thing, but are thwarted by the plane of consciousness (and language) which rises above the external world. In apprehending the external world via universals Hegel argues we are in fact “taking” something out of the external world. “Perception” literally means, “truth-taking” (Redding 86).¹⁴

On the other hand, although Hegel’s conception of the object of knowledge is internal to consciousness, it is still mediated by what is external. Consciousness is capable of knowing this external object through

¹⁴ Garfinkel made this property of language a centerpiece of Ethnomethodology. He is skeptical as to the possibility of objective statements within the sciences and everyday life and shows that a manifestation of this property of language, its inability to say what it means, is the phenomena of the “uninteresting” essential reflexivity of accounts. Garfinkel shows this fact of language is for social actors otiose.

acting upon it. For example, in describing the construct “pure ego,” i.e., the immediate and most primitive form of consciousness in *The*

Phenomenology, (149) Hegel writes:

.I [pure ego] am certain of *this* fact before me, not because I qua consciousness have developed myself in connection with it and in manifold ways set to work about it: and not, again, because the fact, the thing, of which I am certain, in virtue of its having a multitude of distinct qualities, was replete with possible modes of relation and a variety of connections with other things. . . . The I does not contain or imply a manifold of ideas, the I here does not *think*: nor does the thing mean what has a multitude of qualities. (149-150)

From this we can infer that the “I” can develop itself through its activity.

Secondly, we can infer that the potential of the “I” and the direction of its development is interdependent with the “distinct qualities” of the thing.

We can know what a thing is by working on it; and how one knows it, is dependent upon the qualities of the thing.

In the second chapter, “Perception: Or things and their Deceptiveness,” the difficulty with its new orientation for consciousness becomes the construction of the “intuited singularity,” the thing in itself, with universals. The difficulty for consciousness is that it must do two things at once: one, it must perceive the thing itself as a unity and, two, simultaneously perceive the many properties of the thing. Consciousness oscillates back and forth between the thing-in-itself and the thing for

consciousness. For this reason the object of perception, a thing with many qualities, must be seen as the product of activity on the part of consciousness. As such, for consciousness, the object becomes an “unconditioned” universal; that is, a thing that is not conditioned by sense-certainty, but rather by the activity of the knowing subject.

In the third chapter, “Force and the Understanding: The World of Appearance and the Supersensible World” consciousness seeks an answer to the question of how to account for the unity of the unconditional universal; at the level of perception its unity was merely an act of consciousness. Aware of its own activity, this is no longer good enough. At the level of “Understanding” consciousness perceives the unity of the unconditioned universal as conditioned by “supersensible” forces or laws which are known by the manifestation of the unity of the many properties in the thing, the unconditioned universal. In *The Phenomenology* this form of consciousness, Understanding, relies on the natural science of Hegel’s day to account for the unity of the unconditioned universal. Thus, in construing the unity of the thing as derived from some supersensible laws or forces, Hegel argues we are moving towards self-consciousness, which is a further development in the experience of consciousness’s knowing of a thing: it is now purely an object of thought, since the essence of the object is seen to lie in supersensible laws.

This concept of Understanding plays a pivotal role throughout Hegel's philosophy. Hegel claims in the introduction to *The Phenomenology of Mind* that neither science nor natural consciousness is able to provide successful reasons for truth claims. Given this inability to ground truth objectively, Hegel states "we shall here undertake the exposition of knowledge as a phenomenon." That is, Hegel argues that one can find no grounds for holding one view of empirical reality over another. Ironically, treating of knowledge as phenomena allows for the discovery of the truth: "Skepticism, directed to the whole compass of phenomenal consciousness . . . makes mind for the first time qualified to test what truth is; since it brings about a despair regarding what are called natural views . . ."

(136) Hegel admired ancient skepticism for its attitude of doubt with regard to the natural attitude, although he saw ancient skepticism as a "merely negative process" with no possibility for apprehension of what is. Hegel saw the point of view of modern skepticism (e.g., Descartes) as a kind of dogmatism of natural consciousness, i.e. it naively accepts what is given to solitary consciousness as grounds for belief (Williams). Alternatively, Hegel argues ". . . that the exposition of "untrue consciousness" in its untruth is not merely a negative process" as is the case with ancient skepticism (137). This ". . .one-sided view of it is what the natural consciousness generally adopts;" (137) Instead Hegel argues for

“determinate negation” that is, each “form of unreal consciousness” will give birth to a new form of knowledge which will in turn reveal itself to be untrue. However, this positive moment, the fixing of reality with the universal, the “determinate negation” which is characteristic of Understanding, is also recognized to be a positive moment. It is the form in which knowledge emerges, fleetingly.¹⁵ For Hegel, “determinate negation” allows for an immanent logic whereby “. . . in negation the transition is made by which the progress through the complete succession of forms comes about by itself” (137).

With the completion of the first section Hegel has developed a model for the comprehension of the social world in a non-positivist manner; that is efforts to comprehend the world “in itself” have broken down. He has done so by showing how the mind itself constructs the world in its interactions with that world. As will be shown, this platform of consciousness above the sensible world allows for development of a speculative reason rooted in mutual-recognition, theoretical knowledge that has great promise for the practice of education. The immanent development of consciousness in the first three chapters, ends in “Self-Consciousness,” i.e. the moment when consciousness is aware that consciousness of an other is “consciousness of

¹⁵ For a view on the role of Understanding within Hegel’s thought and his view of it in social thought see “Hegel’s *Science of Logic*: Ironies of the Understanding” by Joseph C. Flay.

self in its otherness” (211). Hegel writes that “there is so much satisfaction” in explanation, because consciousness in “being in direct communion with itself . . . enjoys itself only”(210). Hegel shows in the next section that, the full development of the concept of self-consciousness, this satisfaction, can only be achieved when the presupposition of a solitary consciousness is dropped and a social interaction is presumed.

Hegel’s Triune Social Ontology: Spirit

In the first part of *The Phenomenology of Mind*, “Consciousness,” as each stage of individual consciousness struggling to apprehend reality self-destructs, aspects of the lower level are incorporated into the higher level. This notion of transcending and preserving elements of one world view in a higher world view is described by the German word, “Aufheben” (Hegel, 164). This is a teleological element in Hegel’s thought.¹⁶ This pattern will continue as, in this section individual consciousness will be incorporated into Hegel’s social subject, Spirit.

In the first section of the second part, “Self-Consciousness,” “The Truth of Self-Certainty,” Hegel continues to present the experience of a

¹⁶ Habermas argues in *The Theory of Communicative Action* that teleological thought is “metaphysical.” (387) Teleological action is however a central motif of Pragmatism. The uncoupling of science from teleology is a heritage of Neo-Kantianism and its rigid a priorism..

solitary consciousness to his readers. Here self-consciousness, “the awareness of itself in otherness” seeks to find itself in the external world, here depicted as a kind of state of nature, Life, which is “. . . the endless, infinite movement by which that stable medium is consumed . . .” (223). However, at this point, “. . . the sensible world is regarded by self-consciousness as having a subsistence which is, however, only appearance, or forms a distinction from self-consciousness that has no being. This opposition of appearance and its truth finds its real essence, however, only in its Truth—in the unity of self-consciousness with itself. This unity must become essential to consciousness, i.e., consciousness is the state of *Desire* in general.” The flux of life poses a challenge to self-consciousness which seeks to find certainty in life but cannot. It first responds to this uncertainty by “sublating this other, which is presented to self-consciousness as an independent life.” It “negates the independent object, and thereby acquires the certainty of its own self.” Unfortunately, for self-consciousness, its certainty, it discovers, is “conditioned by the object; for the certainty exists through canceling this other; in order that this canceling may be effected there must be this other.” As such, it cannot gain “awareness of itself in otherness” which is the desire of self-consciousness. It learns that it can only gain self certainty through another self-consciousness: “The object

desired is, in fact, something other than self-consciousness, the essence of desire; and through this experience this truth has become realized” (225).

For Hegel the notion of desire signifies a conceptual model of human agency as oriented outwards to the world in a quest for certainty, and for the elimination of the uncertainty of the monological I, of solipsism.

The next stage, “Lordship and Bondage” presents, for the first time, a social setting, i.e., two actors confronting each other. Although this is the most commonly treated section of *The Phenomenology* it has become the subject of some controversy. At issue is the possibility of the emergence of “mutual recognition” as opposed to the condition of domination, where the “one is merely recognized, while the other only recognizes” (231). The controversy arises partially as a legacy of Kojève’s interpretation of this passage which locates here a “desire for recognition” and thereby takes the experience of the master as the prototypical mode of human being. In so doing, Kojève’s reading is seen to deny alterity, mutual recognition within Hegel’s thought.¹⁷ Against this reading Robert Williams points out that this section, “Lordship and Bondage” contains two parallel but distinct sections. Borrowing a distinction from Husserl, Williams argues that the first section is an “eidetics,” which he describes as “an exploration of meaning at the

¹⁷ For an attempt to provide a balanced interpretation of this controversy see Jurist (196-200) Kojève’s interpretation is seen as having a great deal of influence in Europe during the years leading up to World War Two.

general level of ontology, namely the study of possibility.” Eidetics is an “informal logic” insofar as it is conditioned by, and requires an “empiric,” which studies “factual questions,” i.e., “the general eidetic structures in their concrete determinate actualization” (Williams, 144). Williams argues the first seven paragraphs of “Lordship and Bondage” describe the general features of the possibility of Spirit, mutual recognition, and as such is an eidetics. The remainder of the section is considered an “empirics” because it outlines an instance of the possibilities inherent in the eidetics of recognition, in this case, the relationship between the master and the slave, an instance of misrecognition. Following Williams, I will consider the first part of Lordship and Bondage because a key assertion of this dissertation is the pedagogical import of the notion of mutual recognition elaborated there.

Hegel opens the “Lordship and Bondage” section, (Williams’ “eidetics”) with a paradoxical statement: “Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say, it *is* only by being acknowledged or “recognized.” Hegel claims here that the individual is inherently social and that the precondition of individuality is its being acknowledged by others. Hegel next suggests that this relation of self and other amounts to a “unity in its duplication, of infinitude realizing itself in self-consciousness” (229). The unity of the two self-consciousnesses critically involves an expansion of

the possibilities of the solitary ego; although this opening to alterity, to the possibility of infinity, is also inherently threatening.

Hegel goes on to describe this “process of recognition: “In the first move, considering the action from the point of view of one self-consciousness in confrontation with another, Hegel writes that one self-consciousness “comes out of itself;” in so doing it at first “loses itself, since it finds itself as an *other* being.” As Williams points out, Hegel’s use of the term “other” here is deliberately ambiguous. On the one hand, since the first self-consciousness comes “out of itself,” the other is itself; on the other hand, the other is that other. Secondly, it has “thereby sublated that other, for it does not regard the other as essentially real, but sees its own self in that other” (229). This is the equivalent of the pragmatic attitude of Fichte, which Hegel reacted against, because it involves the imposition of a one-sided concept, without recognition of the alterity of the other (Rose 63). It is thus a form of monological domination.

Secondly, “it must cancel this its other.” In so doing, “. . . it must set itself to sublimate the other independent being, in order thereby to become certain of itself as true being, secondly, it thereupon proceeds to sublimate its own self, for this other is itself” (229). Monological domination is self-defeating because in sublating the other, one sublates oneself because the

other is a precondition for the self. This is the road of mastery that Hegel describes in the more well-known passage from “Lordship and Bondage.” Thirdly, “through the canceling of *its* otherness,” (230) “it becomes one with itself again” (229) and “it gives otherness back again to the other self-consciousness. . . and thus lets the other again go free” (230). Williams, following Ludwig Siep, argues that this idea of letting the other “go free” is an essential aspect of the notion of mutual recognition, which requires that the self and other represent each other, are present for each other, in their particularity (Williams 84-85).

Fourth, Hegel adds complexity to the model by considering this action as being conducted simultaneously by both actors: “. . . this action on the part of the one has itself the double significance of being at once its own action and the action of the other as well.” It is a double action. “For the other is likewise independent, shut up within itself, and there is nothing in it which is not there through itself.” “Each sees the other do the same as itself; each itself does what it demands on the part of the other, and for that reason does what it does, only so far as the other does the same” (230).

Mutual recognition occurs when each actor recognizes in the intention of the other the willingness to recognize the other. Mutual recognition cannot be coerced because for each actor, “. . . there is nothing in it which is not there through itself” and, as in the subsuming act of desire, or the first action of

self-consciousness when confronted by another self-consciousness, the incorporation of the other is self-defeating because it destroys for a self-consciousness its precondition, the free recognition of its other. It also destroys the possibility of growing through the actions of the other.

Fifth, “. . . the act *simpliciter* is the act of the one as well as the of the other regardless of their distinction” (230). The action itself, although the action of two individuals, has a unified logic. Sixth, as a consequence of this mutual recognition, “*Consciousness* finds that it immediately is and is not another consciousness, as also that this other is for itself only when it cancels itself as existing for itself, and has self-existence only in the self-existence of the other.” “. . . each is to itself and to the other an immediate self-existing reality, which, at the same time, exists thus for itself only through this mediation. They recognize themselves as mutually recognizing each other.” This condition of the self-consciousnesses being aware of their mutual interdependence is a precursor of Hegel’s concept of Absolute Knowledge.

These actions by two self-consciousnesses result in the creation of Spirit, i.e.: “Ego that is “we”, a plurality of Egos, and “we” that is single Ego.” It should be noted that in spite of his teleology, for Hegel, the creation of the social subject, intertwined yet independent consciousnesses, is a contingent accomplishment. Indeed in *The Phenomenology* he follows

his description of the stages of recognition with an account of a failure of mutual recognition, the famous story of the domination of the master of the slave. The rest of the text is about the struggle of this social subject, Spirit, to know itself and in so doing work on the world. This notion of a continuum of recognition suggests a heuristic value of the concept of Spirit, it enables one to conceive of social groups as tending more or less towards mutual recognition or domination. It also gives us a logic to think our ways out of the cull-de-sac of Bourdeiu and Passeron's "symbolic violence."

Nevertheless, within the first seven paragraphs of this section, Hegel's "eidetics," Hegel has uncovered a logic of social cohesion as well as of individuation; although one not without conflict. Centripetal tendencies are located in the social nature of mind and its individuality, its desire for certainty and its discovery of mutual recognition. For example, as we saw in the first part, *Consciousness*, given the nature of consciousness to split between the thing in-itself and the thing-for consciousness, and consciousness's awareness of the split between the thing in itself and its awareness of the thing, consciousness exists in a state of uncertainty. As for Hegel, for consciousness, the world becomes "only phenomenal knowledge" (135). Consciousness, under these uncertain conditions, becomes "*Desire* in general:

“. . . the sensible world is regarded by self-consciousness as having a subsistence which is, however, only appearance, or forms a distinction from self-consciousness that per se has no being. This opposition of appearance and its truth finds its real essence, however, only in the truth—in the unity of self-consciousness with itself. This unity must become essential to self-consciousness, i.e., self-consciousness is a state of *Desire* in general (220).

Consciousness is in an intolerable state of uncertainty. It learns through experience that attempts to gain certainty can only be achieved via another self-consciousness. “Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness” (226). This monological uncertainty of the Cartesian subject for Hegel, the I, can be only remedied through social cognition. This is the main centripetal force.

The second point to emphasize is that for Hegel, as for Descartes, individuals do not have immediate access to others. Thus, in Hegel’s eidetic model the first action of self-consciousness faced with another self-consciousness is to see “its own self in the other” (229) and then to “. . . sublimate the other independent being, in order thereby to become certain of itself as true being, . . .” Faced with the presence of the other, the self is decentered and uncertain. This is the main centrifugal force.

Through this experience consciousness discovers it only sublates its own self, because it did not know the other. In sublating its own self-consciousness it gives otherness back to the other “and thus lets the other

again go free” (230). When the two consciences take up each other again, they now do so based on this experience of each having let “let the other again go free.” They learn that letting the other “go free” is a precondition of the free recognition of the other of the self. Free recognition is the only recognition that matters for a self-consciousness. To sublimate the other as in the state of desire is to destroy the presuppositions for one’s self. The subjects learn to cooperate, but not to dominate or be dominated: “Action from one side only would be useless, because what is to happen can only be brought about by means of both” (230). As such, Spirit is a creation of social actors which constitutes a social subject. The formation of spirit has an experiential component for the self-consciousnesses involved. Through experience they learn the capacity of this new relationship; they “re-cognize”¹⁸ the relationship via the spectrum of their experience from resistance to cooperation.

Spirit thus displays a “triune” structure: that is, two subjects, two “I’s” concomitantly create a third subject a “We.” As such, it is an example of Hegel’s “speculative reason.” Hegel saw that the dilemma of

¹⁸ Gillian Rose claims that in his Jena lectures of 1803-1804, and 1805-1806 Hegel developed the concept of re-cognition because of his dissatisfaction with the term “intuition.” Intuition implies a direct seeing into the other. Hegel wished to include the experience of an initial misrecognition which is changed by the subject. (Rose, 71)

perceiving the "inter-human germ"¹⁹ is that it requires thinking two opposed things simultaneously: One must see a group as constituted by individuals and one must see a group as a corporate body in itself. The dominant logic of his day and ours, "the Understanding," (Verstand) perceives things as "abstract identities" which are only externally related to other things.

Hegel's speculative reason, rooted in a phenomenology of a divided subject, allows one to see things distinguished as also unified. Thus, the definition of Spirit as: "the unity of different independent self-consciousnesses" allows us to re-cognize a corporate body as two things at once: a We and an I; as in the case of perception, we must oscillate between the unity and its particularities.

In chapter four, we will take this interpretation of Hegel, speculate as to its possible usefulness for teaching, and then draw on this interpretation in setting up and analyzing an experiment in teaching: the attempt to create a dialogical classroom experience, in Hegel's sense. The next chapter will contain a transcript of the first of several such experimental classes, and an analysis of that transcript from a Hegelian perspective.

¹⁹ This is a term used by Williams. (150) Moreover, according to Williams, Nicolai Harman claims that "the concretely universal social subject is Hegel's original discovery." (Williams, 156)

CHAPTER 4

THE STUDY AND THE SETTING

Influenced by Hegel's concepts of Spirit and Ethical Life, I sought to create conditions that would allow students to experience Ethical Life in a classroom setting; that is, greater freedom combined with greater responsibility, particularity in the context of mutual recognition. I hypothesized that by allowing students to more freely explore their ideas in class the social logic of mutual recognition would display itself. I further hypothesized that the experience of ethical life would serve as a "ground" for greater student learning.

The conception of the study was also motivated by a parallel reading of education research as described in Chapter 1. Near universal consensus exists among researchers that schooling still suffers from the ailments already diagnosed by Dewey in 1899: passivity and the transmission of curricular knowledge in such a manner as to decrease chances of meaningfulness for students. (Goodlad, Tyack and Cuban) Furthermore, education research reveals a disturbing correlation: A tendency towards pessimism with regard to education reform, particularly for students

engulfed in adverse circumstances, combined with a list of qualities which successful schooling “ought” to embody.

Such a stance is reminiscent of Hegel’s critique of “morality” which for Hegel is constituted by a difference between what “ought” to be and what is. For Hegel, the dilemma of the moral point of view is that it remains subjective, separated from actuality. For Hegel the integration of the moral point of view with what is real is what constitutes ethical life, and in so doing, in integrating morality into social life, it transforms morality as it transforms ethical life. (*Philosophy of Right*, 185) Hence the abstraction of pedagogical theory from practice, a dilemma described in Chapter 2, makes it difficult to know what about the ought is potentially real, given existing social conditions.

For example, one recurrent admonition from education researchers has been the seemingly unimpeachable notion that school reform ought to be grounded and legitimated in student access to curricular knowledge. This has been true even for those who are critical of the transmission model of education and extremely conscious of the need to engage students with the official curriculum (e.g., Nystrand, 90; Haroutunian-Gordon). Such proposals are proffered in spite of ethnographic findings that altering the culture of schooling is difficult and that open classrooms often require more frequent use of teacher regulatory strategies (Wilcox). Researchers have

hypothesized conditions which they believe will enhance student learning and engagement, but being unable to test their theories in action, they are unclear how to actually engender enhanced student learning (e.g. Newmann, 1992).

Divorced from pedagogical practice, such critics and researchers leave unnoticed, and hence unexplored, the regulatory boundary between encouraging students' interpretive freedom and their need to engage with a particular curriculum or text. For example, if students are allowed interpretive freedom, what is to prevent them from diverging from the curriculum into areas of concern for them? Moreover, if they perceive school conditions as alienating (Newmann, 1981), doesn't teacher control of their discourse potentially enhance their cynicism and lack of engagement? Awareness of this dilemma is not new; Rousseau identified the dilemma in *Emile* (Finkel and Arney). In eliding this problem, critics/researchers reveal their perspective as abstract, rather than concrete. Separated from the act of teaching, they tend to overemphasize the universal aspects of curricular content as opposed to the particularity of real students' experiences with the curriculum. They also tend to overlook the cultural significance of disrespect that Hegel analyzes in *the Philosophy of Right*, i.e., to what extent does the lack of rights within a society — in the case of the families of the students in

this study the right to work and respect — which Hegel identifies, contribute to the palpable alienation of students in so many urban schools (Kozol) ?

Furthermore, while the need to create a positive classroom culture is frequently asserted in the research literature, (e.g., Nystrand, 85) and urban schools are frequently observed to be more restrictive and alienating (Wilcox; Nystrand), few studies have focused on the issue addressed here: What kinds of pedagogical acts can engender student interest and ethical life within schools facing high levels of student alienation and resistance to schooling?

On the one hand, the answer to the question this study poses must be a pedagogy that includes greater freedom for students to diverge from the curriculum and pursue their own agendas in a discussion. On the other hand, the acquisition of meaningful curricular knowledge is, in fact, one of the goals of the pedagogy behind the action-research presented here. Curricular knowledge is not to be isolated from student interests and lives or rigidly kept within disciplinary boundaries (Bernstein, 1975). Its reception by students is understood as mediated by the evolving cultural life of the classroom, i.e., Spirit. This study provides one test of the hypothesis that by more fully shifting the pedagogical goal from the acquisition of curricular knowledge to the exploration of students' interests in situ, i.e., as determined by classroom culture, Spirit, students will be positioned to discover for

themselves the relevance of curricular knowledge and generate questions of vital interest, a cornerstone of inquiry learning (e.g. Dewey 1910, Beyer). There may be other routes to a given end, even if the very end itself is in need of revision in light of experience.

Finally, my hypothesis that Hegel's concepts of Spirit and ethical life could serve as useful heuristic devices was also derived from my experiences teaching. Hegel's concept of Spirit, a model Hegel constructed for explaining the acquisition of knowledge by a Cartesian-like subject who discovers that it is not such a subject, that its knowledge presupposes a collectivity of self-conscious subjects, a We, seems to aptly describe the experience of students: they must establish relations of mutual recognition to form a class. Indeed, Hegel's concept of Ethical Life describes a social logic of mutual recognition as the ground of social life, and as such sees the role of education ("Bildung") as integrating individuals into the social existence of civil society and the state, larger orbits beyond the immediate confines of the family. Drawing on these concepts, I hypothesized that allowing students relative freedom, the experience of discussion relatively unrestricted by institutional constraints (such as grouping and curricular content), would provide them with a social space to discover the requirements of ethical life. In a discussion their recognition of the rights and particularity of others as a personal duty in return for the recognition by

others of their rights and particularity would translate into higher levels of satisfaction, learning and engagement. Such mutual recognition of rights and duties allows individuals positive freedom, the right to take on particular identities in social spaces beyond the parochial recognition of familial love.

To explore my hypothesis, one afternoon a week for 10 weeks in the Spring of 2004 I met with two groups of approximately ten to fourteen students to discuss social issues in our Humanities class. That is, the discussions analyzed in this study were conducted in the context of the study of the New York State Global Studies curriculum within a Humanities class.²⁰ Drawing on Gutierrez's descriptors of "dialogic pedagogy" (1993) I developed the following protocol for leading these discussions:

- a) I tried to limit my role to introducing an initial discussion topic related to our curriculum and facilitating the activity
- b) Students were allowed to negotiate and determine the topics and direction of the discussion. I only stepped in when I deemed it necessary.
- c) I tried to allow students their right to regulate their own turn taking, allowing them to allocate the right to speak to each other.
- d) The imposition of specific correct answers was avoided in order to encourage student inquiry.

²⁰ "Humanities" is an integrated discipline combining aspects of History and English. For a critical view of it in New York City Schools, see Crocco and Thornton.

In this study I analyze the transcript of one session, April 15, 2004, with one of the two groups that emerged. This is a selection from a set of class sessions I transcribed that span the length of the study (April 15th to June 3rd). The transcripts allow for a close examination of emergent events within each class session as well as examination of changes within the group over time. The April 15th session discussed here was audio taped.

I was able to reduce the size of the two discussion groups with the help of colleagues and with the flexibility that a small school allows.²¹ I hypothesized that reducing class size was necessary so that students would be able to meaningfully recognize each other and be recognized, as well as experience the effects of their contribution on the ethical life of the group.²² The size of the group allowed us to sit around a large rectangular surface formed by pushing four tables together.

I allowed students to choose which of the two groups to join; as a consequence, peer influences were readily apparent, although given the size of the overall class, 28 students, peer effects would have been present had I chosen the groups with the intent of fomenting a particular chemistry.

Ironically, the strong presence of peer affinity in this study is useful, for it

²¹ One colleague had planned independently to take a class of students on weekly outings which freed one classroom in the school. Another was kind enough to tutor the half of the class that was not engaged in discussion with me.

²² In her study of “interpretive discussion” Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon argues that class size for discussions should be 5-15 (187); although she limits her rationale for this to a determination of the amount of time students can speak under those conditions.

allows for the visibility of counter social forces, which to the extent that they emerge, can be seen because they counter the prevailing peer interaction patterns. Allowing students to choose their own groups also avoided fights with students over grouping choices, although it also created tension for those students who were socially marginalized. This was particularly true for Mary, who, although she played a strong role in the April 15 discussion analyzed here, vacillated between groups over the course of the project, seemingly never quite being fully accepted or comfortable.²³

There were three Hispanic students in the group, (Anne, Craig, Jack, Marge) four American Black students (Charles, Jamie, Roger, Mary, Tina), one Caribbean Black student (Rita) and one Cambodian student (Jim).

The School

This study was conducted in the Spring of 2004. It took place in The Art School (pseudonym), a high school that was then completing its second year of existence. Since it began with one entering ninth grade, at the time of the study the school consisted solely of grades nine and ten.

A group of teachers (including this study's author) and the principal proposed the school in response to a solicitation from the Bronx's High

²³ All students' names have been changed, sadly with a loss of a sense of the diversity that was embedded in their names.

School Division of the New York City Board of Education. In cooperation with private foundations, Bronx educational leadership sought to provide an alternative to the generally failing high schools in the Borough. One of the most underserved communities in the nation, department representatives reported that 60% of students in the Bronx did not graduate from high school.²⁴ Based on the success of small schools (Farber), the division requested that teams of educators submit proposals to form “new small high schools” early in the year 2000. The Art School opened in the Fall of 2003.

The school was designed to attract to students interested in the arts. It also incorporated many of the features considered essential in an alternative high school. The proposal called for shared governance between principal and staff, portfolios, block scheduling, advisories, integrated curriculum and small classes (Newmann). The school proposal stated that the school would follow the model of “authentic student learning” developed by Fred Newmann, et. al. and the curriculum planning guidelines developed by Grant Wiggins.

At the time of this study, Spring 2004, the school occupied eight classrooms in one corner of the top floor of a large 1930s high school building. Within the building there were also three other new small high

²⁴ In fact, this is approximately the graduation rate for New York City’s Public High Schools as a whole, which is 38.2%. (Swanson)

schools, all equally small, as well as the original high school, which continued to operate; it had also accepted a freshman class in the Fall of 2003. The building had been built for 2000 and now housed approximately 4000 students. The overcrowding was a significant source of tension between schools within the building. There were fewer students per class in the new small high schools and these schools had proportionally greater resources.

After a student was killed in the Bronx over the summer of 2003, the Superintendent of Bronx High Schools had metal detectors installed in all Bronx high schools. As a consequence students often had to wait in long lines to pass through these detector and be admitted to the building, lowering morale.

At the Art School, student art projects decorated the halls and an attractive student-designed banner hung across one of the halls, distinguishing the area of the Art School from the other schools in the building. (Not surprisingly, for an urban public school, the decoration of the school provoked resistance from the janitorial staff and the principal of a different new school operating on the same floor.)

Five of the eight founding teachers at the Art School had previously taught together at Central Park East Secondary School. This meant that there was a fairly strong consensus among the staff in favor of basing our

curriculum and assessment in interdisciplinary student projects. At the time of this study, the second year of the school's existence, seven of the teachers were white, there was one Black teacher and one Asian teacher. There were six men and three women.

At the time of this study, there were approximately 180 students in the ninth and tenth grades. The student population was predominantly Black and Hispanic, with barely a handful of Asian and white students. The school qualified for Title 1 funding. Many of the students read below grade-level. Data compiled from US Census and NY City agency reports by the Furman Center at NYU indicate that in the areas surrounding the Art School 44%-56% of the people over twenty-five had less than a high school education in 2000. The Furman Center also reported that in the immediate areas around the school the household poverty rates ranged from a low of 13.7% to a high of 35.9% in 2002 and rates had been as high as 43.5% in 1999.

Students were required to apply to the school. Although the Department of Education ultimately made the admissions decisions; students and their families had been interviewed by school staff prior to being accepted. Virtually all of the students in the first class returned for the second year, although two of the more academically successful students opted to leave the Art School and attend specialized high schools.

I would characterize the school in its first two years of existence as engaged in a struggle involving all of the stakeholders (administration, faculty, families, students) to find appropriate forms of pedagogy and methods of assessment and thereby to build a viable academic culture. Not long into the first semester of the school, opposition to the faculty's vision of the school emerged among many of the students. Students began to resist the demands of curriculum and to manifest oppositional tendencies such as fighting, coming late to class, wandering the halls, and failing classes. Although confronting the culture of the entire school, the degrees of oppositional student culture encountered by the faculty varied from teacher to teacher. One African-American female teacher, who left the school early into the second year, seemed able to maintain a positive classroom climate and student engagement in all her classes. Not all students manifested these tendencies and while various manifestations of oppositional culture existed, life in the school went on, complete with small, block-scheduled classes, advisories, and portfolios. Of the students in my sample I would describe all of them, with the exception of Charles, as regularly manifesting opposition to the demands of the school.

Portfolio based assessments were a new experience for these students, who had not encountered them in their middle schools. Rather than ending a unit of study with an examination, students had to produce work throughout

the course of any given lesson. Students met individually with teachers during class to review their work, putting them in a new and potentially uncomfortable situation week after week of enduring the focused attention of a teacher. Portfolios store individual projects, making them available across the school year. Teachers might require students to draw upon past projects in order to complete a new one, a significant change from traditional schooling that allows students to finishing with a topic after taking a unit test.

The Class and The Curriculum

During the 2003-2004 academic year, I had sought to engage the students by connecting the Social Studies curriculum to what I judged to be some of the major issues of our time: encounters between peoples with different beliefs (the relation between Judaism, Christianity and Islam in “the Ancient Beliefs Exhibition” and between Christianity and Native American traditions in the “Black Robe” exhibition — an essay on the film by that title (that film portrays an interaction between Jesuits and Native Americans in seventeenth century New France); the emergence of the scientific revolution (“the Modern Beliefs Exhibition”); and the rise of nation states and industrialism (the three War Exhibitions).²⁵

²⁵ At Central Park East Secondary School we had called student projects “exhibitions” because students were encouraged to share their work as evidence of their learning with others. See Meier, *The Power of Their Ideas* for a description of the portfolio process.

Believing essay writing an essential skill, I had exclusively assigned essays as opposed to alternative forms of assessment such as poster presentations or skits. This was, in retrospect, perhaps a mistake as I believe many of the students perceived the work as too demanding, arbitrary and abstract. As can be seen in the transcripts, students were quite often annoyed with me because I always returned student essays with specific feedback requiring revision. Depending on the essay, I usually asked them to clarify or support their theses and to improve the quality of their reasons or evidence. I would not give students a grade until I felt their essays demonstrated an understanding of the curricular concepts the assignment entailed as well as some creative synthesizing of that knowledge on their part. Many students came to view this process as something they were doing for me rather than for themselves. On the other hand, students frequently presented these exhibitions in their end-of-the-year portfolio presentations and seemed to find satisfaction and pride in them; unfortunately, they could not know that they would find them satisfying until they had the experience of presenting them.

Also of relevance for understanding transcribed student responses is the nature of the state curricular demands. Students were going to take the New York State Regents' exam in the Spring. The Global Studies curriculum, ranging as it does from the earliest humans to contemporary

history, presents enormous challenges for teachers and students, particularly to make it meaningful and engaging. The extent of the curriculum is often identified as one of the factors that make Social Studies one of the least liked of the academic subjects in High School (Marks). Moreover, the principal worried that students would not be able to pass the exam because in creating thematic units I had deviated from the normal Social Studies curriculum. The students did not share the fears of the principal. Although they resisted the course curriculum, for them the Regents Exams were a distant eventuality that they did not mention much in the course of the year.

It was in this context, that is, a new school seeking out a new and not-yet-known definition of itself, but still a definition which sought to provide the students and teachers with much greater freedom than traditional schools, that this study was undertaken.

Chapter 5

Analysis of Classroom Transcript

As described in Chapter 2, schooling today is more often than not conceived by the educational research community as lifeless and dominated by “coverage” of state-mandated curricula (Ball). Studies of schooling show an absence of students’ exchange of ideas (Goodlad, Nystrand) or of opportunity for students to reason together about curricula. Sadly, this quality of classroom life has been shown to have a history as long as the existence of modern schooling (Dewey, 1900; Cuban). Furthermore, urban public schools have been observed to be much less likely to incorporate student discussion into pedagogical practice (Nystrand, Haroutunian-Gordon). The emergent understanding of these conditions led researchers in the 1970s to turn to the question of students’ agency within classrooms (e.g., Lightfoot, 1978). Within work devoted to this concern, educational researchers developed the concepts of “resistance” (Giroux) and “engagement” (Newmann, 1992) to help understand students’ classroom experience.

Moreover, with respect to Social Studies, research has discovered that Social Studies is one of the least-liked subjects of students in the United States (Marks). In addition, the demands of the New York State Curriculum, and the development of content standards, have increased

pressure on Social Studies teachers to “cover” curricular content, contributing to pedagogical approaches that exclude fostering student discussion and engagement with the content. (Grant, Gerwin & Visonne).

As an antidote to lifeless classrooms, student discussion has been advocated either to promote learning of curricula (e.g., Adler, Haroutunian-Gordon, Nystrand, et. al.) or as a means to empower students to create knowledge that is meaningful for them and not necessarily confined within curricular boundaries (e.g., Burbules, Freire and Schor). Researchers have hypothesized conditions of “what ought to be the case” in classrooms, conditions that they believe will enhance student learning and engagement. Being unable to test their theories in action, they are unclear how to actually engender enhanced student learning (e.g. Newmann, 1992). The need to test these theories, and provide depictions of actual students creating meaningful knowledge led to calls for empirical studies of alternative pedagogies (Gore) or “critical inquiry in schools” (Sirotnik). Teacher-initiated action-research provides a way for the educational research community to develop knowledge which is not accessible by social science methodologies that rely on an outsider/observer to capture classroom practices unless they are lucky enough to find a teacher who happens to employ all of their strategies (Goswami and Stillman, Kincheloe). Teacher conducted studies, self-consciously implementing particular strategies, provide an essential tool for

uncovering examples of “what ought to be the case” in classroom life and pedagogical practice (Sirotnik).

In light of the reported lack of exchange of ideas in low-track and urban classrooms (Anyon, Wilcox), and of the twin dilemma of a lack of student interest in Social Studies combined with the demand that students learn a great deal of Social Studies content to pass state exams, as a teacher of Social Studies, I determined to undertake an action-research study of the impact of student dialogue on student learning and ethical life. As described in Chapter 3, my theoretical goal for the study was to explore the utility of Hegel’s concepts of Spirit and Ethical Life as an intellectual resource and pedagogical tool. The aim was to gain understanding of the immanent dynamic of students’ reasoning together in class and any emergent ethical relations to which this process might give rise, as Hegel’s analysis would predict. My hypothesis was that under circumstances of greater student freedom, absent monological controls, an immanent logic of mutual recognition would arise and within the logic of mutual recognition we would see both intellectual and ethical development — or what following Hegel we might call the emergence and development of Spirit. Access to such experience has been blocked by the historical origins of pedagogy as a form of social regulation (Gerwin, Gore, McNeil). Thus, in analyzing these discussions I am looking for the emergence of Spirit understood as: “Ego

that is a “we”, a plurality of Egos, and “we” that is a single Ego” (*The Phenomenology of Mind*, 227). It was hypothesized that “free” classroom discussion will lead to greater cognitive achievement and enhanced ethical life within schools.

To this end, I met with two small groups of students to discuss Social Studies themes and to allow them an opportunity to reason together about social issues of interest to them. Beginning April 15, 2004 and extending until June 9th 2004 the group met once a week, i.e., nine times, to discuss these issues. My immediate pedagogical and curricular goals were two: One, I was interested in knowing how students were understanding the Global Studies curriculum. In spite of my efforts to engage students with Global Studies through the use of thematically-based units, as described in Chapter 4, I saw that I was pushing many of them toward curricular projects and pedagogical goals rather than helping them learn curriculum that was of importance to them. In the context of pushing them toward curricular goals that did not seem to be theirs, I also believed that they needed an opportunity to address any questions they might have about the curriculum or to discover interests they might unwittingly have in it.

Two, I wanted to allow students an opportunity to discuss and develop understandings of their social worlds, regardless of whether or not their conversations were of direct relevance to the Social Studies curriculum.

In addition to allowing them time to develop their own understanding of their social worlds such conversation would allow me to learn more about students' lives and interests and how they understand their worlds. One benefit of knowing more about their social worlds is that it would allow me to create with them curriculum more responsive to their perceived needs. I reasoned that discovering such matches between interests and the curriculum ought not to be difficult given the enormous scope of the Global Studies curriculum.

As described in Chapter 4, I met with approximately half of my Global Studies class at a time to discuss our curriculum and their worlds. For several weeks leading up to the first sessions we had discussed my intention to explore with them how they learn through conversation. This did not come as a surprise to them, as I had often tried to engage them in curricular conversation as a pedagogical method. We also discussed how splitting the class in two would give each of them more of an opportunity to have their voices heard. The division of my class was made possible because a colleague had arranged a program for half of the students at a time to leave the school to study biology in a nearby park. Removing half of the tenth grade at a time freed a classroom in the school -- not a small achievement given the enormous overcrowding in Bronx schools (New York Times). Another colleague agreed to cover the half of the class while they

were not engaged with the study. Thus, I met with half of the students for the first hour of the class and the second half in the second hour.

The classroom dialogues began April 14, 2004 and extended for nine weeks and ended on June 3rd, 2004. This dissertation is an analysis of one of those discussions, the beginning session of April 15, 2004. In order to develop a richer understanding of the data I have chosen class transcripts of dialogue that transpired between the same core group of students.

I have divided the class into sequential sections of dialogue. This division came about by reading the transcript and discovering that it seemed to readily lend itself to identifiable sectioning based on the emergence of themes and by transitions which are introduced in that discourse by the students and myself. In each case the sections have the feel of being a bounded unit based on the meaning that was being enacted by the group in the section. In addition, each segment may include one or more “chains” of dialogue. As described in Chapter 4, chains are “sequences of dynamically co-constructed understandings” (Nystrand, 90). Focusing on such chains of dialogue allows us to examine how meaning was created by these students in their interactions with each other and with me.

April 15, 2004

As the class began, two chains of dialogue were overlapping. One centered on an exchange between Roger and Craig, with Anne, Christian, Jaime, Jim, Linda, and Mary for the most part watching and laughing about it. The other dialogue was between Marge and Tina. Rita was in the room with her head down. On the audio recording the dialogue between Marge and Tina is drowned out by the dialogue between Roger and Craig, et al. Marge's voice is audible although what she and Tina said to each other is not retrievable. At the start of the dialogue, Jack was in the classroom and he walked out before class started. As the first discussions went on I am returning papers. I then sat down and waited for the students' attention and watched the discussion develop between Craig and Ralph. We were comfortably seated around a large table formed by combing four rectangular tables. The conversation has been divided into segments and analyzed below.

Section One

Linda: *Whooo's talkin'?* Who's talking?

Mary I'm not talking to him ((Marge addresses Tina, their discussion parallels that between Craig, Roger, et al))

Craig I seen Jesus, I saw Richard, I'm straight

Anne No you *aint*

Linda I hear that

John: * Jack we're going to start * ((spoken away from the table where the tape-recorder is. The students Linda, Mary, Craig, Roger, Marge are sitting at the table where the microphone is so their talk is picked up as the central talk of the room))

Roger Just because you've seen a man that plays Jesus

Linda: =Doesn't mean you've seen him right? Thank you

Jim: [He does look like Jesus though]

Roger [Because if you'd seen Jesus] you would not be here.

Craig He do look like Jesus

Jim: I never seen Jesus before but

Craig =I felt Jesus' pain when I saw the movie. I cried when I saw the movie

Jamie You didn't cry

Craig Yes I did I swear to god

Jamie You like all the violence and shit

Roger You like that. You like: *yeah, yeah Jesus!*

((Student laughter))

Roger (continues) you like that didn't you?

Craig If you see a man fall off a bridge connected to a chain and his ribs get dislocated, would you cry?

Jamie Ah, *hell yeah*

Craig Yes you would

Roger Off a bridge?

Craig Yeah, the Romans threw him off a bridge and he was connected to a chain when they captured him in the bridge

Roger Ah (.5) no, he fell

((Laughter. Maria's can be heard in the background; most of the students appear to be listening to Roger and Craig spar verbally over what happened to Jesus in the just released Mel Gibson movie. There is also a reference to Craig having fallen, apparently just before the class. Roger's teasing is therefore a double entendre.))

Roger He fell

Craig No, no

Roger No he was pushed and then he tripped over something

((Laughter))

Craig So what caused him to fall? A punch right?

Roger He fell

Craig That's like me punching you and you right next to a ledge. Your ass gonna fall, right?

Roger All right, remember, remember how you fell right over there?

Students: Oh, oh

((Jaime, Linda and others laugh loudly, someone pounds the table))

Roger I just used that as an example, [laughter] I'm not trying to dis ya, I jus

Jamie He dissed ya 'cause

Craig You right, cause you're the one who pulled the chair back and

. . . . right? So you caused it. The same reason with Jesus

Roger He tripped over something

Craig I don't care I'm going to change my hat in like five minutes

John Okay, guys

Jim We're talking about Jesus

Marge We're talking about who?

John *Roger*

Linda *Jesus*

In this first section several important dynamics transpired. On the one hand, the class began to constitute itself as a We, the spirit of the group was being formed. This occurred on two levels. One, they decided what they were talking about. The students had freely constituted a discussion topic, Christianity. Two, as we shall see in the analysis below, they began to establish relations of recognition and non-recognition. These two events were interwoven as the content of the conversation became the medium for their relations to each other.

The topic of Christianity defined the first section. It was the axis around which their thoughts were formed and identities posited.

Christianity was in the air because Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of Christ*

had just been released and many of the students had recently seen it. The topic was taken up when Craig said, “I saw Jesus, I saw Richard, I’m straight.” Richard was a teacher who was a very devout Christian. He tried to live by his interpretation of the ethical code of Christianity and he was well-loved by the students. In this sense for the students he was Christ-like. The movie had attracted a great deal of interest in the school. Richard had seen *The Passion of Christ* and had discussed it with the students.

Craig equated Richard with Jesus e.g., “I saw Jesus, I saw Richard, I’m straight.” Christianity established a unity within the group as well as a feeling of unity Craig had with the other students. From this ensued a dialogue chain about whether or not Craig was in fact “straight,” a bona fide Christian. Anne, Linda and Roger questioned Craig’s Christianity. Craig reasserted his connection to Christ, “. . . I felt Jesus’ pain when I saw the movie. I cried when I saw the movie.”

Hegel claimed that individuals achieve their identities through the recognition of others. Craig was saying to the group, I am a Christian too, like Richard, like you. On the other hand, the group knew him well. They point out he was not Christ-like. Jamie told him, “You like all the violence and shit” and Roger agreed with Jamie. They said to him you are not what we call a Christian; you are not our concept of a Christian.

On the other hand, whether or not Craig was a Christian was hilarious for these students. They laughed several times during this part of the conversation, as they discussed violence, and as they talked about the Romans throwing Jesus off the bridge. This laughter suggests they were also calling into question their own faith. Roger said to Craig, regarding the violence in the film, “you liked that didn’t you?” He knew that because he could share with Craig that sentiment. Roger liked violence as well. Roger’s mother, who worked in the school, took him to church regularly.

Up to this point the conversation had been about Craig’s beliefs, and the group’s belief in Christianity had been the ground, or context for this discussion. Craig continued to assert his feeling for Christ, by asking the others, “If you see a man fall off a bridge . . . would you cry?”

Roger kept the focus on Craig, but changed the aspect of Craig the group was attending to. He questioned Craig about whether Christ was pushed or whether he fell. Craig asserted that Christ was thrown off the bridge. When Roger said, “All right, remember, remember how you fell right over there?” It became clear that when Roger said, “He fell,” the “he” he was talking about was both Christ and Craig. The students found the ambiguity attending to the indexical “he” hilarious as evidenced by the laughter that immediately followed Roger’s joke. They also found it

hilarious that Craig fell. They were like the Romans. The students too were ambivalent about their Christianity.

On the other hand, there was an affinity established. Craig and Roger were testing each other, and in so doing they affirmed their bond. Their bond was a precondition of the teasing. At the same time this affirmation of their bond was at Craig's expense. In having fallen or being pushed, his hat had been soiled. He turned away from the sparring with Richard, "I don't care; I'm going to change my hat in like five minutes." Craig was Christ-like. Richard, who compared Jesus falling to Craig falling ("remember how you fell right over there... I'm not trying to dis ya, I jus") was the master in this exchange.

For the students in the school a soiled hat or sneakers was a sign of poverty, something that was close to them. For Craig, to have a dirty hat was an embarrassment, a stigma.

Section one ended when I pulled the group together and said, "Okay guys." Jim turned to me and said, "We're talking about Jesus." This confirmed "what they were talking about;" it also was an invitation for me to redirect the group. Jim was saying, "what do you want to talk about?" This began the transition to the next section of the classroom dialogue.

However, there was one problem. When Marge said, "We're talking about who?" Linda responded with emphasis, "**J**esus." Marge, who had

not been part of the dialogue between Richard and Craig over Jesus, violence and falling, was contesting whether the group had been talking about Jesus, because she had not been. Linda's emphasized "*Jesus*" is to say yes "we" have been and perhaps Marge was not a part of us.

There was an evolving tension established between recognition and non-recognition of members by the group.

Section Two

John I don't, I'm not, I'm actually (.5) the last group had a great time. I'm not angry with you guys. But it does (.2) strike me as odd that it takes (.2) I'm sitting here waiting to begin you guys are going on

Jamie No, you wasn't, you was walking out of the room

Marge Exactly, giving out work

John Yeah, but

Jamie But you're still walking around the classroom

Marge =Giving out work

John Okay

Roger We waiting for you

John Okay . . . all right, Let's start now. . . um

Linda: Did he just say shut up? ((aside to Anne))

Anne: He said, let's start now ((to Linda))

Linda: Oh

In this section there was tension between the group and myself. I felt that the group should have come together sooner. Sociologists have pointed out that the control of students is central to the professional life of teachers (Waller, Lortie). My feeling was a manifestation of this institutional rule that teachers start class by settling down the students and focusing them. As I started to talk to them, as is indicated on the transcript, I paused in several places. I was conscious of doing this as a mechanism of control. I wanted the students to attend to me, and I knew that if I paused this would prevent them from establishing chains of discourse while I was talking. My speech could have served as “cover” for their conversation; the pauses were intended to prevent that. What I was trying to prevent did actually occur later in the class, as we will see.

The students felt that I was wrong to have expected the class to have started sooner since I too was doing something: Jamie says I was “giving out work.” Roger and Marge agreed with Jamie. I saw that I would not be able to reinforce the idea that we all should make the class start on time, or that giving out papers is a qualitatively different enterprise than having a friendly chat about Jesus, or that I had finished doing so long before I stopped their conversation. I saw that these were points I could not make,

and so I decided to move beyond the question of whose fault it was for the class starting late. I said as a signal to start class, “okay.”

On the other hand, to reconsider the same event, I enjoyed seeing Roger and Craig unfold their dialogue, yet I could not see their conversation as legitimate because it was also taking the place of the conversation I wanted them to have. Although my pedagogy was student-centered, it still had a strategic element: I wanted the students to discuss issues with sincerity. As an adult I believed this task was good for them, but I also knew it was something I was making them do. My contradiction was that I was forcing them to have free conversation.²⁶ Thus, when the students turned their focus to me, instead of starting, I decided to criticize them for not considering that I was waiting for them. As can be seen above, I said to them among other things: “... I’m sitting here waiting to begin you guys are going on.”

Since my comments appealed to their relationship to me, their comments to me also could have indicated that they were saying, “we look to you for leadership John. We thought you weren’t ready to start class, you were ‘giving out work.’” Moreover, their defensiveness suggested that they cared what I thought. This, in itself, is significant from the perspective of a

²⁶ Elizabeth Ellsworth and others have called attention to the tradition of the unanalyzed power of the teacher in Critical Pedagogy, the idea of the use of the teacher’s power for liberation.

developing group spirit, and there was an ethical dimension to this, that I was being unfair or unjust in accusing them of not doing what I had wanted and expected them to do. I could not see these other possible meanings of the talk at the time because of my knowledge that it was my job to start the class and because it had been my impression that they, like most students, were resisting the beginning of class.

There was an underlying resistance to beginning the class on the part of the students and myself. No one can be quite sure what will happen when the class begins. In fact, in the absence of a well-established ground for the conversation, such as the students had with Christianity, no one could be sure what the class would be like. Moreover, knowing what we know about schooling in the United States, as well as my practices as a teacher, the students must have believed that there was a strong possibility that they would receive “test questions,” i.e., questions searching for their knowledge of Social Studies content.²⁷ The possibility of being shown to be ignorant and the absence of a sense of a shared content that everyone could see themselves as sharing was stressful. It may account for the paradoxical position I exhibited here, which reemerged in the dialogue, of someone who

²⁷ The opposite of a test question is an authentic question, that is a question that the asker really wants answered because she doesn't know the answer.

claimed to want to have the conversation, talking about the need to have the conversation instead of getting on with it.

Linda was not willing to go on. She said to Annie, “Did he say shut up?” Like Marge, I was posited by Linda as outside the group. Anne, opened the class to me with her, “He said, let’s start now.” Anne was not going to join Linda in positing me outside of the “we.” Unlike the instance above when the question was raised as to whether or not I was giving out work, no one came to Linda’s aid. The group was in a period of tension-full waiting, there was nothing yet to replace the subject of Christianity, and the group had not constituted itself as an integrated “we” that recognized its members because it had not had the opportunity to do that yet.

Section Three

((Door Slams))

?? Sh!

Roger Hearing things

John Okay

Jack Guess who’s back?

Roger: Who?

Linda Nobody

Roger Who nigger? Who back?

Jack Why is everybody so quiet?

Anne Cause we're starting the class

Roger Yes, and you're interrupting

In this section Jack, one of the dominant boys in the school, entered the class.²⁸ He had been in the class at the beginning of the first section of dialogue. As can be seen in the first section, I had said to him : “Jack we’re going to start.” When he returned he announced his presence by saying “Guess who’s back?” Roger’s “Who?” and Linda’s “Nobody” while playful, were also a form of non-recognition and a response to Jack’s dominance. As non-recognition their responses only indicate Jack as an unknown, a “who” a “nobody.” They establish a rapport with Jack, an acknowledgement of him but it was an uneasy one. On the other hand, by challenging of Jack’s identity, (e.g., “Who nigger? Who back?,”) they were also establishing a connection, but one filled with disunity.

Jack immediately challenged me by saying to the group, “Why is everybody so quiet?” He was well aware, as were the others, that classes normally commenced by waiting for the teacher to start class, by being quiet. In fact, we had not started because we were pausing to let him into

²⁸ Jack had had many issues of confrontation with students and teachers in the one-and-three-quarter years of the school’s existence. His mother and he had met with the school social worker often and it had emerged that within their family there was a great deal of anger. It is a very good thing that he came to class, since he was often found in the halls during class time.

the group. His arrival was conspicuous as there were only twelve of us in the room when he arrived. On the other hand, given that he was entering a group that had already shared several experiences, a group into which he had yet to integrate himself, which was sitting together around a large table, his comments may have had more of a purely introductory rather than disruptive intent.

On a deeper level we can see that for Jack and perhaps for the rest of the students, the question of the legitimacy of schooling must have been present. Given the setting and the monological conditions described as prevalent in schooling, one could understand Jack's or others' feelings that perhaps they bore no responsibilities to the group. That schooling is coercive is widely recognized within educational research and the sociology of education (Newmann, 1992; Lortie). Coming from a community where few of the significant adults, parents or caregivers have gone to college or graduated from high school, and where schooling seems unresponsive to their needs and concerns, one can understand these students' resistance. Hegel argued, that in Ethical Life, in the world of mutual obligations that are constitutive of a just social order one can only have "duties" if one also has "rights" (*Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 197).

Section Four

- John Allright! Um . . . so this is a two-part exhibition.
In one part we're gonna look at the second issue of war
- Jack: uhhhhhh! ((groans))
- Marge: Can I ask you a question?
- John Yeah, go ahead
- Marge. How you gonna give us a new exhibition if the first war
exhibition everybody wasn't done with it?
- Mary: *Ohh*, true, true, true, ((in a sing-song voice))
- Linda: I'm done
- Anne Shut up ((addressed to Linda))
- John Well
- Jack I've got so many exhibitions man
- Craig Wasn't the first exhibition just to write a page about um,
[comparing],
- Mary [why was there war] ((she is clarifying the exhibition
question))
- Linda Yeah
- Craig: comparing all three of them?
- John: Marge, you've got to remember you've missed a week so that's
slowed you down a little, I'll give you time to get caught up.
But, the thing is this exhibition as I said in the sheet . . . I don't
know if . . .

I began the discussion by introducing a new assignment to the students. This was “the Second War Exhibition,” an essay assignment on the question: “How have wars changed over time?” I thought that students would welcome the opportunity to discuss a topic they would have to write about. Instead Marge responded by questioning why I would give out another assignment: “How you gonna give us a new exhibition if the first war exhibition everybody wasn’t done with it?” Mary and Jack agreed with Marge. Linda’s “I’m done” combined with her earlier assertion of “*Jesus*” seemed indicative of an ongoing rivalry with Marge of which I was unaware at the time. She had finished; Marge had not. Marge’s use of “everybody” here is doubly interesting. It was probable that Marge had not polled students as to whether or not they had finished the first war exhibition before raising this question. On the one hand, she had been absent for a week. Her opinion was that the class should slow down to accommodate her. We shall see a kind of immature egocentrism reemerge in the students throughout the class. On the other hand, by staking this claim, that they should not be assigned more work, she was grouping herself with the other students. She was presuming that they too would wish to avoid or lessen the workload. We have seen signs that her status was tenuous given her

separation from Roger and Craig's discussion and Linda's comment at the end of the first section (They were talking about Jesus; she was not).

I was also empathic to Marge and the students. I believed that the war exhibitions were challenging for them. I suspected that the students had mostly received academic assignments that did not require them to create knowledge, or to develop theses on significant topics. I also knew that assigning challenging tasks is considered one method of engaging students (Newmann, 1992). I had allocated a great deal of class time for students to work on these projects, which allowed me to better understand the challenges that individual students had with writing. As described in Chapter 4, the students were often not happy about my asking for revisions of their work. In short, I was in a position of trying to push the students to achieve high quality intellectual work, and there was substantial resistance within the group to that. Jack, who complained (in section four) about having so many exhibitions, would refuse to elaborate or develop his ideas in revisions. This was an ongoing battle for the entire class and me all year.

Craig's comment, "Wasn't the first exhibition just to write a page about 'um, comparing. .'" is representative of the role he played throughout this class. He enjoyed Social Studies, liked social issues, and wanted to talk about them. At almost every opportunity he tried to move the group

forward. In this case he did not appear to want to prolong the argument about the quantity of writing. It was also interesting that Craig was not a strong reader or writer. For Craig, intellectual activity was almost exclusively a matter of classroom dialogue.

Section Five

- John: Tina did you get one of these? Can you pass this to Tina? Does anybody else need the second exhibition?
- Linda No, I just got one
- Craig Okay
- John Jack do you need one?
- Linda (an aside to another student, probably Anne) I asked him for one that's all you need to know. I don't have to look at him.
- John You need one of these
- Jamie I need one
- John Can you guys pass one down?
- Jack ((starts to sing in a nasal tone, he seems bored with the handing out of exhibition assignment sheets))
- John Charles, do you?
- Charles: No, I'm good
- Jamie I need it

John: Jamie

This is a moment of routine for the class. It is a handing out of the exhibition assignments. Linda seemed to continue to behave in a rude manner to me. (In section two, she asked Anne, “Did he just say shut up?” As is clear from the transcript, the “he” she was referring to is me.) She seemed to be suggesting that she does not have to “look at” me, in this case as well. She seemed to be actively working to exclude me from the group.

Section Six

Jack Yo, is that thing recording?

John Yes,

Jamie Yeah

Jack: Oh, shit it is, yo

Roger It’s recording now?

Linda Yeah, it’s recording

Marge Laughs

Craig That means it hear our . . .

Linda Yeah

Marge Conversation, yeah

Jack: ((makes wining noise))

- John Alright, I'm telling you guys I promise I will not use this for [grading you.
- Mary [wa, wa]
- John: I will not use it for punishing you. I will (.5) everything you say is only going to be used for my study of how kids can learn with conversation.
- Jack That's a lie cause you only saying that because the tape recorder is recording now.
- Craig Your answers have been proven guilty
- Marge ((laughs))
- Jack I'm joking
- Marge Jack, he can't use it against us because he just said it on tape.
- Craig On tape, you know
- Jack: I'm joking
- Roger What you gonna do make a copy of what you just said?
- Marge It's mad crazy that . . .
- John I'm sorry I had a million things to do today, so I was gonna type it up and bring it in a note saying that, for you to sign, for your parents to sign, for me to sign just cause I want you guys to know . . . trust is really important here, and I hope you guys trust me.
- Linda I don't care
- Craig I trust you mister
- Linda I don't care

John: Okay

Marge Me neither

John Ok, thank you

Mary: You know Craig did that to your car back there, don't you?

((Muffled sounds probably made by Craig's indicating joking displeasure with what Mary is saying. My car had been stolen the year before and I used to tease Craig about having stolen it.))

Craig Yo, you know what? That's all right Mary. Wait till you get a car

Mary It aint gonna be no damn Mercedes

Jack That's gonna be a long time

John So . . .

Jack: I'll be 95

Marge: He tryin' to talk

Roger I know ((aside to Anne))

John Let me just, let me just say . . .

?: Sh!

Craig: Whoa

Anne Mind your business

Jack Slow your role little girl

Sh!

- Craig Respect your elders, John's speaking
 ((Laughter))
- Anne Yeah, but you're the one interrupting class right?
- Craig Anne, . . just . . . shut the hole in your face and
 listen to
- Mary: ((laughs))
- Linda Okay John

In this section the group builds its rapport with me through conflict. It began with Jack inquiring about the tape recorder. Again, I saw this as a mode of delaying the conversation, the work of the group. On the other hand, I too was struggling with the issue of the tape-recorder. I did not want the students to feel threatened by the tape-recorder, although I also knew it must have been, as a form of surveillance, threatening to them.

The students began to be animated about the fact that there was a recording being made of the conversation. They momentarily pulled back from me and discussed among themselves the significance of the recording. It is interesting that the students felt that their conversation, perhaps the one about Jesus, would be a threat were it to have been recorded. They seemed to like the idea that they had been found out.

When I told the students that I would not punish them with the tape, Jack immediately responded by saying, “That’s a lie . . .” Of course he was right. The presence of the tape and my saying that I won’t punish them with it was of course relative; if an instance occurred of enough magnitude the tape would have had to be a source of evidence. But, after the students laughed, Jack said, “I’m joking.” The students followed by affirming their commitment to the group. Craig said, “I trust you mister.” Linda said, “I don’t care,” and Marge said “Me neither.”

Mary, whose attachment to the group socially was tenuous, said “You know that Craig did that to your car back there, don’t you?” I had a car stolen the year before and I used to tease the students about having stolen it. Mary’s move was successful; Craig, responds positively to her. In the relaxed atmosphere of the discussion the students begin to open up to each other, to recognize each other.

Interestingly, Marge wanted the class to begin. She says “He trying to talk.” She sensed that I was trying to start the class. Craig and Anne shared an exchange about the need to start the class, again exhibiting the paradoxical attitude of claiming to want to have the class conversation instead of moving the class discussion forward. The section ends with Linda inviting me to start the discussion. She says, “Okay John.” Linda

Craig: *You*

Roger: All right just shut up then

Marge: You're a pussy faggot ((said in a joking manner))

John This came up in my last group. How do you guys wanna . . .
((Linda and Anne go on talking))

I was now able to commence what I shall call the official discourse by making an analogy between wars between nations and conflicts between young people, the subject of their "First War Exhibition." When I commenced this discourse Jack began to talk as I was talking, saying "They had a scene like that in the lunchroom." He also began to bounce a small object on the table. Craig waited for me to finish and answered my question. Then he and Tina began to discuss the analogy I had introduced. Here we see a logic unfold. Craig responded to Tina's affirmation of my analogy by beginning to proffer a reason why people and nations "don't like to back down." We never get to hear the reason. Instead Jim said, "I like to back down."

Jim had claimed an identity at odds with the norm of "not backing down." The students' responses to Jim were charged. Craig's response seemed to simply acknowledge the uniqueness that is Jim. Craig simply said: "*You.*" Roger's, "All right just shut up then," also implied a lack of

capacity to deal with Jim's uniqueness. It can't be comprehended, just swept aside. Mary's "You're a pussy faggot" was a judgment. She was telling the group that Jim's position was not viable. Jim's position had electrified the group at the same time as it had threatened the group. It seemed that the possibility of an alternative way to be, to "back down," was an alternative that the students couldn't comprehend because it was at odds with how their world was structured.

The ideas generated by the group moved away from the line of talk I had introduced, the comparison of wars between states and conflict between students. An unofficial discourse began to parallel the official discourse. These two discourses had different intentional objects, although they emerged from the same source: conflict. As such, this was an example of a dilemma we have seen built into authentic student conversation, the trail of reasoning often forks and yet students are wanted to participate meaningfully, "authentically." The students had moved the discourse in the direction of a discussion of conflict involving their personal lives. Moreover, it began to electrify them because it involved a speculative leap. Jim had modified the understanding of what a young man is or could be. They found it jarring and exciting because unlike the official discourse regarding nation-states it directly involved their lives, their very self-image. My strategy worked, to the detriment of the official discourse. Because the

unofficial discourse veered in a direction I had not anticipated, I did not see this as the opportunity it was. Like the discussion of Christianity, this conversation became, at least for Jim, Roger, Mary an intentional object which engaged them. As we shall see ripples of this chain reemerged throughout much of the conversation.

Section Eight

Roger This is a modified horseshoe

John Yes it is, you remember this from last year . . .

((Small object bounces on table))

Mary I used to hate those damn modified horseshoes

((Small object, bounces on the table again))

John: I know

Jack Yo . . . anybody got two munuzno

Roger is referring to the practice that I used to employ the year prior to this of getting the students to sit in a “horse-shoe,” an open-ended circle for discussions. Roger and Mary were saying they did not like those conversations. Unlike this study, during those conversations I used to try to get the students to focus rather narrowly on some text or specific theme. I was hoping that in this case they would not associate this experience with my more heavy-handed control of them last year. Thus, I acknowledge

Mary's sentiment. I tell her that I know she didn't like them. It's juxtaposition to the chain commenced by Jim's challenge suggests that part of this discomfort for students relies precisely in the speculative challenge, that things can become other than they are, through dialogic exchange. Thus as Hegel put it learning can become a "Highway of Despair" as one's fixed ideas are undermined by speculative leaps. (*The Phenomenology of Mind*, 135)

Section Nine

Linda: Now can I talk?

Marge Turn this off

Linda Now can I talk, now can I talk?

Craig Che mierda

Linda Now can I talk?

John Yes

Linda: What?

Marge Talk

Linda Like it's the same cause they form alliances together

Jack: * rah, rah, rah *

John Alliances too?

- Linda** [Don't shake your] head no
- Jack** [* rah, rah, rah *]
- Craig That's true
- John Do you guys see that?
- Craig Yep
- John Alliances between nations, alliances between people?
- Linda I know cause like
- Marge =I think wars happening because either they disagree about something or somebody conquered land
- John Is this what? Is this what you wrote in your exhibition?
- Jack How about no
- John: [They disagreed] about something or they wanted land
- Jim [Jamie's gay]
- ?? Sh, sh ((Someone tries to shush off-track inappropriate conversation developing between Jim, Jamie and Roger and maybe Jack))
- John: Anybody see another
- Jaime * ? ? ? baby brother *
- Mary There's other reasons
- John: I know because I read your papers and
[you guys came up with a lot of different cause for war]
- ((I have gone to the blackboard to list student ideas about the causes of war. While there, Jim, Jaime and Jack have begun to play with the microphone, speaking into it and creating the

parallel conversation which is going on underneath the official class conversation. At times, it breaks through.))

Jim [**Jamie suck my dick**]

Roger *Yo*

John: **Do you wanna try and think of some others? Carlos?**

Craig **[Religion]**

Mary [There's also] the Taino

Jack: [Roger sucks cock]

John: I think that, Marge did [you mean that they didn't agree]

Jaime: [you know Chinese people give the
Best head]

Marge: Like they disagree about certain stuff

Roger: [Yo Jim]

Marge: whether its religion or its acts

John: Right

Craig: Shut up Jim

Mary Fighting over thrones and who's gonna take over

Jack [Imitating a nasal and Asian voice] Shut up, Jim

Jamie ((laughs))

Jim Keep making jokes

Jack **Ya, ya, ya, Yo Craig be quiet**

((Laughter))

Jamie Ariba, ariba Craig ha

In this segment we can see that the two chains of conversation initiated by my comparing alliances between people to alliances between nations had gathered force, with the strain begun by Jim's "I like to back down" overpowering the less vital official discussion of conflict between nations.

Linda was enthusiastic about contributing to the official conversation. She had formulated an answer to how wars between nations were like conflicts between students. Three times she calls out, "Now can I talk?" It seems that the topic of alliances and wars was gaining steam for these students. "Like it's the same cause they form alliances together." Her contribution surprised me because she had seemed so hostile. Throughout the dialogue students' contributions to either the official or the unofficial discourse are associated with positive affective states.

I tried to get the others to take up Linda's concept of alliances. Instead, Marge tried to redirect the group to the question of the first war exhibition: Cutting off Linda she said, "I think wars happening because either they disagree about something or somebody conquered land." Her interruption could have been a continuation of a conflict that had been evolving between the two girls beginning at the end of section one and in

section four. Marge continued to develop her initial thought. Her first statement in this sequence, “. . . either they disagree about something or somebody conquered land” became a few lines later the more refined abstraction, “whether its religion or acts.” Mary took up Marge’s distinction and specified the types of acts that might lead to war. She said, “Fighting over throne’s or who’s gonna take over.” One can see that the logic of the official chain of discourse also propels it along. It’s dynamism was derived from its source as a shared production. Mary took Marge’s more developed concept and elaborated it. The type of acts Marge had suggested were specified in Mary’s comment.

Parallel, and overwhelming the official discourse, the unofficial discourse begun by Jim’s “I like to back down” continued to gather momentum. Jim, probably responding to a comment from Jamie, said “Jamie’s gay.” Jamie then said, “ ??? baby brother.” Jack hearing Jim’s reply to Jamie (i.e., ** Jamie suck my dick **), globalized the situation; homosexuality became a universal. That is, he said “Roger Sucks cock,” all the boys are potentially gay. (Jack’s comment could also be seen as payback to Roger’s “Who nigger, who back?” in section three.) Jamie tried to refocus the question of homosexuality specifically to Jim. Jamie said, “You know Chinese people give the best head.” Jim is Cambodian; this was a reference to Jim. The boys were excited. They started to focus on

Jim, their friend who wouldn't fight back. Then they turned on Craig; perhaps because he had been participating in the official discourse. They did so by referring to the category of ethnicity opened up by Jamie's reference to Jim's ethnicity. They teased Craig for being Hispanic. In so doing, they reduced the stigma attached to being different; being an ethnic type became a universal quality, that is one shared by all.

Roger: [Yo Jim]

Marge: whether its religion or its acts

John: Right

Craig: Shut up Jim

Mary Fighting over thrones and who's gonna take over

Jack [Imitating a nasal and Asian voice] Shut up, Jim

Jamie ((laughs))

Jim Keep making jokes

Jack Ya, ya, ya, Yo Craig be quiet

((Laughter))

Jamie Ariba, ariba Craig ha

Section Ten

At this point I stopped the conversation. I felt that the group needed a limit, Jim's "I like to back down" had led to vibrant and yet invidious associations with homosexuality and ethnic stereotyping. I was also struggling with the phenomenon of pedagogy Lortie described as "classness." Teachers deal with students in large groups and hence have to establish "general rules for class conduct and find it necessary to discipline deviation from those rules" (Lortie, 137). I was concerned that the students who had been participating in the official discourse, who had to that extent been cooperating with me, would feel betrayed if I did not stop the unofficial discourse. Marge had already, in Section Nine, demanded that the tape recorder be turned off. The feeling of betrayal I imagined they might have had, was introduced by Tina:

John One thing I want to ask you guys is . . . and this came up in my last group. Do you want to... in terms of conversation, sometimes people will raise their hand. I think it's better if we just talk but one at a time because um if you guys do this we're not gonna be able to have the conversation, so if we just listen to each other then we'll be cool . . . Linda you wanted hands raised. Is that what you are saying? Okay. How do you guys feel? If you want to do hands, we'll do hands.

Linda What's that?

John: Like

Tina It doesn't matter cause even if you raise your hand and you sayin' something, and somebody disagree then automatically jump in and say it

- Mary Yeah, that is true, cause that happened in this class a couple of times.
- Tina A couple?
- Craig Look at that right there?
- Mary Not a lot but
- Tina =Every day
- Roger: That's what I wanted to say, look at what happened right now. Look at what just happened?
- John Roger. I missed your point
- Roger What?
- Craig Tina was talking
- Jamie He just said look at what happened right now
- Craig Tina was talking and Mary agreed and then Mary
- Roger =She just jumped in
- Craig Yeah
- Linda Like that ha .ha
- Jamie: Just like that, like them too
- Roger Just like what he's been doin'
- John Well what that's different from talking out of turn
- Roger Like you just said
- John You guys... actually this conversation was beautiful because you listened to each other. And you responded to

each other. I think that really worked . . . what *doesn't* work is when you have two voices talking at the same time

Mary =At the same time

Jamie Just like that

Linda Yeah, that's what they was doing they was talking at the same time okay, yeah both of themlaughs

Roger Just like that

John Alright

Roger Just like (laughs)

My intervention to end the heated unofficial discourse after

Jamie's "Ariba, ariba Craig . . . ha" was not confrontational. I wanted the students to want to participate in and create an official discourse. I also knew and they knew that I could not make them participate meaningfully; they had to want to participate in the conversation. Moreover, the key motivation of this study was precisely the search for an immanent logic of mutual recognition as a pedagogical resource. Such a logic could not be coerced. At this point, I asked the students whether or not they wanted to raise their hands to decide who had the floor. As can be seen above, I also told them, ". . . if you guys do this we're not going to be able to have the conversation." Tina responded by saying that the conversation was hopeless because no one could or would follow rules. She stated that if

someone disagreed with the statement of another they would “automatically jump in and say it.” Mary agreed with Tina, although she tried to moderate Tina’s categorical statement that the situation was hopeless, (i.e., “It doesn’t matter” if we raise hands or not) by saying “Yeah. . . that happened in this class a couple of times”

Craig, took umbrage at Mary and Tina’s statements. He saw a challenge to the dominance of the group that was being displayed by the unofficial discourse and those who created it. He said, “Look at that right there?” and accused Mary of doing the very thing Tina said was making the conversation impossible. In effect, he accused her of “jumping in.”

Roger, sensing the emergent meaning, called attention to Tina’s jumping in, pointing out that Tina’s “Every day” took the place of Mary’s “Not a lot but.” Jamie joined in and in so doing helped focus the group on the emergent issue of turn-taking within the group. Jamie said, “He just said look at what happened right now.”

This exchange emerges as a confrontation between Tina, who I imagine, expected me as the teacher to impose rules on the class, to impose order, and Craig, who had been participating but resented the appeal to my authority to establish rules. From the particular instance of who has the floor, who was interrupting who, emerged the more general point, the point that Sacks analyzed in social settings, that is, the question of who gets to

speak, of how a group organizes turn taking. This was precisely the question that my pedagogy was raising since control of the conversation was shifting to the students. To a large extent, they were deciding who would talk. Their joking about this tension called attention to this fact.

The joking also called attention to the fact that turns were allocated chaotically or perhaps were subtle or not-so subtle reflections of power within the group. One thinks here of Charles and Anne who almost never participated, or Tina, whose valid calling attention to turn taking was belittled by the group's joke (i.e., Jaime's, Craig's and Linda's joke). This exchange seemed to indicate a culture of mis-recognition, of a kind of mastery, which makes classroom dialogue threatening for students; although here mastery is located in the larger social milieu, on the level of the behind-the-back quality of the group's consciousness of the rule of who will have the floor, and on the level of the peer group. Although many students spoke in this session, it was true that the group of Craig, Jamie, Roger, and Anne were close friends. They seemed to have allocated to themselves many of the turns, although Mary, Marge, Tina and Jack resisted this. The dominance of mastery does not allow for mutual recognition, the sharing of turns and views. The confrontation between individuals, or worse, between individuals within larger groups, is terrifying, and is often recognized as

such. In fact, it is only in the last section, that Charles, a brilliant but socially isolated student, participated.

Tina's comment ("It doesn't matter . . ." that is, whether the group raises hands or not) indicated that she could not imagine the group being otherwise. Her behavior is reminiscent of Hegel's analysis of Antigone. Hegel saw Antigone as tragic because she could not see that her assertion of a valid right, in Antigone's case the right of her brother, Polynices, to a proper burial conflicts with the right of the state to uphold the law (Houlgate). Antigone could not see that there were contrasting laws, and for her the law of the family, the law that gave her right to bury her brother, was inviolable.²⁹ Similarly, Tina's insistence that people not interrupt each other, conflicted with the evolving nature of the group, which was developing its own standards for turn-taking. She was sticking to her interpretation of what she saw, that the group was the way it had been. Her comments imply that she saw it as anarchic. Or, given the data, she may have been aware of the group being dominated by the group of Jaime, Roger, Craig and Linda, who had taken most of the turns. However she understood the group, her judgment would not let it be otherwise. After this

²⁹ Hegel wrote of Antigone: ". . . Antigone proclaims that no one knows where the laws come from: they are eternal." *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 189.

exchange, she did not contribute again to the conversation and she gradually stopped coming to the small-group discussions.

On the other hand, the group had not taken up her initial suggestion that nation-states were like students in that they too do not like to back down. Tina may have shared with me the feeling that Jim's "I like to back down" was a provocation, rather than an opening for critical reflection on the expectations of our behavior. In fact, he had contradicted her. He said that he did not fit her idea that young people, "don't like to back down."

Section Eleven

Jaime: * Ryan's a cock-blocker *

John So, let's clarify this

((Mary and Linda laugh))

Jack [Jack speaks while I am speaking but what he says is not decipherable on the audio tape. He is probably commenting on Jaime's statement immediately above.]

Roger Let's just clarify it, clarify it

Linda Clarify what?

?? * Ryan's a cock-blocker *

John What we're doing

Jamie uh, uh

Linda huh

John What we're doing

Jack I like alpha bits ((sung in a low nasal tone))

Craig Oh

Jaime Shut up Craig, ****fucking Mexican, huh, huh huh****

John The first exhibition you were supposed to look at (.5) Craig (.5)
the first exhibition you were supposed to look at different wars
and come up with what you thought were the causes of the war
looking at how wars have changed. Linda?

Linda Did you find mine, my exhibition?

John You know what? I haven't really looked for it

Roger Yeah, what about my Black Robe?

John I told you I gave you credit for it. Yes Jamie?

Jamie What about my Black Robe? Did you find it?

Mary Yeah and my . . . essay

Jim He didn't look at it

John I didn't look for it

Mary *Oh*

John Did you hand it in?

Jamie Yeah before the break

Mary You didn't look at mine's either

Jamie Two days before the break

Jack: Damn it's 2:20. Let's get out of here

- Jamie Cause you made me, you put me in a corner
- John What?
- Mary You didn't look at mine's either right?
- John I didn't. I looked at the ninth graders' exhibitions.

The discussion of turn taking ended when I attempted to reestablish the official discourse about war. I ended the turn-taking conversation by saying, "So, let's clarify this." Roger's repetition of my comments was mocking of me, although his tone was gentle. The room quieted as I quieted down. In the void left by my pause, Jack said, "I like Alpha bits." Jamie said, "Shut up Craig ** fucking Mexican, huh, huh . **" As the room quieted again, I began to speak again. In my struggle to get the floor I conflated the first and second war exhibitions; I said that they had "to come up with what you thought were the causes of the war looking at how wars have changed."

As with the first time I tried to introduce the theme of the war exhibitions the discussion turned on a different aspect of the exhibitions than I had anticipated. Linda asked if I found her exhibition. In addition to Linda, Jamie, Roger, Mary, and Jim comment about the exchange of work between us. They are immediately concerned with their grades, to know

that they will receive credit for their work. I continued to take their questions about their work. In the interest of making the class as transparent as possible to them I allowed all that wanted to, to ask about their work. I did not want them to feel that I was covering up. A sense of doubt emerged among them regarding whether or not they would have their work acknowledged, that I would read it and return it. Since I spent a great deal of time reading their papers, it sometimes took a week or so to get them back to the students. Having worked with me for at least eight months, they knew that I read their work and returned it to them. Hence, I did not feel that theirs was a valid sentiment. On the other hand, I also believed that it was useful for them to share their stories about doing their work. They could publicly display that they had done it.

Section Twelve

Marge	Okay
Jamie	Roger's a c-blocker
Craig	He's a C-bee'r
Linda	What's a C-bee'r?
Jamie	All dick-cock blocker
Craig:	A cock-blocker
Linda	<i>Oh. . .</i>

Craig Damn Roger

Marge Ha, ha

Linda What?

Jack Oh

Linda: He got it

Linda: Are we done? Excuse me class are done?

 ((I had stopped talking waiting for the class to settle
 down))

Craig No

John Alright, so

Jack =Hai Cabron . . . la salsa

John Jack. . . Jack do me a favor, I don't want to get angry but
 I just I don't

Mary You dumb ass

John know how I'm going to do this

Jack He started it too, son

The students have stopped talking about their work. I was waiting for them to attend to me. In the space I have left the students began to talk amongst themselves. They wanted me to compete with them for the floor. They filled the void with their discussion of sex. Jamie says "Roger's a c-

blocker,” i.e., someone who won't have sex with a male. When I remain quiet, Linda asked, “Are we done?” I tried to start the official discourse again. I said, “Alright, so .” as I did, Jack interrupted me. Marge is annoyed with Jack. When I tell Jack, “I don't know how I am going to do this” I was speaking in a very soft voice. Jack replied, also in a soft voice, “He started it too, son.” He acknowledged my complaint without taking full responsibility. According to Jack, he and someone else were both doing something wrong, not letting me “start.” I take Jack's recognition of my position as a positive sign. On the other hand, Jack's calling me “son” was also interesting. It implied a kind of intimacy; yet it also implied that I was in a subordinate position to him. I was like a “son” to him.

It was also interesting that the group's talk in these sections seemed motivated by two things. On the one hand there was a void. Unlike in the early discussion of Christianity the group had nothing to discuss. The students filled that void with their own miscellaneous talk, but it was not directed; it was scattered. It was not an unofficial discourse; it did not have the coherence or momentum of the unofficial discourse that ensued when Jim said he likes to “back down.” They seemed to want to assert their right to take control of the conversation, but they were unable to find a topic that interested them, and they were resistant to talking about the war exhibitions.

Their talk in this section was a defensive maneuver to take the place of talking about the exhibitions.

Section Thirteen

John Alright well let's do it together . . . Ok. One of the things I showed you guys the movies, um what was the movie? Braveheart and I showed you Saving Private Ryan

Craig =*Saving Private Ryan*

John I was really, *one*, impressed with the way people focused on it and two I was impressed by, um, how many people did the classwork assignment.

Jack Maybe because it wasn't boring

Mary I did it

John Yeah

Mary I got it back

Jack It wasn't boring that's why

Linda He didn't say you didn't do it ((Linda says this to Mary))

Jamie *Check- plus*

Linda He gave it back already?

Anne Yeah

Linda I did mine's

Anne Did you give it to him?

Linda You mista

John Yeah

Linda: I gave you my classwork that day

Jim No you didn't

Linda Yea I did

John Rita I have yours, and Marge I have yours

Jack [Belching] Damn Roger

John I don't have yours here Linda . . I don't have yours here .

In this section there is a sense that the students have something beginning to take the place of Christianity. They have something to talk about. In this case it will be the scenes from the films *Braveheart* and *Saving Private Ryan* that I had used to introduce the second war exhibition, which dealt with the question of how wars have changed over time. After I introduced the topic of the films we discussed the work sheets they had completed on the film. In this context, the completion and grading of the work sheets, the students continued the theme of whether or not I returned work to them. I had handed back this work to them at the start of the film. I distributed a few more and double checked as we began talking about the two movies. The students worked to restore their image of me as a just teacher, that is one who returned assigned work. Jack said students did the

work in this instance because it “wasn’t boring.” Mary said, “She got it back.” Jamie let everyone know that he got a good grade, a “check-plus.” Craig told the class that he did the work (e.g., “I did mines”) a sign of its legitimacy for him.

As in the case with the discussion of student exhibitions in section eleven, here the students seemed to be displaying a kind of ego centrism. We would have to stop our collective endeavor, our class discussion, in order to focus on their individual situations. They knew that they could do that with me outside of class.

Section Fourteen

John Can we just make a list of like you how you guys saw ancient and modern Wars different? ((I go to the black board to write down what the students say.))

Craig: Alright the

Jamie =Alright the Modern Belief

Jack This nigger likes you

Jamie You said the Modern Belief or the Modern War?

John Well it’s interesting maybe we could get into how it relates To modern beliefs

((Student voices start))

- Marge Ancient or Modern wars?
- John Yes
- Mary Modern wars
- John Yeah
- Marge Modern Wars was like Saving Private Roger
- John Right
- Mary Ancient wars like Braveheart
- John That's what I am saying
- Jamie You're talking about that, oh
- Mary Like grenades and all of that
- John Ok, so there's
- Jamie Machinery weapons
- Mary Machinery and mass destruction stuff. What you call that?
- Craig Weapons of mass destruction
- Mary: Yeah that
- Jack: Weapons of mass destruction ((slightly mocking))
- John Interesting. Did they have weapons of mass destruction in Saving Private Ryan?
- Craig Yes they did!
- Mary Yeah

Craig The A-bomb was a weapon of mass destruction

Jamie Yeah and that bomb, that bomb the one with the long pipe

Linda: [* wow *]

Craig [That was] a grenade launcher

Jack That's called ack-block

Jamie: You are long ((laughter)) No Homo

Jack You heard that right, he said a log John

Jamie No, I said you said that

Mary The ancient world was like

 Hold up, hold up

Mary They just used

Jamie Ron get out of here ((a student Ron had entered))

Ron That was Jerry

Craig Get out Ron

Jack Funacki, get out that's for Jerry

In this section, having aired the students' concerns about the work that they had done, we were able to go forward. There were 27 exchanges in a row all focused on the same official topic involving 5 different students as well as myself. When I asked the students how ancient and modern wars were different, the subject of the Second War Exhibition, Craig responded and was interrupted by Jamie, who also responded to my question. Jamie

said, “Alright the modern belief” at this point Jack said, “This nigger likes you.” Jack seemed surprised that Jamie had decided to engage with the official discourse of the class. He also associated contributing to the conversation as an indication of Jamie’s affective state, that he “likes me.”

In *the Phenomenology of Mind* Hegel wrote that “Self consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness” (226). It is this formula, which is the basic relationship of recognition. A first subject sees itself in the other, as the other sees itself in the first subject. In *The Encyclopedia Logic* Hegel discussed the act of the understanding, the application of the abstract and fixed determinations as universals to the empirical flux of the world, as a manifestation of the “goodness of God” as it bestows “various kinds and classes” upon the world (*The Encyclopedia Logic*, 127). In this section we can see these two forces in operation. Here the students began to name things, and in doing so the group began to recognize each other’s contributions, which was also a recognition of each other. In doing so they formed a collective focus which was resistant to disruption. In so doing the mood of the group lifted, they developed a positive affect.

First, the group needed to distinguish between Ancient and Modern Wars, using the films as examples. Mary clarified that *Braveheart* was an example of an ancient war and that *Saving Private Ryan* was an example of

a modern war. From this the students went on to further determine the qualities that distinguished ancient from modern wars. Mary suggested “grenades” as an example of a modern weapon. Jamie abstracted from her category and labeled the broader category, “machinery weapons.” Mary further associated machine-made weapons with weapons of “mass destruction.” This raised the question of whether weapons during World War Two were “Weapons of mass destruction.” Craig recalled that atomic bombs were used during World War Two. At this point Jamie referred to a bomb with a “long pipe.” In response to Jamie’s image, Linda, said “ * wow *.” In spite of Jamie’s perhaps unintentional introduction of a phallic symbol into the conversation, the momentum of the collective achievement of the group, their satisfaction making meaning together propelled them through this interruption as well as the interruption of Ron and Jerry, two students entering the class room at the end of the day.

Section Fifteen

Mary They would just use hand made weapons in the ancient

John Hand made weapons . . oh

Jamie Like swords, switch blades

 Laughter

Roger Flip blades

Linda Oh they had a job fair

Mary Damn, I missed it

Yeah

Jack Roger Smith would you please stop touching me

Mary Laughs

Jamie *Mad homo*

((Laughter))

John Um, Craig said

Linda Why is . . . here

John Craig said that, I think you meant in the Ancient world they had rules of war?

Craig They had um

John You want to say more about that?

Craig: Like in *Braveheart* mister, before the war started the general, lieutenant and um two high ranking soldiers would go out to the middle of the field and the opposite of the other group would

Jamie [Head up]

Craig and they would decide about what was allowed and then after that the war would start

Jamie No, they didn't say what was allowed the said um

Mary: They said what would happen

Jamie: Yeah if they

Craig And they discussed how many um

Jamie Like what would happen if like they backed down

Craig Yeah

Jamie from the fight and like what would happen
if they continued on with the fight

 Yeah

Jack: They would take over that's why they had to fight back

John Did you guys, did you guys notice, I'm really glad
you brought that up

Jack: America fights back

Jim: I was like that they stand in front of each other while
Brave, um bravery . Saving Private Ryan was like, they
had to run and kill and shit.

Jamie Yeah

Craig you had face-to-face combat

Jamie Yeah, of on the ancient belief

John Ancient war

Jamie Ancient war

John But didn't you um, but didn't you they do face to face combat
in *Saving Private Ryan*?

Craig No, they did not mister !

John They got pretty close at the end

Craig That's not face-to-face

- Mary Yeah
- Jack: They had to breach the bunker
- Mary Yeah, that was like
- Jack To get inside
- Mary Yeah, it was because they went inside the thing and the boys,
they went out
- Jamie That wasn't hand to hand though it wasn't hand-to-hand though
- Jack: It wasn't everybody was having out in their face they was
standing on top
- Jamie: Shouting like pop, pop, pop, pop
- John We already know, we already know why it wasn't hand-to-hand
in the modern world right? It's because of what Jamie said
- Jamie: Machinery, weapons
- John Machine weapons, guns, by the way
- Jack But, but *Braveheart* wasn't
- John *Braveheart*, right
- Mary They had homemade weapons
- John Although they did have bows and arrows they would shoot so
that made it sort of long range weapons
- Jack: That's at the beginning. But then they changed horses with the
horses and everything
- John Did we mention horses . . . yeah. ((I'm writing on the board
things students are saying)) Um have the used modern
machine made weapons? Is this coming up and everything ((a
student had picked up the headphones of the tape-recorder))

John Can you hear it well? Good. Thank you. Alright, thank you for checking that.

Roger Oh, he's happy

John Um

In this segment of the transcript there were 40 consecutive exchanges, involving seven students, all focused on the official topic.

At the beginning of this section Mary continued to explore the distinction between ancient and modern wars. She came back to this distinction although the flow of the conversation had been interrupted by Jamie's interjection of the phallic weapon and the upset that was caused by the two boys, Ron and Jerry entering the classroom. It was also nearing the end of the school day, a time when students are often unable to maintain their focus.

It seems that the satisfaction of naming their world, in this case an historical world and the fact that they did it collectively, mutually recognizing each other's contribution, contributed to the momentum of the class discussion. Jamie took up Mary's redirection of the conversation to ancient warfare, implicitly recognizing her, and said, "Like swords, like

switchblades.” Jamie’s association of two like weapons, swords and switchblades, began a chain of jokes. Jack associated wooden sticks used ancient war with bamboo which was an association with martial arts, an ancient art of warfare. At this point Jack introduced the concept of “Cambodian Breast Milk” which was an association to Jim, the Cambodian student who was associated in Jack’s mind with a baby because he liked to “back down.” This time, Jamie and another unidentifiable student redirected the conversation to the contrast between ancient and modern war instead of pulling the official discourse away from itself by taking up Jack’s provocative “Cambodian Breast Milk.” On the other hand, Jamie did respond to Jack’s “Roger Smith would you please stop touching me” a few pages later.

Craig continued to develop the contrast between ancient and modern war. Speaking of ancient wars he said “Um, you had face to face and you had rules of war.” I asked him to say more about the notion that in the ancient world they had rules of war. Craig began to discuss this paradox. This drew other students into the conversation, beginning the chain of 40 consecutive exchanges focused on the topic. Jamie introduced the notion that the combatants would discuss “what would happen if they continued on with the fight.” From this Jack made an inferential leap to the thought of why these groups would fight, if one side were to lose, the other side would

“take over.” He then associated this with America. He said “America fights back.” Jim, who was normally quite reticent to speak in class continued on with the distinction between “hand-to-hand fighting” and fighting which required one to “run and kill and shit.” Presumably, Jim was thinking of the difference caused in warfare by the introduction of firearms.

The students focused on Jim’s idea that only in ancient wars did you have “face-to-face combat.” I questioned that distinction, pointing out that we saw hand-to-hand fighting in *Saving Private Ryan*. My question (didn’t they do face to face combat?) elicited a strong response from Craig (No they did not mister!). The students then went on to discuss whether or not there was hand-to-hand fighting in *Saving Private Ryan*. Like the much more highly charged example of Jim’s speculative aufheben of the notion of what a person does, (one does not back down) Craig’s response to my query, asserting that face to face combat only existed in ancient wars and not in modern combat, indicates the strong pull of universals, of naming the world. To question them, as I did, by suggesting that we had seen an example of hand-to-hand combat in *Saving Private Ryan*, elicited a powerful response.

Section Sixteen

John Do you guys know what’s the difference between old

Jamie: Stop that Roger Camps

John Do you guys know what's the difference between old-style bullets and modern bullets?

Craig Um, yes

Jamie Yes

John Christian

Charles Old style bullets are more round and the new bullets are kind of like . . . kind of shaped

Mary Curved

Jamie: They're shaped like a sphere

Craig Can I say Mister?

Jamie Like a sphere's

Craig No . . . no its not

Jamie Yes it is, they like this, like A, like a finger

John: Why is, why are

Rita: It has a point

Craig Fifty caliber bullet

John Why would the new a

Jack Fifty caliber bullet is like that big

Roger You should try to hear yourself

John Oh a fifty caliber is not that big

John Christian, do you want to say more?

Charles The reason why the shape is different cause the new ones

are they don't have much resistance in the wind

John Okay. Can we stay together? You guys I know are on the same Topic, but the main thing I want to avoid is breaking up this Week so that we have two configurations

Jack [makes fart noises]

John Christian can you repeat that? Cause these guys are talking

Charles The shape of the bullet also affects how far it can go because the resistance of the wind when it gets shot, and it can travel longer.

John: That's true, the shape

((Jack makes fart noises))

But there's another reason, definitely the shape, but there's another reason why these guys go farther.

Jamie Because

John Why do they call them rifles? Does anybody know?

Jamie Because they travel further . . . than normal bullets

John They do, but that's not why they call them rifles

Jack They have range

In section sixteen I broke into a series of "test questions"³⁰ about rifling in firearms. In effect the study ends for the day as I take control of the discourse by "leading" a discussion about weapons during World War One. (Stories that I had heard from my grandfather, a veteran of the British

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Navy.) One notable distinction is that when I began to lead the discussion two students who had been quiet throughout the discourse, Charles and Rita, entered. Rita had had her head down throughout the class. She was beginning to wake up to get ready to go home. I could see that she had been completely exhausted. Charles seemed to need the structure of my leading the discussion to feel comfortable contributing to the group's conversation.

Discussion of April 14 2004

Having looked in some depth at the evolution of meaning-making and the social conditions which engendered it, with regard to this class we are in position to examine the two levels of goals for this study — the theoretical and pedagogical.

With regard to the theoretical goals, the uncovering of an immanent logic of mutual recognition and the emergence of spirit, absent strict monological controls, is evident as emergent ethical life within the class. We find evidence for this in the four substantial chains of dialogue that emerged as student generated in this transcript: the discussion of Christianity, of the nature of social being (i.e., does one “back down or not”), on the nature of turn taking in their discussions and in the distinctions generated between ancient and modern war. Of these four, only the last one, the one I consciously participated in, had the quality of being self-consciously about itself. In each case we find that a shared intentional object was constructed.

Hegel termed such a construction, “Objective Spirit.” It is around these shared creations that the students were able to develop shared understandings. We have seen how in the discussion of backing down or in the discussion of ancient and modern wars the students picked up each others’ universals and either applied them, by naming things, or they speculatively altered them. Jim re-cognized the notion of what it means to be a person. Jack made an inferential leap from the act of war to the idea of why nations fight to the notion that America fights. Craig fixed upon the antinomy of having rules in a lawless setting.

All of these achievements, and others could be named, were group products achieved with little use of force on my part. In fact, we can see the force of these group projects, this objective spirit, in the resistance these chains of logic developed to being subordinated to attempts to redirect them.

We also see, concomitantly, that members of the group are able in these circumstances to take on new roles. Jim’s radical leap has been frequently commented upon. Perhaps less conspicuous was Jack’s willing participation and albeit partial subordination to the Spirit of the group. In the conversation chains of powerful group focus, there was significant resistance to efforts by group members to overthrow the Objective Spirit of the group.

While Tina's refusal to continue was tragic, we have seen that the socially marginal Mary became an active and acknowledged interlocutor. In fact, Jim's comment can be seen as not a rude challenge to Tina's position, but an important clarification to an act of misrecognition on her part. Moreover, the use of ethnic stereotypes throughout the dialogue seems more ironic than hostile. The students were saying to each other I know you, I see that you are not Hispanic, Black, Cambodian, Christian, I see you in your unique qualities. The lone exception of such ironic recognition might be that inspired by Jim's stance. That seemed hard for the boys and Mary to accept. We saw that Craig and Roger could not name it. Yet the possibility was raised, and it unleashed a stream of homoerotic banter..

As to the pedagogical goals for the study, we can remember that Hegel described "experience" in the introduction to his *Phenomenology of Mind* this way:

When consciousness knows something; this something is the essence or what is *per se*. This object, however, is also the *per se*, the inherent reality, *for consciousness*. Hence comes ambiguity of this truth. Consciousness, as we see, has now two objects; one is the first *per se*, the second is the new existence *for consciousness* of this *per se*. The last object appears at first sight to be merely the reflection of consciousness into itself, i.e., not of an object, but solely of its knowledge of that first object. But, as was already indicated, by that very process the first object is altered; it ceases to be what is *per se*, and becomes consciously which is *per se* only *for consciousness*. (142-143)

I think that to the extent that these students have had this experience

of relatively free exchange of ideas, they had a new thought (a new “object” to use Hegel’s term) about learning in groups and its possibilities; although as with the process of consciousness Hegel described above, it almost certainly went on behind their backs and lives somewhere below the surface of their consciousness. Nevertheless they *had* this experience; they experienced new possibilities of free exchange and of ethical life. The class went from being for me, to being, to a much greater extent, for them. They experienced something that happened because they made it happen.

Of course if we are to judge whether or not the experiences captured in this transcript are educational we must compare them with what we can assuredly know about their educational experiences in the past. Given the long history of monological instruction in this country as well as the myriad studies reporting a strong tendency for working class students to be all the more subjected to its pernicious effects we can imagine that for these students to have the opportunity to use their minds socially while certainly threatening must also have had great experiential benefits. They had the experience of making meaning together under their own freely associating minds. While not without struggle, they must have realized new possibilities where no such conception had existed before.

As for their understanding of Global Studies and of their social worlds, my immediate pedagogical goals, we can see that they began to

distinguish between the ancient and modern worlds. We can also see that they revealed much about their social worlds. As a teacher one can imagine delightful opportunities in Jim's comment for curricular development. Ought nations back down? Or Tina's question, "Why don't people and states like to back down?" Was Jack's "They would take over that's why they had to fight back" the answer? Is it a good one in the modern world? These topics are delightful because they originated in students' minds, and they are central questions in the world today.

Chapter 6

EMERGENCE OF THE SPIRIT

The classroom conversation of April 15, 2004, analyzed in chapter five, was the first session of a case study of classroom dialogue which lasted for nine weeks. While including a detailed analysis of each of these dialogues, as was done with the first transcript, would not be feasible given space constraints, I will provide an overall sketch of the effects of these accumulated experiences for these students.

The analysis of the April 15, 2004 class transcript showed a great deal of struggle on the part of the teacher and the students. Several times in the course of the discussion I had to stop the group and refocus them. In addition, two of the students themselves, Tina and Marge, also felt the need to comment on the group's behavior. On the other hand, as was shown from the four major chains of conversation that developed during that session, powerful centripetal forces also emerged. These centripetal forces can be accounted for by the desire of these students to attain certainty about themselves and their views on the world. They seem best explained by the emergence of the collective force of Spirit, by the need for people to understand the world together, a need that Hegel uncovered. While not without conflict, having the opportunity to reason together about the world,

relatively freely, led to enhanced feelings of group solidarity and individual satisfaction.

Over the course of these discussions as the students learned how to create this experience together, they also learned that they wanted to repeat it. The curricular content we discussed became richer as our discussions deepened and the group behaved with greater respect. Our discussions centered on larger and more significant issues facing us today. The issues that we discussed in depth included questions of poverty and wealth, the workings of a market economy, the responsiveness of democracy and whether or not democracy could work in a world divided between rich and poor, the use of force by the police to keep order, the ethics of capital punishment and the question of how to keep the nation safe in the world after September 11, 2001 and in the context of the war in Iraq.

The students increasingly recognized each other as active individuals with something to say and with points of view that the group would respect. For example, in our discussion of June 3rd 2004, a dominant male student, Earl, put forward the idea that to protect ourselves the United States ought to use nuclear weapons in Iraq. As the conversation began Craig and Jack agreed with Earl. Through an exchange of ideas that drew on the ability of the students to imagine the perspectives of people of other nations, a consideration of the utility of war to solve problems in the modern world, an

historical analogy with the experience of France during the reign of Louis the 16th drawing on the concept of the balance of power, and the current state of the nation's safety after September 11, 2001, the students reasoned that the use of nuclear weapons in Iraq was unwise. In addition, although the conversation began with some degree of machismo, over the course of the conversation the students became increasingly intent on making their points and hearing others. In this context the students did not denigrate Earl, who had put forward the proposal, even though they felt he was wrong. In the course of the conversation Jack conspicuously and Craig less so, changed their minds. In turn, Earl who had a history of behaving aggressively, reacted calmly to the group's turning against his idea. He allowed others to make their points, and he accepted the point of view of the group without appearing to be embarrassed. Interestingly, at the end of the class, he was teased by Jamie for his role in the conversation, but in a manner which showed Earl that Jamie respected that Earl had stood up to the group with his ideas and that this must have been difficult.

As the students became excited about using their minds together, my role became less one of acting to control the group and far more one of acting to assist the group in its explorations. As the students learned that they liked to reason together their need for me to regulate them diminished substantially. In our hour-long discussion of June 3rd four times I made comments intended

to resettle or focus the group. In each instance they were minor comments. I did not have to slow my pace as I had on several occasions during the April 15, 2004 conversation.

My role continued to be one of allowing students to allocate their own conversational turns, to give the students great latitude in determining the direction of the conversation, of asking authentic questions, seeking to incorporate their answers into the conversation, and singling out for high level evaluation concepts they had introduced into the conversation that I thought deserved further consideration. To give an example of a high level evaluation, on May 27, 2004 the students were discussing their preference for President Clinton over President Bush. In this context I asked them why they liked Clinton. Among other responses, Craig said that Clinton “didn’t raise prices on gas and milk.” Craig’s comment was an opportunity for me to ask them if the government raised prices on gas and milk. This allowed us to begin to use our collective capacity to discern how markets establish prices. In the course of this discussion students were able to discover that it was owners of businesses that set prices on commodities.

Furthermore, these conversations allowed students who did not normally participate in the intellectual life of the school to do so. For example, in the course of the conversation about the workings of the market initiated by Craig, Roger suggested that money circulates, that money spent

would come back to you in the form of purchases of your goods or services. He said, “So, the money you put out you get back in our pay checks?” He also suggested that if owners of businesses raise prices on commodities that they would lose business. He said, “But if you need it, [i.e. if you need to buy something], don’t you lose business like that. Are they going to lose business somewhere else?” If a store raises prices people will go elsewhere to purchase what they need. Although Roger had played a leading role in the discussion of April 15, 2004, he did not contribute in any substantive way to the conversation that emerged over ancient and modern war. Here we can see that Roger felt enabled to contribute insightfully to our discussion, a quality he had rarely displayed prior to this.

Charles also increased his level of participation in the class conversation, providing further evidence of a changed feeling in the group. As the class discussions continued over the period of the study this intelligent but awkward student contributed more often. Although his views were frequently at odds with those of the other students they did not ridicule his ideas. In addition, at one significant point Craig solicited his views about the nature of democracy. Craig, who always enjoyed discussion in social studies, sought out the views of Charles, a socially marginalized student.

Finally, we find that in the safe space created by the emergence of Spirit the students were able to take on different roles. Continuing with the exploration of the place of homosexuality in our society we saw in the April 15th discussion, Craig advocated for the right to gay marriage. Jamie argued against violence. Jack publicly changed his mind and spoke seriously against the use of nuclear weapons. These positions were at odds with the normal machismo boys displayed in the school and the neighborhood.

These transcripts need to be examined more closely. It is clear however, that given the opportunity to use their minds freely and together these students welcomed the opportunity. In so doing they mutually recognized each other. They also demonstrated sustained engagement with deep and central concerns we face today, as well as concerns that are central to the social studies curriculum.

The idea of allowing and helping students to freely converse in class is seen both as an ideal learning situation (or in Habermas' terms, an ideal speech situation), and as an unfeasible one, given the propensity of (especially inner city) teenagers, if given a free space in school, to create, instead of an ideal learning or speech situation, a disastrous situation of chaos, conflict and confusion. This research experiment (action research) has shown that the ideal is indeed feasible. Of course the conditions of reducing the class size and finding the physical space had to be provided.

We saw that the first class, from the perspective of traditional teaching, would appear to be a class that is out of control and resisting and avoiding any serious or sincere classroom intellectual discussion. Nevertheless, from the perspective of Hegel's philosophy, we saw that it was possible to analyze this dimension as a step in the development of Spirit. As the teacher, who had already conceived of this project in terms of Hegel's philosophy, I, too, felt at the time that the first class session was one of resistance and opposition, with some chaos and confusion, as well as some focused discussion. Nevertheless, on analyzing the transcript using Hegel's categories, I was surprised to discover that an alternative understanding of what was transpiring in the classroom was possible. This Hegelian interpretation of the classroom dynamics was confirmed by the ongoing development of the class over the period of the research-experiment. Thus, as a comment to teachers, who might be leery and skeptical of conducting such an experiment themselves, I want to convey that such an ideal learning situation is possible, and that what might feel to the teacher, who is always concerned with control of the class (in most normal class settings), as a class going out of control, may in fact be a first step in the development of spirit and ethical life. In fact the teacher must give up control of the class in order for there to be a free speech and learning situation. This is not an easy thing for a teacher to experience, and it may be

difficult to distinguish a totally out of control situation from one that is in the early stages of development. My advice is to assume that if students are not hurting each other or leaving the class or totally disengaging from the class by moving into their own private space or side conversation that continues throughout the period, then something educationally positive is developing, despite the appearance to the contrary. Moreover, giving up control of the class in order to allow for free dialogue does not mean that there is not a continuing and important role for the teacher – as described above. It is just that the role changes, and the way the teacher conceives of herself and of the class changes as well.

Appendix Transcript Conventions

Double Asterisk:	* *	word or phrase spoken in a soft or low voice
Equals sign:	=	“latching,” of utterance, utterance follows unusually quickly after the immediately preceding utterance
Square Brackets:	[]	Marks points where talk by different speakers overlap.
Italics:		voice stress on word, phrase or sound
Double Questions ??:		unknown speaker

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