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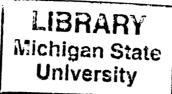has been accepted towards fulfillment
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SINCERITY AND READING: DILEMMAS IN CONSTRUCTIVISM

By

Michael J. Pardales

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Abstract

SINCERITY AND READING: DILEMMAS IN CONSTRUCTIVISM

By

Michael J. Pardales

In an attempt to understand the way social and individual

forms of constructivism might manifest themselves in

classroom practice, this dissertation studies the

theoretical discourse over constructivism in education,

and, empirically studies the shift in one teacher's praxis

as he moves from an individual constructivist pedagogy to a

social constructivist pedagogy, in middle school

philosophical inquiry classes. Since this is a study of my

teaching, this work is, in part, a self-study of teaching

practice. While there has been theorizing about the ways

individual constructivism translates into pedagogy, social

constructivists do not say much about the specifics of

teaching and learning as they are mostly engaged in

postmodern critiques of modern epistemology. This leads me

to ask the following questions:

1) How does a postmodern social constructivist pedagogy differ (for the teacher) from a modern form of constructivism?

2) How does a teacher trying to enact a postmodern social constructivist pedagogy remain faithful to both subject matter content and their students' ideas, experiences, and developing understandings?

3) What role does "community of inquiry" play in modern and postmodern forms of social constructivism?

Two significant dilemmas appeared through my study of the discourse and practice of social and individual forms of constructivism. First, taking a constructivist stance towards teaching can create an illusion for a teacher committed to a discipline based pedagogy. This illusion can make a teacher think he is being more humane to his students when he may be seducing them into learning what he was going to teach them anyway. This <u>introduces the issues of sincerity into the discourse over constructivist teaching</u> by examining what of a teacher's pedagogical motivations he is obliged to reveal to his students. Second, the empirical study raised questions about the enterprise of reading in constructivist classrooms. These questions lead to <u>a revealing discussion about the purposes of reading beyond exegesis in constructivist classrooms</u>.

To Stacey and Isabella, whose patience, love, and support
make everything possible

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In this chapter I will examine issues relating to

individual and social forms of constructivism, modernism

and postmodernism. My purpose is to review the various

forms of constructivism and their connections to modernism

and postmodernism, corresponding views of teaching, and

then consider the relationships between pedagogy and

purpose.

Constructivism

There are terms used in specific discourses that take

on almost transcendental status as they get defined,

redefined, and used in many different ways in the service

of influencing, arguing, questioning and the like. In

educational parlance, "constructivism" is one of these

terms. Constructivism is used in many different ways. There

are constructivist learning theories, world views, teaching

methods, theories of cognition and more. In his

introduction to the NSSE yearbook, <u>Constructivism in

Education</u>, D.C. Phillips (1999) offers an initial

distinction in an attempt to begin mapping out the broad landscape of constructivism. He distinguishes between constructivism as "a thesis about the disciplines or bodies of knowledge that have been built up during the course of human history (p. 6)", and constructivism as "a set of views about how individuals learn (and about how those who help them to learn ought to teach) (p. 7)." While this is a sweeping cut in the landscape, it is an important distinction that I will make use of. It is interesting to note that Phillips has divided the constructivist landscape, roughly, in terms of individual and social sorts, corresponding to an individual/social distinction. Next, I will briefly consider some of the ideas which helped contemporary constructivist discourse take shape, and then attend to some broader characterizations of constructivism which fall on either side of Phillips' distinction.

Within the broad domain of constructivism, there are many places one could begin an analysis of important philosophical influences. I will deal specifically with Kant and Wittgenstein.

Kant can be given credit for synthesizing the dominant

world views of empiricism (starting with Locke), and

rationalism (starting with Descartes), and can also be

considered one of the seminal theorizers of constructivist

epistemology (Bredo, 2000, p. 128). Kant argued that

neither the empiricist nor rationalist traditions

adequately dealt with the subject of how individuals make

sense of the world. While classical empiricists struggled

with how the mind receives (constructs) experiential

knowledge from the outside world, rationalists struggled

with how the mind reasons about (constructs) an apparently

given world. In the empiricist view, we find an emphasis on

experience, and in the rationalist view we find an emphasis

on reason. Kant sought to synthesize the two views by

claiming that the mind is predisposed to organize

experience in a particular way because of its fundamental

organizing categories of space, time, causation, and

substance. Howe and Berv (2000) sum this up nicely,

> Kant's view exemplifies a true constructivist view
> because it is more thoroughgoing. . .It denies that
> there can be any <u>raw</u> sensory experience that the mind
> takes as given and then performs its formal operations
> on (empiricism). Alternatively, conceptual schemes are

not <u>pure</u> (rationalism), but have meaning only as they <u>construct</u> experience. (p. 21)

It is important to note the influence Kant had on Piaget here. Piaget adopted the Kantian categories, and experimented and theorized on the developmental unfolding of these categories in children. While I will say more about this later, for now suffice it to say that Kant was one of the key figures in the development of individual/psychological constructivism and dictated some of the very terms key psychological constructivists (like Piaget) used in developing their theories of learning and development.

The linguistic turn in philosophy (Rorty, 1992; 1991) placed language, as opposed to experience, as the new unit of analysis in theorizing about mind and knowledge. One of the key figures in this turn was Ludwig Wittgenstein. The later work of Wittgenstein was radical both in its form (Wittgenstein wrote in an aphoristic style), and in its claims about the traditional projects of epistemology. Wittgenstein believed that to understand anything about mind or knowledge we must understand something about how

language works. He posited the notion that how we talk about things dramatically effects how we learn and understand because how we talk about things is governed by rules, or, forms of life (Wittgenstein, 1953). That is, we learn about happiness, pain, knowledge, etc. by participating in language games where key terms are used in particular ways. An example of a language game would be the practice of a discipline like chemistry. Chemists use the particular nomenclature of the discipline and the corresponding actions (laboratory practices and scholarship) to constitute the practice of the language game of chemistry. One becomes a chemist by using the language and performing the actions (participating in the form of life) of the chemistry discipline.

The thinking of both Kant and Wittgenstein influenced the way constructivist epistemology took shape. Kant, through his synthesis of rationalism and empiricism, forced us to think about the human experience in the world as a experience shaped by particularly human categories of understanding. Wittgenstein helped introduce language as the new unit of analysis and shifted the emphasis of

construction away from experience to discourse. Other

scholars have given more thorough accounts of the

philosophical underpinnings of constructivist thinking

(Steffe & Gale, 1995; Elgin, 1997). Given Phillips general

distinction between constructivism as either a thesis about

the bodies of knowledge of human creation, or a set of

views about how individuals learn (and teach), some general

comments about constructivism can be offered along those

lines.

Individual/Psychological Constructivism

Ken Strike (1987) has said, "the claim that people are

active in learning or knowledge construction is rather

uninteresting because no one, beyond a few aberrant

behaviorists, denies it" (p. 483). This statement contains

one of the most basic tenets of individual constructivism,

that people are active in learning/knowledge construction.

In trying to consider strains of constructivism that

start from individual/psychological concerns, we must

consider the work of Jean Piaget. As mentioned earlier,

Piaget was heavily influenced by Kant, and took Kant's

categories as an important starting place for his

theorizing about learning and development. Piaget's genetic

epistemology can be understood as a theory about how innate

structures of knowledge develop as the individual matures

and interacts in the world (Piaget and Inhelder 1969,

Piaget, 1954). Fundamental to this is the process of

equilibration, which entails the processes of accommodation

and assimilation. Piaget believed that cognitive structures

develop as individuals assimilate new information, situate

new information (accommodation), and reach subsequent

stages of equilibrium. This process is brought about when,

through one's interactions in the world, one's cognitive

understandings meet with conflicting information (cognitive

dissonance). In general, Piaget's theory of genetic

epistemology and his account of learning and development

have been criticized as overly individualistic, relying too

much on a rationalistic world view (Bruner, 1985). However,

his ideas have had great influence on constructivist

thinking and have infused such notions as prior knowledge

into the discourse of education (Leinhardt, 1992). Piaget's

work has greatly influenced another theory of

individual/psychological constructivism, Ernst Von

Glasersfeld's (1995) theory of radical constructivism.

McCarty and Schwandt state that, "Von Glasersfeld's

views on the fine details of constructing derive from a

careful reading of Piagetian developmental theory on which

a child builds up concepts and cognitive schemes by

isolating different experiences and treating them as equal

or near equal (p. 45)." For von Glasersfeld, individuals

engage in an unending series of constructions that the

individual either accepts and makes use of, or rejects

based on the viability of these constructions for their

life purposes. That is, the individual only has knowledge

of whether their constructions work in the world and never

directly knows or experiences anything outside of his own

constructions (Von Glasersfeld, 1991). As McCarty and

Schwandt (2000) state,

> Von Glasersfeld does not deny extra-mental existence
> outright (and, on this point, joins forces with Kant
> against Berkeley and Hume), but prefers to insist that
> external reality cannot be known. What remains of
> knowledge for the constructivist extends no further
> than the edges of the individual mind.(p. 44)

From these constructivist views of individual learning,

corresponding views of pedagogy can be extrapolated as

well.

Howe and Berv (2000) identified two premises of

constructivist learning theory as,

> (1) learning takes as its starting point the
> knowledge, attitudes, and interests students bring to
> the learning, and (2) learning results from the
> interaction between these characteristics and
> experiences in such a way that learners construct
> their own understanding, from the inside, as it
> were.(p. 31)

Both of these premises have a direct lineage to Piaget's

work. Beyond these premises of constructivist learning

theory Howe and Berv identify two parallel premises of

constructivist teaching. The first premise states that

instruction must begin by considering the knowledge,

attitudes, and beliefs that learners bring to a learning

situation (p. 31). The second premise is, that "instruction

must be designed so as to provide experiences that

effectively interact with these characteristics of students

so they may construct their own understandings (p. 31)."

Interestingly enough, nothing in these premises reveals

anything about a learner's relationship to a discipline, or

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about a learners relationship to other learners. These are
truly premises of individual learning. These points give a
fair characterization of some basic constructivist beliefs
about individual learning and teaching.

Criticisms of Individual/Psychological Constructivism

Matthews (2000) summarizes what he believes to be the
main contributions of constructivism at the same time
qualifying these contributions as not of purely
constructivist inspiration,

> Constructivism has done a service to science and
> mathematics education by alerting teachers to the
> function of prior learning and extant concepts in the
> process of learning new material, by stressing the
> importance of understanding as a goal of science
> instruction, by fostering pupil engagement in lessons,
> and other such progressive matters. But liberal
> educationists can rightly say that these are
> pedagogical commonplaces, the recognition of which
> goes back to Socrates. . .Constructivism has also done
> a service by making educators aware of the human
> dimension of science, its fallibility, its connections
> to culture and interests, the place of convention in
> scientific theory, the historicity of concepts, the
> complex procedures of theory appraisal, and much else.
> But again realist philosophers can rightly maintain
> that constructivism does not have a monopoly on these
> insights. (p.187)

Matthews also suggests that the influence of constructivism has resulted, in part, in a substitution of terms. For example, he contrasts what he calls "Orthodox Old Speak" with "Constructivist New Speak", in the following translations: learning = construction of knowledge, theory = scheme, graphs = mediational tools, writing = discourse, education = cognitive apprenticeship, paying attention = student engagement, etc., (p. 182).

Howe and Berv (2000) point out the basic premises that constructivist thinking has introduced regarding learning and teaching (those of individual constructivism), but there are those who believe that reform oriented teachers, whether they profess a commitment to constructivism or not, enact such premises of teaching and learning all the time (Ball and Bass, 2000; Solomon, 2000). While on one hand the contributions of constructivism seem to be noteworthy, they may not be the contributions of constructivism alone. Also, as Matthews (2000) points out, one can enact constructivist premises of teaching without being a constructivist: he gives Plato's Meno, specifically Socrates work with the slave-boy, as an example of constructivist teaching

informed by an epistemology that is not really

constructivist (p. 187). This suggests that constructivists

who enact premises of individual learning and teaching have

reintroduced some ideas that have been around for a long

time (many which can be associated with progressivism), and

have mildly supported teaching practices that are often

enacted by reform-oriented teachers anyway.

Social Constructivism

There are also some basic statements that characterize

social constructivist views about the bodies of

disciplinary knowledge that humans have come to work

within. Phillips (2000) summarizes the view of "Strong

Program" sociologists who believe that disciplinary

knowledge "can be fully explained, and accounted for, in

sociological terms (p.8)." That is, knowledge, in any

field, is constructed by sociological forces of ideology,

religion, human interests, political influence, and the

like (Phillips, 2000, p. 9; Bloor, 1976; Woolgar 1988).

Kenneth Gergen's (1994) Social Constructionism is one of

the more coherent views about the social construction of

knowledge and reality. Gergen believes that,

　1. The terms by which we account for the world and
　ourselves are not dictated by the stipulated objects of
　such accounts.

　2. The terms and forms by which we achieve understanding
　of the world and ourselves are social artifacts, products
　of historically and culturally situated interchanges
　among people.

　3. The degree to which a given account of the world or
　self is sustained across time is not dependent on the
　objective validity of the account but the vicissitudes of
　social processes.

　4. Language derives its significance in human affairs
　from the way in which it functions within patterns of
　relationship.(p. 48-52)

This view is different than other social constructivist

views as it mostly ignores metaphysical talk of reality in

favor or a focus on microsocial processes (p. 69). Though,

I agree with McCarty and Schwandt (2000) who point out that

Gergen (and Von Glasersefeld) can be criticized for

smuggling in talk about knowledge and reality even though

he denies these charges.

　　Vygotsky's (1978) Cultural-Historical theory spans

both sides of Phillips' broad distinction. Vygotsky

proposes mechanisms by which individuals internalize

thought and the broader norms of culture by participation

in linguistic communities. He also proposes a theory of

human development along onto and phylo genetic lines that

accounts for the broader development of the species. Bredo

(2000) summarizes Vygotsky's place in this landscape and

elaborates in a way that illuminates this side of Phillips

distinction,

> Vygotsky can be viewed as a constructivist because he
> considered basic forms (and contents) of minds to be
> socially constructed (and constructing). He viewed
> symbolically mediated thought as a social process,
> like a dialogue, that is "internalized" through
> participation in social interaction. . .As Russia
> modernized, for example, people's ways of thinking
> changed to become more formal-logical as a result of
> schooling and other experiences. Seen in this way,
> society is not just an environmental variable or a
> content that one learns about. Rather, modern social
> life creates the very form of modern minds. (p. 133)

Criticisms of Social Constructivism

The side of Phillips' distinction that does not talk

about views of individual learning is concerned with the

bodies of knowledge that have been constructed by humans

throughout history (disciplinary knowledge that is). The

wars over epistemology in educational theory over the last

twenty years have been largely due to social constructivist

criticisms of disciplinary knowledge as not reflective of

some external reality, but as constructions dependent upon

such things as power, particular discursive communities,

and ideology. In part, these critiques have been inspired

by neopragmatists and poststructuralists philosophical

critiques of modern epistemology. This has led to debates

within education, like the "science wars" (Slezak, 2000)

between those who uphold the legitimacy of the modern world

view and preeminence of science, and those who believe

science to be claiming foundations it cannot support.

However, these debates mirror, and draw upon, the debates

in philosophy between realists like Popper and Fodor, and

neopragmatists and poststructuralists like Rorty, Derrida,

and Foucault. This kind of constructivism does not have as

its primary focus, teaching and learning. There are general

statements made that resist authoritarian forms of

teaching, and a call for communal learning and dialogue,

but no detailed accounts of what teaching as a postmodern

social constructivist might look like (McCarty and

Schwandt, 2000). So, it would seem that social

constructivist theorizing, with its powerful critiques of

foundationalism and the modern world view, offers no

significant prescription for teaching and learning, and

mostly mirrors the long standing debate in philosophy.

Thousands of pounds of paper and gallons of ink have been

used by educational theorists in recreating the

philosophical debate between realists and those espousing

non-realist (often postmodern) theories. Burbules (2000)

brings a note of clarity to these debates,

> In short, realists on this issue are more likely to
> think that knowledge can be objective, complete, and
> unchanging, and that knowledge disputes can be settled
> by allusions to "the way the world is."
> Constructivists and others who reject that premise are
> more likely to think that knowledge will be partial,
> provisional, and imperfect, and that knowledge
> disputes will be more intractable because strongly
> held beliefs are intertwined with other social and
> cultural elements that groups may be reluctant to give
> up or change. Who is right on this issue? I hope to
> have made it clear that the question cannot be
> answered at that level; both positions tend to
> prejudge what sorts of social agreement will or will
> not be possible, and they use claims about "reality"
> (one way or another) to undergird what are really
> premises about the likelihood of being able to settle
> certain types of disagreement. (p. 317-318)

What Burbules is suggesting is that the debates on this

side of the constructivist landscape are of little use to

educators and have more to do with matters of temperament than anything productive for thinking about teaching and learning. He echoes this claim when he gives his view, which I agree with, on the metaphysical war between social constructivists and their critics,

> On the issue of metaphysics, we come to the timeless philosophical question about the independent existence of an external world. I have given long and careful thought to this problem, and I would like to propose a seriously considered response: Who cares? The question of the existence of an external world is, I believe, one of those philosophical pseudo-questions that are not answerable in the terms given. . .It expresses an article of faith rather than a demonstrable philosophical postulate, and as with other articles of faith it is not interesting to ask whether it is true or not, but only why people believe it and what effects their belief has. (p. 317-318)

I accept Burbules' criticisms and think it wise to change the topic of conversation to ones of importance and practical effect.

Critique of Social Constructivist Teaching

Some of the criticisms made of both kinds of constructivism point to a real problem for educators. If one is charged with the responsibility of teaching a well defined set of facts/concepts, say in Biology, Algebra, or

American history, how does one balance that responsibility

with staying committed to helping students construct their

own knowledge and understandings? This question has been

wrestled with by several scholars working with

constructivist ideas within the context of disciplinary

teaching (Ball, 1993; Ball and Chazan 1999; Rose, 1999;

Yackel, Cobb, and Wood 1991). These studies have shown that

there is a place for constructivist premises of teaching

within the teaching of a discipline, but, that the

disciplines have their own requirements for what counts as

legitimate, contested, appropriate, etc. As Ball and Bass

(2000) point out,

> As children engage with interesting mathematical
> problems, they produce different solution strategies
> and solutions. Quite often, however, classes end with
> no comparative inspection of these. Instead, multiple
> representations, methods, and solutions are left to
> uneasy coexistence, implying either a mathematically
> unverified equivalence, or the message that multiple
> solutions simply exist, much like multiple
> interpretations of text. But the disciplines of
> mathematics and literary interpretation differ, and
> the imperative to inspect and compare multiple ideas
> is central to mathematics. (p. 199)

While I think that there is an imperative to inspect and

compare in any subject, I take from Ball and Bass that some

of the premises of individual constructivist teaching can open up spaces for dialogue and inquiry within what are sometimes thought of as air-tight spaces (mathematics teaching); also, that the opening of space for dialogue and inquiry must be accompanied by a certain rigor dictated by the specifics of the discipline. But this points to a potential disconnect when a teacher has content that they "have" to "get" to the students, yet, they want students to construct their own knowledge. Smith, et al. (1993) skillfully point this out in their criticism of misconceptions research. It seems that in many cases the attempt to apply constructivist premises of teaching within disciplines has taken the form of trying to relieve and replace students misconceptions, which, as Smith et al. point out, is not very constructivist. Sexias (1993) points out this discrepancy in relation to the teaching of history,

> Even where alternative interpretations of the past are presented, they are conveyed with the authority of a community of which the students are not a part. . .rather the voice of the historical text systematically excludes them. If the constructivist theories are right, there is not much room for real learning here. If the philosophers of history are

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right, there is not much real history, either (p. 314).

In the examples of disciplinary teaching cited above we see students working in communities, with the teacher playing an important role as leader and moderator. The students are given the space necessary to explore their reasoning with one another with the result that students often engaged in similar activities to their professional counterparts in the disciplines (Ball, 2000; Rose, 1999). That is, students reasoned in mathematically (in Ball, and Cobb et al.) and historically (in Rose's case) sophisticated ways that sometimes resembled the kinds of moves mathematicians and historians make. These teachers consider and make use of their students' attitudes, beliefs and understandings, and use these to foster a lively discourse around the subject matter they are teaching. They also use a more communal organization as opposed to a more didactic style. Ball and Chazan (1999) and Rose (1999) skillfully illustrate the tensions constructivist teachers face as they try to balance student understanding and lively discourse with the demands of subject matter knowledge their students need to know. While the level of student engagement is remarkable,

and they have fascinating conversations that defy what many believe students capable of, <u>perhaps this is a more humane way of seducing students into learning what states, districts, and teachers want them to know</u>? Wouldn't a serious attempt at trying to teach in a social constructivist way demand that teachers not just use premises of individual constructivism as a different way to "get" the content of a course through to students? Doesn't taking both sides of the constructivist distinction Phillips makes require a different, more critical stance towards disciplinary thinking? Doesn't more need to be made of the understandings students construct, knowledge in general, and issues of authority and power, etc.? The disciplinary attempts at teaching in a social constructivist way, while they have many positive things to teach us about the kinds of thinking and inquiry students are capable of within disciplines, while they are skillfully enacting the premises of individual constructivist teaching and should and can be held up as exemplary cases in skillful constructivist teaching in inquiry oriented environments, wrongly identify what they

are doing "social constructivism". I am not saying that this teaching is not constructivist, it is. I am suggesting that it is more akin to individual constructivism or sociocultural theory than social constructivism. If we take Phillips distinction, and look at the some of the premises of social constructivism, we see that these teacher/researchers are not enacting the beliefs of social constructivism. In fact, the social constructivist discourse discussed above has very little to say about pedagogy. It is possible constructivist teaching has not gone far enough in attempting to employ more of its philosophical tenets in the realm of pedagogy?

It would seem that outside of the research on disciplinary teaching cited above, which is really more sociocultural than social constructivist, we have few examples of what taking a postmodern constructivism seriously, would look like. Wouldn't we be doing something different than trying to find a more humane way to get students to know what we want them too? This analysis suggests that the contribution of constructivism, especially the side of Phillips' distinction having to do

with views of how individuals learn and how people should teach, has mostly been a cognitivization of the idea that we should listen to what students think and encourage them to work together so we can better teach them what we were going to teach them anyway. Also, it suggests that we have not seen a more thoroughgoing social constructivism that incorporates its postmodern, philosophical points into pedagogy.

Modernism and Postmodernism

In the 1996 special issue of The Educational Psychologist, Richard Prawat identifies six constructivisms and undertakes the task of organizing these six views into two camps, one modern the other postmodern. The distinction between modernism and postmodernism, for Prawat, lies in the epistemology of each of the two groups. The difference between the modern and postmodern epistemologies is, the postmodern views, "refute the assumptions that knowledge is primarily the property of individuals and that, if it is to have any claim on our allegiance, it must be the product of a foolproof inferential system (p. 215)." The modern

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constructivisms Prawat identifies are Radical

Constructivism and Information Processing. The postmodern

constructivisms he identifies are Sociocultural theory,

Symbolic Interactionism, Social Constructionism, and his

own, "idea-based social constructivism" which is supported

by the thinking of Peirce and Dewey.

In the constructivist literature reviewed thus far,

knowledge (and to some extent, reality) is a key issue. But

the lines cannot be drawn quite as cleanly as Prawat

suggests. For example, McCarty and Schwandt (2000) put Von

Glasersfeld's radical constructivism squarely in the

postmodern camp because of its refusal to speak of reality

and knowledge as anything but personal constructions. And

while Sociocultural theory, specifically Vygotsky's

Cultural-Historical theory, and Symbolic Interactionism,

the view of Mead, have distinctive postmodern elements (the

way they ignore mind/world, inside/outside binaries, and

focus on language), they also have commitments that would

classify them as modern in orientation (their developmental

theory and taking of reality as essentially given). The

lines between different forms of constructivism quickly get

blurry, and trying to differentiate the pedagogical, let alone the epistemological, elements of modern and postmodern constructivisms is difficult. So, I will attempt an analysis of modern and postmodern discourse that will help bring into relief different aspects of what a postmodern social constructivist pedagogy might look like. This analysis will help us answer the questions posed above as to what a postmodern social constructivist pedagogy would need to entail. So, let us move to consider the discourse over modernism and postmodernism. This will help us better understand what difference these differences make, and will suggest what the important differences means to educational enactments of social constructivism.

Discussion about modernism and postmodernism is contentious. Neither term designates a particular theory or a comprehensive philosophy. While we can identify certain beliefs and values as modern or postmodern, no description or attribution is final or definitive. Even the words modern, postmodern, modernity, postmodernity, have contested meanings and uses (Usher and Edwards, 1994). On this point, Usher and Edwards (1994) state,

> To talk about postmodernity, postmodernism, or the
> postmodern is not therefore to designate some fixed
> and systematic 'thing'. Rather, it is to use a loose
> umbrella term under whose broad cover can be
> encompassed at one and a the same time a condition, a
> set of practices, a cultural discourse, an attitude
> and a mode of analysis. (p. X)

My tack will be to lay out some thoughtful descriptions of
these terms in an effort to paint, in broad brush strokes,
postmodernism in contrast to modernism in a way that will
render a fuller account of social constructivist teaching
and learning.[1]

Modernism can be used to describe a historical period
and corresponding world views beginning with the
Renaissance and Enlightenment, and leading into the 19th and
20th centuries. John McGowan (1991) describes events
connected to the Enlightenment that helped create the
conditions of the modern world,

> The challenge to Catholicism by various protestant
> sects, the challenge to Eurocentrism in the discovery
> of radically different societies in other parts of
> the globe, the challenge to religion manifested in
> both new scientific discoveries and new economic
> practices, the challenge to monarchy/oligarchy in the
> rise of popular, democratic agitation, and the
> challenge of traditional patterns of social

---

[1] For expanded treatments of the discussion over Modernism and
Postmodernism see, Usher and Edwards 1994; Best and Kellner, 1991;
Jameson 1991; Featherstone 1991; Hassan 1987; Smart 1992.

integration in changing modes of production and
distribution and the growth of towns and cities all
combine over a three-hundred-year period (1500-1800)
to transform Europe. By the end of this period, the
West has recognized, in the face of diversity and
change, that it is thrown back upon itself to ground,
legitimate, and make significant its own practices.
(p. 4)

Challenges to traditional forms of authority and knowing

created the conditions from which a new view of the world

would emerge. Vaclav Havel (1992, Quoted in Cherryholmes

1999) communicated some of the spirit of the modern world

view in a speech he delivered to the United Nations:

> The modern era has been dominated by the culminating
> belief that the world. . .is a wholly knowable system
> governed by a finite number of universal laws that man
> can grasp and rationally direct for his own benefit.
> This era, beginning in the Renaissance and developing
> from the Enlightenment to socialism, from positivism
> to scientism, from the Industrial Revolution to the
> information revolution, was characterized by rapid
> advances in rational, cognitive thinking. This, in
> turn gave rise to the proud belief that man, as the
> pinnacle of everything that exists, was capable of
> objectively describing, explaining and controlling
> everything that exists, and of possessing the one and
> only truth about the world. It was an era in which
> there was a cult of depersonalized objectivity, and
> era in which objective knowledge was amassed and
> technologically exploited, an era of belief in
> automatic progress brokered by the scientific method.
> It was an era of systems, ideologies, doctrines,
> interpretations, of reality, an era in which the goal
> was to find a universal theory of the world, and thus
> a universal key to unlock its prosperity. (p. 15)

The modern world is very much the world we still live in.

The preeminence of scientific method is palpable. This

preeminence, as Havel noted, is fueled by the desire to

explain, predict, and control as mankind continues to

progress via the technological advancement and control of

nature and self. In the modern world view, the individual

(especially the individual mind) is the preferable unit of

analysis, and is conceived of as a unified, autonomous,

subject with a stable identity. These dispositions, and

view of the self, it is assumed, helps us get along in our

world. It is precisely these drives that postmodernists

criticize as being the product of a scientistic view of the

world. Feminist scholars have pointed out that these drives

have a basis in gender differences (Harding, 1987). It is

this world that many theorists believe to be in transition:

transition to a world "after" modernity, that is, "post"

modernity.

Cherryholmes outlines this transition with regard to

education,

> For much of the twentieth century, efforts to
> describe, explain and prescribe theories and practices
> of education have been couched in a modernist rhetoric
> that has highlighted rationality, hierarchy,

> expertise, accountability, and differentiation in
> order to promote progress and productivity. .
> .Modernism and rationality assume distinctions between
> logic and rhetoric, planning and spontaneity, text and
> context. Empiricism granted a central role to logic
> validating theories, practices and discourses. . .We
> are required to abandon a logic/rhetoric distinction,
> however, because of developments in modern logic. .
> .The effect for educators and others is that we are
> forced to think about the world in a way that relies
> less on logic to validate our conceptions and more on
> rhetoric to persuade ourselves and others about the
> world and how it operates. (p. 91)

The "post" in "postmodern" attaches to other areas that go

along with this purported shift. Analytic philosophy

transitions to postanalytic philosophy; Structuralism in

linguistics transitions to poststructuralism, and

colonialism transitions into postcolonialism. That is, each

of these movements develops in reaction to an established

tradition, as opposed to an apriori justification based on

a new epistemology or metaphysic (Cherryholmes, 1999, p.

89). For example, certain poststructural criticism made by

Derrida, of the structural linguistics of Levi-Strauss,

involve Derrida's using the very logic of structuralism to

show its inconsistency and ambiguity. He does this by

showing how Levi-Strauss' use of the binary nature/culture

deconstructs: within Levi-Strauss' own studies one can find

phenomena that fall into both the natural and the cultural

(Derrida, 1974/1997, p. 101-2). This means that what is

considered postmodern, or entailed in any of the "posts",

was, in some measure, already present in what came before

it. As Natoli and Hutcheon (1993) state, "Postmodern

paradox, ambiguity, irony, indeterminacy, and contingency

are seen to replace modern closure, unity, order, the

absolute, and the rational (p. ix)." In many ways,

postmodernism arose out of modernism.

Thus, postmodernism can be seen as a reaction to

modern projects and views of the world. While it cannot be

labeled as only a particular time, logic, argument,

architecture, or theory, it can be thought of as all of

these things, and more. As Usher and Edwards state,

> The postmodern moment . . .can therefore be seen as a
> celebration and tolerance of pluralism, and difference
> leading to a much more ambivalent and less fixed
> positioning of subjectivity. The self and subjectivity
> can no longer be thought of as unified and coherent
> but 'decentered'. . .the 'centered' subject does not
> exist naturally and preformed but is rather a cultural
> construct, inscribed by the meaning system that is
> language and by discourses, particular and systematic
> uses of language. . .As the postmodern problematises
> the logic of naming, representation and language, so
> the constitutive power of language is foregrounded. .
> .Being located in the postmodern also points to the
> importance of textuality, of writing, and of

reflexivity in the sense of having an elaborated
awareness of what is done and what is constructed
through text and discourse. (p. 16)

Of course, postmodern thinkers (those who propose such

ideas), have their critics.

Frederic Jameson (1991) proposes the idea that a close

examination of postmodernism shows that all of its elements

can be found in Modernism. This leads him to suggest that

what is called postmodern is actually not a new period so

much as a late stage of Modern Capitalism. Terry Eagleton

(1996) takes a hard line against postmodernism and has made

critiques against it similar to the ones postmodernists use

against modernism. He states,

> for all its talk of difference, plurality,
> heterogeneity, postmodern theory often operates with
> quite rigid binary oppositions, with 'difference',
> 'plurality' and allied terms lined up bravely on one
> side of the theoretical fence as unequivocally
> positive, and whatever their antitheses might be
> (unity, identity, totality, universality) ranged
> balefully on the other. (p. 25-6)

The debates around postmodernism are intense, and

thoughtful scholars in many different disciplines have

lined up on every possible side of it. I am not so much

interested in a correct characterization or description of

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any particular side of these debates. I assume the social

constructivist critique of modern epistemology, at least as

it animates educational discourse, is as much at play and

to be learned from as modern, psychological constructivism.

With this, albeit brief, assemblage of

characterizations of the tension/transition between

modernism and postmodernism, let us move to consider what

these characterizations might mean in relation to a social

constructivist pedagogy.

Postmodern Social Constructivist Pedagogy

First of all, postmodernism necessarily shifts our

attention away from a preoccupation with the individual

toward issues of sociality. Therefore, we are more likely

to consider constructivist premises of individual learning

within the broader context of thinking about learning and

teaching as social enterprises. Also, students

constructions will be taken up as key texts in the class

and not considered only for the purpose of more effective

disciplinary teaching.

Postmodernism gets us talking about the role of language and discourse, specifically textuality. Textuality can be thought of as a way of being in the world that takes seriously the idea that the world is socio-politically layered/constructed and must be read purposefully. Following certain post-structural lines of thinking, specifically Derrida, we consider an exploded notion of text as any attempt to mean/interpret, whether spoken, written, or gestured. As Derrida (1982) states,

> It is precisely for strategic reasons that I find it necessary to recast the concept of the text by generalizing it almost without limit, without any limit that is. That's why there is nothing 'beyond the text'. That's why South Africa and apartheid are, like you and me, part of this general text, which is not to say that it can be read as one reads a book. That's why the text is always a field of forces: heterogeneous, differential, open. That's why deconstructive readings are concerned not only with library books. . .they are not simply analyses of discourse. They are also effective or active interventions that transform contexts without limiting themselves to theoretical utterances even though they must also produce such utterances. (p. 167-8)

This means that textuality will be an important issue in any enactment of a postmodern social constructivism.

Trying to describe a notion of postmodern social constructivism also requires that we pay attention to

authority and relations of power that shape subjects in the classroom. A postmodern social constructivism will consider issues of authority and power central and explicit resulting in teaching that will make these issues central to the teaching.

Given that social constructivism, as noted earlier in the chapter, consists mainly of critiques of modern epistemology, a postmodern social constructivist pedagogy will directly confront issues of disciplinary faithfulness in the context of teaching. That is, while teaching may occur within the outward confines of a discipline, the borders of disciplinary practice will be crossed in the process.

Broad Purpose of this Dissertation

This dissertation will present an examination of my own teaching, which changes from a modern constructivist to that of a postmodern social constructivist within the context of a sequence of philosophical inquiry classes. In order to clarify what the differences might mean in terms of an actual teacher and actual students, I will look at my

pedagogy in philosophical inquiry across the three years and compare the teaching on a set of issues that will bring into relief modern constructivist teaching that was discussed earlier with a postmodern social constructivist style of teaching. I am, in one sense, the same teacher across the three years. But, my own thinking changes across a three year period of time. In the first year I enacted a traditional, disciplinary based philosophical inquiry. As I begins to interact with more postmodern/critical ideas, my teaching in the second year began to look different, and so the community of inquiry looked different as well. In the third year I attempted to enact a fuller postmodern community of inquiry in the classroom, one that tried to take seriously the elements of a postmodern social constructivism described above. Analyses that span the three communities will help differentiate a postmodern social constructivism from a more modern constructivism that adheres to disciplinary boundaries. By reading the three different communities as text, my analyses demonstrate the differences between modern and postmodern forms of social constructivism, and demonstrate a more

thoroughgoing social constructivism invigorated by

postmodern thinking.

There are few examples of teachers trying to teach on

the postmodern side of constructivism. While there are

teachers who employ social/communal beliefs and strategies

in their classrooms, there are few cases where postmodern

issues like textuality, authority, disciplinary boundaries,

difference etc., are integrated into the teaching, and

students are encouraged to interrogate the subjects of

their schooling (especially pre high-school).

Chapter 2

Introduction

In this chapter I will represent community of inquiry in a
way that takes into consideration its development as it
pertains to the teaching of philosophical inquiry while
distinguishing it from other notions of communal learning
that are part of the discourse of theories that are social
and constructive.

"Community" is becoming a greater and greater part of
educational discourse. Community of practice (Wenger 1998),
learning community (Peterson, 1992), community of learners
(Rogoff, Matusov, and White, 1996), classroom community
(Bridges, 1995), and other phrases involving community can
readily be found in a search of educational topics
involving the word "community". This suggests the term
community is at play in educational discourse, and its
prolific use means that it plays in many ways in that
discourse.

My intent is to discuss "community" in relation to its
use in "community of inquiry". How and why a classroom

might become a community of inquiry is different depending on what one's views of constructivist teaching is. The teaching studied in this dissertation invokes different understandings of community of inquiry and I will try to explain the differences between them. The notion of community of inquiry that is at work in the philosophical communities of inquiry I will study in the empirical portion of the dissertation has its roots in the work of C. S. Peirce. Therefore, I will begin with a particular consideration of the phrase "community of inquiry" in Peirce.

C. S. Peirce and Community of Inquiry

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) was both a scientist and a philosopher. These dispositions had a major impact on his work as he sought to bring the method of science to philosophy. Peirce's drive to bring scientific inquiry to philosophy was in large part a reaction to the dominance of Cartesianism in modern philosophy (Murphy, 1990, p. 8-9). Peirce believed that philosophy had gone awry with its adoption of a Cartesian view of knowledge.

Descartes reconstituted the Western view of knowledge by

positing the mind as an inner space which directly

apprehends ideas, and it is these ideas which, when clearly

and distinctly perceived, constitute knowledge. It is worth

quoting Peirce's understanding and criticisms of

Cartesianism at length as it is his reaction to this system

that inspires his notion of community of inquiry:

> Descartes is the father of modern philosophy and the
> spirit of Cartesianism—that which principally
> distinguishes it from the scholasticism which it
> displaced—may be compendiously stated as follows:
>
> 1. It teaches that philosophy must begin with
> universal doubt; whereas scholasticism had never
> questioned fundamentals.
> 2. It teaches that the ultimate test of certainty is
> to be found in the individual consciousness; whereas
> scholasticism had rested on the testimony of sages and
> of the Catholic Church.
> 3. The multiform argumentation of the middle ages is
> replaced by a single thread of inference depending
> often upon inconspicuous premises.
> 4. Scholasticism had its mysteries of faith, but
> undertook to explain all created things. But there are
> many facts which Cartesianism not only does not
> explain, but renders absolutely inexplicable, unless
> to say that "God makes them so" is to be regarded as
> an explanation.
> In some, or all of these respects, most modern
> philosophers have been in effect, Cartesians. Now
> without wishing to return to scholasticism, it seems
> to me that modern science and modern logic require us
> to stand upon a very different platform from this.
> (Buchler, 1990, p. 228)

Peirce offers specific and fatal criticisms to what he

calls the "spirit of Cartesianism". His objections are

important because it is within his objections that we begin

to understand the development of his notion of community of

inquiry. First of all, Perice rejects the notion that

philosophy must begin with universal doubt. He says, "We

cannot begin with complete doubt. We must begin with all

the prejudices which we actually have when we enter upon

the study of philosophy (1990, p. 228)." Peirce did not

believe a person could doubt everything as we must act in

the world, and action requires belief in a great many

things. Any attempt at universal doubt would end in self-

deception. To the second tenet, Peirce argues that if truth

and certainty are to be found in the individual

consciousness then, "If I were really convinced, I should

have done with reasoning, and should require no test of

certainty. But thus, to make single individuals absolute

judges of truth is most pernicious (1990, p. 229)." It is

in his rejection of this tenet of Cartesianism that we find

Peirce mention the importance of community,

> In sciences in which men come to agreement, when a
> theory has been broached, it is considered to be on

probation until this agreement is reached. After it is reached, the question of certainty becomes an idle one, because there is no one left who doubts it. We individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the <u>community</u> of philosophers. Hence, if disciplined and candid minds carefully examine a theory and refuse to accept it, this ought to create doubts in the mind of the author of the theory himself. (1990, p. 229)

This notion of people coming together to serve as jury to ideas and hypotheses is the basis for Peirce's notion of community of inquiry. Where people come together in agreement, "one can speak of knowledge, truth, and reality, but these concepts will be grounded in the <u>community</u> of inquirers, not in the individual consciousness (Murphy, 1990, p. 12)." Community of inquiry is central for Peirce who used the terms community and inquiry to refer to a group of individuals (most often scientists) employing an interpersonal method for arriving at results.

In Peirce's work, the issue of community develops further around his treatment of theories of reality (metaphysics). In his philosophical writings, Peirce argued for the idea that there is a world independent of our minds, which we can develop beliefs about. He says, "The

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real is that which is not what we happen to think it, but is unaffected by what we may think of it. (Peirce, 8.12)"

For Peirce, we come to know the world via a communal and pluralistic community of inquirers engaged in a scientific method of inquiry. If persistent, Peirce believed, the community would eventually arrive at the same conclusions, thus coming to know the real. In Peirce's own words, "[T]he opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed upon to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real (p.40)."

Inquiry, for Peirce, is embodied in the scientific method of arriving at conclusions through synthetic reasoning. This kind of reasoning is inductive in its character as it moves from old beliefs, through experience, to new beliefs. Peirce believed that the human mind moves between poles of doubt and belief. Doubts is a state of agitation which leads to uncertainty. Belief is a state which allows for action, and confidence, eventually turning into habit. Between doubt and belief lies inquiry (Smith, 1983, p. 47).Smith explains this further,

> Serious inquiry aimed at acquiring knowledge of the
> real world. . .starts with the assumption that there

is an answer, <u>the</u> answer to the question that directs
the process. Moreover, there is the further assumption
that this answer would be found if the inquiry
persisted. (Smith, 1983, p. 48)

So the <u>method</u> of inquiry for Peirce is what is crucial to

producing knowledge that can be believed. That is,

"[r]eality, insofar as it is identified through ultimate

belief resulting from inquiry, is defined by a form of

rationality rather than by the fact of a belief's being

held (1983, p. 49)." Peirce believes inquiry to be a

rational, scientific process that by virtue of its logic

(form) will yield the same conclusion regardless of the

interests of those inquiring.

Peirce vehemently rejected the idea that we can

achieve any significant insights, or reliable knowledge,

from introspection. This belief is a reaction to the

Cartesian view that we can be clear and distinct about our

own thinking. For Peirce, it is necessary for us to subject

our thinking to standards that lie outside of our own

interests, concerns, and reflections. In this way, thinking

must continually be subject to a community whose standards

allow us to correct and revise our ideas in the course of

living our lives.

From this position, we get a feel for the importance

of community to Peirce's view of inquiry. The community of

inquirers, accepting of the method of scientific

investigation, serves as the arbiter of standards and the

justification for the production of reliable knowledge. The

individual scientist conducting experiments is never really

alone, for she uses methods that are accepted by a

community and she must continually revise her thought

processes and observations in relation to the standards set

by that community. Smith adds insight to this position,

> The community of investigators purporting to be
> scientific is defined by the willingness of each
> individual member to sacrifice what is personal and
> private. . .in order to follow the dictates of an
> interpersonal method that involves free exchange of
> views and results. (1983, p. 50)

In this way, the individual inquirer is always subject to

the standards of the community which they have accepted by

the adoption of methods of science. Community, in this

case, is the actual community of scientific inquirers who

are engaged in the rational deployment of synthetic

reasoning. I'll end with a quote by Smith which sums up

Peirce's notion of the community of inquiry,

The idea of science as an activity engaged in by a
community of inquirers, and the conception of reality
as an ultimate opinion reached by the process of
inquiry, are reciprocal notions. On the one side we
have the idea of the real as an ultimate opinion which
is, though not external to thought in general, still
independent of what this, that, or the other
individual thinker may happen to think. On the other
side we have the idea of the method reaching such an
opinion that requires individual inquirers to
constitute themselves as members of the community of
science through their willingness to sacrifice their
privacy and bind themselves by the rules of an
interpersonal method. (Smith, 1983, p. 51)

A community of inquiry, Peirce believes, is the model

for the production of knowledge which will lead us from

doubt to belief, and eventually to the real. Peirce's use

of these terms is important because aspects of his usage

remain in tact in recent uses of community of inquiry.

Community of Inquiry in Philosophy for Children

Peirce's use of community of inquiry was a reaction to

the dominant philosophy of his time. Peirce's extrapolation

of community of inquiry from his reading of the scientific

method, and application of community of inquiry to

philosophy, was a way of establishing a new pragmatic

system in philosophy designed to challenge and replace the

preeminence of Cartesian dualism.

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By the time community of inquiry was adopted by

Matthew Lipman, and Ann Sharp, founders of Philosophy for

Children, Dewey had adopted community of inquiry and made

it integral to his theorizing about classrooms and

curriculum (see Dewey, 1938; 1902). It is also discussed,

though not using the specific phrase "community of inquiry"

by Jerome Bruner (1960) in his influential book, The

Process of Education.

Community of inquiry receives an extended treatment in

Philosophy for Children. Philosophy for Children is both a

curriculum (in all senses of the term) from which to view

educational practice and purpose. This perspective takes

seriously the notion that philosophical inquiry should be

one of the core elements of elementary school life (Lipman,

Sharp, & Oscanyan, 1980). The reason for this? Education

should empower children to be thoughtful about the lives

they lead, and doing philosophy is important to that goal.

Philosophical inquiry involves the taking of different

perspectives and serious reflection, and it teaches ways of

reasoning about the world that enhances student's abilities

to think critically, deliberately, and imaginatively. The

vehicle by which philosophical inquiry is implemented in elementary schools is a curriculum based on philosophical novels that students and teachers read together in teacher-led communities of inquiry.

A typical Philosophy for Children class session might begin with the teacher and students choral reading part of a chapter from one of the curriculum novels. The inquiry would begin with the teacher soliciting remarks from the students. This is an important feature of this practice because, in this forum, it is the students who choose what is interesting and raise issues for discussion. To the extent that most classrooms focus on the teacher as the director of inquiry, this shift of power is an important step in the empowerment of students. By shifting the balance of power in the classroom away from the teacher, one shifts the frameworks for participation in the classrooms (O'Connor, M. C. & Michaels, S. 1996). When this happens, students have the potential to become more engaged in classroom discourse, take more speaking turns, and speak for longer periods of time (Cazden 1988, Anderson et al. 1998). These changes are important because they position

students in fundamentally different ways; students become

an important part of the inquiry and their thoughts on the

issue are an integral part of any discussion. In this

environment students are actively responsible for creating

and sustaining discussions, and are confronted with their

own thinking and the thoughts of their fellow students in

an environment of mutual respect with an accomplished

inquirer (the teacher). The novels traditionally used in

Philosophy for Children are sprinkled heavily with

philosophical subject matter. Discussions about reality

(metaphysics), what is right (ethics), and language are

common topics for inquiry. In the end though, it is the

process of inquiry that is most important, and the

discussions often begin in areas that are not

philosophical. But this does not mean that the teacher does

not have any say how topics are discussed. Let me say more

about this process of inquiry.

A discourse community centered around philosophical

inquiry is the primary vehicle by which philosophical ways

of talking and thinking are fostered. Early in the

formation of a community of inquiry, the teacher

facilitates discussion and scaffolds appropriate forms of participation in the community (put in "community values" and "principles of philosophical inquiry" here). Ideally, as the community becomes more skilled and begins to gain confidence, the teacher takes a less active role in the inquiry. "Inquiry", in Philosophy for Children, means, "perseverance in self-corrective exploration of issues that are felt to be both important and problematic (Lipman, 1988, p.20)." In other words, an inquiry is a sustained exploration of a topic or issue that is of interest to students; community members participate in inquiries in the hope of understanding the many ways of thinking about an issue and the production of knowledge about the self and the world.

Simply put, a community of inquiry in the discourse of Philosophy for Children (hereafter P4C), is the conversion of a classroom into a place for the self-corrective, disciplined exploration of issues with philosophical relevance. As Lipman says, "Such a community is committed to the procedures of inquiry, to responsible search techniques that presuppose an openness to evidence and to

reason (Lipman, et al, 1980, p. 45)." The community of

inquiry must arise from an environment that has certain

preconditions.

Preconditions of Community of Inquiry in P4C:

1. Readiness to reason
2. Mutual respect (of children towards one another,
   and of children and teachers towards one another)
3. An absence of indoctrination (1980, p. 45)

To a certain extent, the readiness to reason is assumed by

virtue of the fact the children are language users. The use

of language necessitates certain basics of reasoning even

though they are mostly informal and implicit. Since

reasoning is one of the things the P4C curriculum purports

to cultivate, the readiness to reason will eventually be

transformed into formal abilities to reason through the

teaching of formal and informal logic.

While the second presupposition might seem overly

egalitarian, it is not the case that the teacher and

students are seen as equals. The teacher is viewed as the

authority when it comes to the procedures and techniques of

inquiry, and philosophical background knowledge. But this

authority is not supposed to extend to the favoring of

particular points of view. The teacher must assist students in following the paths of their own thinking. But the teacher must always stop at the point of legitimizing or delegitimizing particular points of view. As Lipman et al explain, "Under the banner of "pluralism," it may be contended, the convergence of views is precluded, agreement and assent are ruled out, and intellectual diversity becomes the order of the day (1980, p, 45-6)."

Building on the previous point, indoctrination is thought to be subverted through the adoption of a pluralistic stance. On one level this is naïve, as teaching, of any sort, involves an ideological stance which precludes neutrality. Pluralism is a doctrine of sorts, a doctrine against monism. However, this presupposition is meant to convey the idea that the teacher must not hold the belief that ideas and opinions must always converge. They present this precondition as necessary to the creation of a community of inquiry. My point here is that community of inquiry is not neutral, or without ideological commitments.

Mechanisms of Community Formation in P4C

According to P4C, the community is brought together by the following means:

1. Group solidarity through dialogical inquiry
2. The primacy of activity and reflection
3. The articulation of disagreements and the quest for understanding
4. Fostering cognitive skills (e.g., assumption finding, generalization, exemplification) through dialogical practice.
5. Learning to employ cognitive tools (e.g., reasons, criteria, concepts, algorithms, rules, principles)
6. Joining together in cooperative reasoning (e.g., building on each other's ideas, offering counterexamples or alternative hypotheses, etc.)
7. Internalization of the overt cognitive behavior of the community (e.g., introjecting the ways in which classmates correct one another until each becomes systematically self-corrective) – "intrapsychical reproduction of the interpsychical" (Vygotsky)
8. Becoming increasingly sensitive to meaningful nuance of contextual differences
9. Group collectively groping its way along, following the argument where it leads (1991, p. 242)

These nine mechanisms of community formation are the constitutive elements of Community of Inquiry for Lipman. They are the "ways" a group of students and a teacher becomes a community. Described a little differently, the community forms by: being dialogically inquisitive, active and reflective, articulate, cognitively adept, cooperative, sensitive to context, and explorative.

For Lipman (1991), Community of Inquiry is not just a

classroom phenomena, it is curriculum. Community of Inquiry

involves a valuing of certain stances towards written

texts. Lipman states that Community of Inquiry begins with

narrative texts that model Community of Inquiry. This is

reflected in the P4C curriculum which is organized around

novels where the characters are a community of inquiry.

This, virtual community, or, textual community, adds a

another dimension of community to the community forming in

any particular classroom. The text reflects: accepted

values and beliefs, mental reflections of an author, and,

examples of thinking that can be internalized (Lipman,

1991, p. 241). The text mediates between the culture and

the individual, and portrays "human relationships as

possibly analyzable into logical relations. (1991, P.

241)." Reading printed text aloud in the community has

ethical dimensions which involve turn taking; this turn

taking is also a division of labor. Reading aloud also

involves the reproduction of the written text into oral

form. This stance toward text allows students to discover

that text is meaningful and worthy. That is, texts are full

of meaning and relevance (1991, p. 242).

Deciding what ideas or issues will be taken up by a

community is another key feature of Community of Inquiry in

Philosophy for Children. Agenda setting is public from the

standpoint that it begins with questions from the students.

Questions are organized collaboratively reflecting the

interests and priorities of the group (1991, p. 242). A

given starting point for an inquiry comes from the

collaboratively constructed agenda and is negotiated by the

entire community (including the teacher – who is a member

of the community – albeit a more capable one).

Specific curricular materials in P4C have been

designed to augment community of inquiry. These materials,

in the form of exercises, discussion plans, etc., allow the

methodology of P4C to more easily be appropriated by

community members, and can help instantiate particular

features of philosophical inquiry. For example, each novel

in the Philosophy for Children curriculum comes with a

teacher's manual that gives exercises and elucidations of

key philosophical topics that appear in the novels. In the

manual accompanying the novel <u>Lisa</u>, a novel which

emphasizes ethical inquiry, one can find philosophically

relevant explanations and exercises on human rights,

friendship, death, and fairness (amongst others).

Finally, efforts must be made to incorporate the

critical and the creative by exploring other forms of

cognitive expression (writing, painting, music, etc.) and

judgment (1991, p. 243).

Philosophy for Children has been practiced for 30

years. Community of Inquiry remains at the heart of the

movement and has received extensive development by those

using principles of Philosophy for Children in the

classroom.

We can see the influence of Pierce and Dewey in the

articulation of community of inquiry offered by those in

Philosophy for Children. The description of inquiry as a

self corrective process, and the emphasis on the form

(logic) of inquiry come directly from Peirce. Communities

of inquiry are modeled after scientific communities of

inquiry where the explorations of ideas and reasoning are

publicly displayed and scrutinized. This display and

scrutiny eventually lead to the creation/construction of knowledge about the self, and the world. While many different avenues of thought can be explored in a philosophical community of inquiry some topics and forms of reasoning with be more legitimate than others. Every participant in a community is like an individual scientific inquirer, making the community of inquiry itself a microcosm of the scientific community of inquirers at large.

It is this notion of community of inquiry that provided the parameters by which the philosophical communities of inquiry in this study are enacted. In order to round out this picture a little, let's look at some other understandings of community of inquiry.

Other Understandings of Community of Inquiry

In studying community of inquiry in the teaching of history, Peter Sexias (1993) distinguishes between two different communities of inquiry: the intellectual community of inquiring historians and the community of inquiry in the classroom. The community of inquiring

historians, Sexias notes, are engaged in the production of

historical knowledge. This community's task has been

greatly problematized by the challenges to modern

epistemology discussed in chapter 1 (some of these

challenges come from Social Constructivists, others, from

people, like Kuhn (1970), Lakatos & Musgrave (1970). As

Sexias notes, "[t]he constructivist recasting of curriculum

thought in the past 15 years has been based not in a

Kuhnian revision in epistemology of the subject disciplines

but in developments in learning theory and psychology

(Sexais, 1993, p. 306)." This re-introduces the dilemma

spoken about in chapter one, that of the relationship

between premises of individual constructivist learning and

teaching, and social constructivist critiques of

disciplinary knowledge. Sexias characterizes this tension

nicely as it relates to communities of inquiry,

> First, what are the limits to the analogy between
> scholarly and school-based communities of inquiry,
> whose participants have not been inducted through
> graduate programs and doctoral degrees? Second, if
> knowledge is based on the conversation within a
> community of the competent, what is the status of the
> products of that conversation? Third, what is required
> of teachers who, in this conceptualization, must
> bridge two significantly different communities? (p.
> 306)

On the one hand we have the communities of discipline based

inquirers, be they from history, philosophy, or

mathematics, and, on the other hand, we have communities of

inquiring students in classrooms. The relationship between

these two has traditionally been one way, where knowledge

constructed in the disciplines gets transformed into

curricula for students in schools. Historians have their

own sets of problems they deal with, lately ones of

epistemology and historical sense making (Sexias, 1993),

and teachers and students have their own struggles with the

teaching and learning of history. Sexias believes that any

attempt to conflate the two groups is dangerous. I guess he

has reservations about students abilities to "do" what

historians do. At the same time, he believes that many

historians would not support the one way flow of knowledge

from professional historians becoming the basis for school

curriculum (p. 313).

In some ways Sexias is caught in the constructivist

dilemma that frames this dissertation. He has pointed to,

within theorizing about the teaching of history, the

disjunction between what historians do and what students in school do.

Gordon Wells (1999) addresses the practice of communities of inquiry in terms of cultural-historical activity theory (Cole 1996). As Wells states,

> Central to this approach is the building of a 'community of inquiry', in which students frequently work together in groups on the same or related inquiries, and in which a critically important activity is whole class meetings for review and reflection on what is planned, in progress or has been achieved. It is in these meetings, in particular, that the dialogue of knowledge building occurs most deliberately and systematically as the relationship among the individual or group inquiries are explored in relation to the common theme, alternative suggestions and perspectives are considered and evaluated. . .These meetings also provide an occasion for taking a 'meta' stance with respect to the processes in which students are engaging, for describing strategies that seem to be effective, and for recognizing and valuing the diversity of ideas that are contributed to the forging of a common understanding. (p. 7-8)

We can see many similarities between, the statements Wells puts forth and those of Philosophy for Children. The basic idea being students and teachers engaged in communities that actively engage in dialogue over topics of interest, in the service of constructing knowledge and common

understanding, and internalizing the discourse of the inquiring community.

Community of Inquiry and This Dissertation

The description of community of inquiry I gave above, especially the conception of community of inquiry from Philosophy for Children, is a good statement of how I understood community of inquiry going into the first summer of teaching philosophical inquiry. I believed myself to be introducing a formal discourse of philosophy (through Philosophy for Children) to my students in a way that would bring out what I believed at the time to be their natural inclinations to inquire in philosophical ways. I was the more capable other, and I would engage my students in a discursive apprenticeship that would help cultivate creative and critical ways of thinking (in order to improve their own reasoning abilities) that they could partake in. For me, at that time/place, <u>there was no constructivist dilemma, no problem of sincerity and reading</u>. The teaching was straightforward. But this thinking changed over the course of the next two years. I have documented my teaching

over these three years, and have a data set that allows me to examine how the changes in my thinking, from a modern constructivist discourse social constructivist discourse. This forced me to alter my practice. The communities of inquiry I participated in as a teacher began to look very different.

This change forced me to consider a different understanding of community of inquiry. Thinking about communities of inquiry as microcosms of scientific methodology became problematic for me as I began to reconsider my potentially disingenuous stance as "bringer of formal philosophical" discourse to my students. This is a very modern notion of community with its modeling of scientific method as its paradigm case. It is also modern because of its focus on epistemology and the transmission of a discourse as its goal. If inquiry is of a sort where the rules, and sometimes the topics, of inquiry are determined ahead of time by the teacher, where is there room for students ideas, experiences, and developing understandings? Is community of inquiry ever critiqued by a community of inquiry? If, as the teacher, my stance toward

community of inquiry is modern in its orientation, what

does a more postmodern stance toward community of inquiry

look like and how does it change things?

In the next chapter I discuss the methodology of this

of this study, and detail the procedures I used in

collecting and analyzing my data set.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In support of theoretical frameworks for action research,

Sanders and McCutcheon (1986) make the case that

professional knowledge is essentially theoretical knowledge

because "teaching requires intentional and skillful action

within real-world situations. The success of these actions

depends on the ability to perceive relevant features of

complex, problematic, and changeable situations and to make

appropriate choices." Argyris calls these "theories of

action"(in Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 16). The forms

of documentation and analysis for action research are

similar to traditional forms of qualitative research such

as field notes, interviews, and classroom documents.

Teacher researchers, such as myself, may also use

audiotapes, videotapes, and research journals. In addition

to using these methods for documentation, many experienced

teachers are able to provide an emic view that outsiders

could not accomplish. Some believe this makes them more

suitable for the appropriate collection of data (e.g.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993).

Some of the literature on self-study is drawn from the larger field of action research, defined by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) as "systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers (p. 7)." Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) provide an overview of the conceptual frameworks for teacher research. The perspective of teacher research as social inquiry maintains that knowledge is constructed collaboratively with the emphasis on transforming educational theory and practice toward a more equitable society. Theorizing teacher research as ways of knowing in communities blurs the boundaries of research and practice and attempts to recognize practice as theory-building in order to change schools. Teacher research as practical inquiry emphasizes the use of teacher research to create and/or enhance practical knowledge. Although this dissertation seeks to accomplish all of those tasks, it best subscribes to the framework of social inquiry.

A major element of the self-study process is critical reflection. Brookfield (1995) suggests six reasons why learning critical reflection is important: to take informed actions, to develop a rationale for practice, to avoid

self-laceration (self-blame for student failing), to ground

us emotionally, to enliven our classrooms, and increase

democratic trust. But reflection is not enough. "Reflection

must be placed in action and look backward and forward to

make choices about educational dilemmas" (Samaras,

1998, p. 62).

Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) contend that self-study

is a formalization of reframing - a way to rethink and

expose yourself "to new interpretations and to create

different strategies for educating students that bring

their practice into concert with the moral values they

espouse" (p. 2). This is in line with what Dewey emphasized

as the importance of teachers being both consumers and

producers of knowledge about teaching. He encouraged

teachers to be reflective and to act on their reflections.

Cole and Knowles (1998b) define self-study research as

"qualitative research focused inward" which primarily uses

qualitative research tools such as observation, interview,

and artifact collection (p.229). More than just qualitative

research, self-study is "post-modern in its

perspective...self-study scholars attempt to embrace that

uncertainty and reject calls for validity and reliability
as they are traditionally known" (Hamilton & Pinnegar,
1998, p. 235). Although such rebellion is exhilarating to
think about, the real world demands that self-study
scholars define it in a way that legitimizes its title of
"Research". Some contend that participant research does not
fit neatly into any other research genre, and it deserves
recognition and acknowledgment in its own right (e.g. Wong,
1995; Baumann, 1996; Elliot, 1991).

Cole and Knowles (1995) define six major issues in
self-study and life history work: technical, interpersonal,
procedural, ethical, political, and educational. Technical
issues surround the facilitation and progression of
the self-study process. Interpersonal issues are integral
to the process when self-study is done in collaboration
with others. Procedural issues are those which involve how
the research is carried out including the methods, time
line, and routines. Because self-study is highly personal
and uncommonly revealing, ethical issues regarding
confidentiality may be unusually salient. Cole and Knowles
regard the personal revelations necessary for self-study

work as potential political issues when, what can be, very

private analysis is read by those in the academy.

Similarly, educational issues such as the validation of

self-study research by academe constantly lingers for those

attempting to be professionally recognized for such

research.

Cole and Knowles (1998a) view self-study as a tool for

broadening the concept of research. They specify two main

purposes: personal-professional development and "broader

purposes of enhanced understanding of teacher education

practices, processes, programs, and contexts" (p. 42). The

former purpose provides a more practical goal for teachers

to engage in reflective inquiry in order to improve their

practice. The second purpose is aimed at challenging what

counts as research and knowledge.

Self-study is commonly believed to be "soft" research.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) provide four standards for

methodological rigor when discussing teacher research: the

research question, generalizability, theoretical framework,

and documentation and analysis. With regard to the research

question, they say that although teacher research questions

are not framed in educational theory, they are "implicit questions about the relationships of concrete, particular cases, to more general and abstract of learning and teaching" (p. 15). In other words, each situation "is a case of some larger practice/theory dilemma", and therefore, more relevant that initially estimated (p. 15).

A common critique of teacher research is its lack of generalizability. This critique, in a sense, speaks to the recipe formula for teaching and denies the legitimacy of serious research questions emanating from individual classrooms. Cochran-Smith and Lytle argue that not only are some teacher research questions similar to those other teachers have, but in fact, it is often the generic educational research that misses the point when insight is needed about particular contexts. In this way, the import of a piece of research is left to the readers of research who may make use of it in many different ways. Also, the work is generalizable from the standpoint that it is situated in a practice (teaching) that many others are actively engaged in.

Educational philosophers and researchers (e.g. Fenstermacher, 1994; Huberman, 1996) critique action research, and by association self-study. Some critics conceive of knowledge as formal, theoretical, scientific and generalizable, and distinguish it from, and in the process usually devalue, practical knowledge (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999). This type of comparison "offers a binary description of a world that is, instead, far more dynamic and complex" (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 241).

Whitehead calls self-study "living educational theory. It is living because, as people engage in understanding it, they learn more and their theory changes as they understand more. Further, because they are living what they learn, new knowledge emerges" (in Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 242). In support of that idea, Russell (1998) writes "There is only one way to understand self-study, and that is to experience it personally" (p. 6).

Data Collection and Analysis

The site for this study was a one-month long summer program for high-ability middle-school students held on the campus of a major mid-western university.[2] Each of the students selected philosophy as one of two academic classes they took during the program. Students also took one course in the Arts. The program was organized by local (public) schools districts, and was designed to provide students with opportunities they might not otherwise have during the school year. The philosophical inquiry course met one hour each morning, four days a week. I studied three separate classes taught over three consecutive summers (1998, 1999, 2000).

Data sources (98, 99, 00)

1. Tape/video recordings of most of the class sessions for each summer.

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[2] I had human subjects approval to begin data collection in the Summer of 1998. I received renewals of this approval for each of the following two summers as well.

2. A whole class interview conducted at the end of each course as well as individual student reactions to the class which I have written copies of.

3. Interviews with individual students conducted during the final week of each class.

4. Samples of student writing from each week of the class for all students.

5. A set of notes from a colleague who observed the classes at least once each week.

6. The teacher journal for each year.

7. Results of a short survey given to students and parents by program administrators (not the teacher).

Description of the Teacher's Stance

I am the teacher in each year of the course. In the next few paragraphs I characterize the stance from which I approached the teaching of philosophy during each summer of the philosophical inquiry class.

My teaching during the Summer 1998

When I taught the philosophy class 2 years ago, my
pedagogy was situated in the modern world view discussed in
chapter 1. I believed in reason and rationality as the best
end for education because it would free our minds and allow
people to communicate with one another toward a common goal
of enlightenment (Cervetti, Pardales, and Damico, 2001).
These beliefs led me to dedicate myself to teaching
philosophy for children in the traditional way (discussed
in chapter 2), where my job was to cultivate and formalize
the natural "human" dispositions of philosophy that lye
nascent in young students.

My teaching during the Summer 99

During this summer I felt very much like I did in the
summer of 1998, but over time, as I continued my education
in graduate school, and confronted critical and postmodern
ideas, my thinking began to change. I became less
comfortable with teaching children how to "do" philosophy
for the purposes of increasing rational thinking and

enlightenment. I began to wonder, why philosophy? Why the emphasis on reasoning? Especially a style of philosophical inquiry whose roots sit squarely in the liberal-humanist tradition, which I was beginning to subject to serious criticism. I also became aware that many students were questioning and criticizing the traditional texts, and I no longer felt the need to defend the curriculum like I used to. Eventually, I felt that is was more important to help the students shape their own criticism of printed texts and society. I altered my teaching, spending less time modeling what I thought philosophical discourse should look like, and more time helping the students shape their own criticism of issues related to the traditional texts and nontraditional texts (aspects of their own lives, non-traditional literature).

My teaching during the Summer 2000

In this summer I taught two sections of philosophy. In one section I used the exact readings used in the first summer of teaching; using the same readings as the first summer and some of the same readings as the second, should have

the effect of highlighting the difference between my

approach because some of the same issues arose due to the

similarities in printed material. Having some of the same

issues arise will highlight the differences in my practice

because I will be able to look closely at the different I

handled discussions around similar topics and issues.

In the second class, I used different printed texts

that I thought would correspond to a more thoroughgoing

social constructivism within the philosophy class. I tried

to make more room for non-traditional texts (student

experience, beliefs, values) to become primary texts for

the class, and to be more open to elements of a postmodern

social constructivist pedagogy discussed near the end of

chapter 1.

Since I began teaching in the first summer I have kept

a journal for each summer's activities. My journal is part

autobiography, part field-note, part self-analysis. I used

my journal to record events that were otherwise not

documented. I also used it to have an inner dialogue about

issues that were arising in my work as a teacher of

philosophical inquiry. This lead me to ask the following

research questions:

1) How does a postmodern social constructivist pedagogy
differ (for the teacher) from a modern form of
constructivism?

2) How does a teacher trying to enact a postmodern social
constructivist pedagogy remain faithful to both subject
matter content and their students' ideas, experiences, and
developing understandings?

3) What role does "community of inquiry" play in modern and
postmodern forms of social constructivism?

My main strategy for analysis was to study all of the

data sources I have collected and read the data in ways

that will help me to bring the issues I have raised around

the constructivist dilemma to the fore. I created a catalog

of every recorded session by taking reflective, critical,

and descriptive notes as I listened to class sessions,

viewed videotapes, and read transcriptions. This catalog is

like a running record of the three years of philosophical

inquiry. After this catalog was complete, I studied the

catalog and coded it with topical markers related to the

issues raised in my discussion of the constructivist

dilemma. Some of the topical markers I used were:

1. issues of authority

2. treatment of text

3. issues of community

4. specific topics of discussion (reality, history, community, views of philosophy, popular culture, etc., etc.)

5. rhetorical stance of teacher

6. students' commentary

7. discursive moves of teachers and students

This coding allowed me to then explore the ways these issues played in different ways across the three summers and also allowed me to read significant thematic differences across the three years of my teaching.

My analyses were guided by this coding and reading, and it is within the analyses that I created responses to my research question about the constructivist dilemma and the possibilities afforded and constrained by my adherence to the modern and postmodern forms of constructivist teaching that I tried to enact.

Chapter 4

Introduction

In this chapter I perform several analyses that will help to explain how my teaching across the three years of philosophy changes. These analyses bring into relief the question of constructivist teaching in its modern and postmodern forms. The first analysis is pivotal. It shows the transition between a modern, discipline oriented, and somewhat insincere form of constructivism, and, the transition toward a more thoroughgoing postmodern social constructivism by examining how each class treats printed texts and issues of textuality. The second analysis looks at the topics that were discussed in each year of the philosophy class. This analysis suggests that as the years of the philosophy class progressed, I included more topics of student interest and was also more open to topics that seemed appropriate to a postmodern social constructivism. The third analysis shows how the beginning of each class was different in ways that reveal the difference between a modern form of constructivism and a form of social constructivist teaching informed by postmodern elements.

Analysis 1: Treatment of Text

As I looked across the three years of philosophical inquiry
I noticed that in each year the treatment of text changed
dramatically. In traditional philosophical inquiry, one
reads a text in an effort to make meaning of an authors
words. That is, the traditional project is exegesis. This
stance assumes that there are meanings in the text and the
meanings need to be extracted in order to be discussed. So,
in the community of inquiry, this would yield an activity
where the community would seek to first understand the text
and the meanings in the text, and after these meanings have
been extracted discussion about the meanings of the texts
and criticisms of ideas could be pursued. This reflects a
belief that the text is the springboard for dialogue. This
means that the text itself is given status as a vehicle of
meaning, and while the meanings in the text are appropriate
for discussion, the text as an artifact is not. This seems
like a fine distinction, but in traditional philosophy
teaching the focus is on talking about philosophical ideas.
As the teacher, I enforce this understanding and in year
one, I consider our project of reading, exegesis. Let us

look at some concrete examples of the stance toward text in each year of the philosophy classes.

We begin with an examination of the year one philosophy classes stance toward text by looking at some of the notes I made while reviewing pieces of transcript from day 5 and day 12 of year one philosophy class.

On the second full day of class I began by asking the students to go back to the text and consider the questions that the philosopher asks Sophie in the first two chapters of Sophie's World. I ask the students, point blank, "what are the questions that the philosopher asks of Sophie?". Several students state the first question, "Who are you?" and I write it down on the board. When several students begin stating what the second question is, I make them, and specify one student in particular, go back to the book and find the exact wording of the second question, "Where does the world come from?" (Transcript 6/16/98 -Day 3). This, going back to the book to get the exact wording, seems important. In fact, we stay very close to the text and I make sure they are able to retell, in part, what they have read.

In looking at a piece of transcript from day 12, when our subject was Martin Luther King's, <u>Letter from a Birmingham Jail</u>, our conversation starts out with me questioning the students about the basic situation described in the text. I want to know if they understand who's in jail, why they are in Jail, and who is writing the letter. After that correct portrayal of the text is complete it seems, then, the discussion begins, and it does. I do stop and direct the cross-talk very early in the conversation on this day, asking the students to speak one at a time. More references to the text are made with an eventual visit to the text where I have a student read the section we are dealing with. Why do I ask the students to read the section and go back to the text so much? Apparently I really want them to "get it" even if they have to reread it because I let two minutes of quiet searching time go by. Anna points to the passage and I ask her to read it. It comes out that MLK was arrested for parading without a permit. I ask the students for the argument that is embedded in MLK's writing. I ask them for no easy thing. I then lay out the law that was used to imprison MLK on the

board in the form of an If-Then statement. Apparently, I think this is very important because I am really making sure we walk through every step of the argument making process. Connor builds on what Lara says and helps clarify an If-Then statement. I ask them what they think about the situation of the law being applied to this peacefully marching group. I point out that there seems to be a contradiction. Ahh, "contradiction", the language of philosophy. Example, Counterexample, fact, opinion, If-Then statements, arguments, my language is littered with philosophical references (referring to Day 12 transcript - 6/16/98).

This transcript commentary illustrate the exegetical stance toward text I enforced as the leader of the community and also reflects my strong alignment with issues traditional to the teaching of philosophy. There is a constant going back to the text to get the right meaning and the exact quote to base the discussion on. While these may not be the only reasons to go back to the text, they were certainly the ones I privileged. I recall in other discussions from this class that students would

occasionally make comments about their dissatisfaction with one of the novels we were reading (specifically the Philosophy for Children novel, <u>Lisa</u>, 1983). One of the responses I gave to one statement of dissatisfaction, "I know this text may be a little different, but it is the ideas in the text that I want you to pay attention to (Class 098, Day 5)", signals a desire to avoid spending time critiquing the text itself, when the text, as I believed, is merely a vehicle for meanings and ideas.

In the second year of philosophy, a different community of inquiry and a different teacher, my stance towards the printed text changes. In the second year, I am more open to critique of our texts as artifacts and do not explain away student criticism. This next data segment offers an example of dialogue that ensues when a student expresses discontent with the Philosophy for Children text we are reading (<u>Lisa</u>). Her critique begins as an indictment of the format of the novel. The novel is written as a series of episodes that do not flow in a logical manner. One episode could refer to one characters dilemma with a piece clothing and then the next episode might be about

another character's argument with a friend over an ethical

issue.

---Begins Data Segment---
(Day 7 - 99)

Jana: Well, this book [the P4C novel, Lisa] bothers me
because it goes from -- you know that part about the
dress, you know, how she gets that dress and then it skips
right on to Maria or whoever. I wish they would have a
section of the book on Lisa and a section of the book on
Maria, because you're like well, what happens to the dress?
Is she grounded or something? It leaves you hanging. Then
you get sick of reading about all those other people.

Tamara: Especially it's kind of like it doesn't seem like a
novel. It seems like something that isn't real. Like you
don't normally go and like run into your friends in the
street and start asking them the difference between right
and wrong and stuff. I mean, it just doesn't seem like very
realistic.

Michael: Mmmm. Why do you think this novel is written this
way?

Nicholas: I think it's like a discussion book. Like if I --
I wouldn't read it if it was just a book. But I think maybe
it's like that because you're supposed to discuss what you
think about the book or what's happening.

Michael: So, it's more of a book that people can discuss
things about.

Amanda: I think it tries to make you think deeper than you
thought before.

Michael: Hmm. Why so?

Amanda: Because like the kids ask really different questions than probably people ask. So, it kind of gets deep a little bit.

Callie: Yeah.

Michael: Nick, you expressed some displeasure with Harry. How's it different -- I've been calling this book a novel. How is this different from other things you've read that you've been told were novels?

Nick: Aren't novels usually thicker?

Michael: maybe, longer or thicker.

Michelle: They have plots.

Rhea: Yeah.

Michael: They have plots?

Michelle: Characters.

Murphy: This lacks a plot.

William: Like -- I don't know, you don't know a lot about the characters, really. They're just who they are. It's not like, you know, they don't go into description a whole bunch about them.

Michael: Mm hmm. This is true.

Sarah: Kind of seems like episodes like on T.V.

Jana: Yeah. It seems more like -- it seems more like it's written like a script than it is like an actual novel.

---End Data Segment---

This kind of critique, allows the community to take a step back from the activity of mining for meaning and see the text as a product designed for a particular purpose. When Nicholas commented, "I think it's like a discussion book. Like if I -- I wouldn't read it if it was just a book. But I think maybe it's like that because you're supposed to discuss what you think about the book or what's happening (Class 99, Day 7, Transcript)." he is making a critical judgment of the text which gives him some say in how he will think about and approach this and possibly other texts he encounters. By doing this he has taken an important step toward understanding that texts are not neutral, that they are constructed, even designed, and that they have a particular agenda. He, as well as some of the other students, knew that this "novel", as I called it, was different than other novels they read, and this opportunity to critique the texts we were reading offers them an important sense making experience about traditional texts as particular kinds of representations.

Terry thought this book looked more like a script for a TV show. Her comment has to do with the fact that <u>Lisa</u> is

divided into many free standing episodes within each chapter. In this way, each episode can be likened to a situational drama or comedy that there are so many examples of on television.

I am not arguing for the point that there is nothing to exegesis. There are certainly times when our purposes dictate that we read a text in order to try and understand what an author is saying. But, opportunities for thinking and learning are opened up when criticism of a text becomes a legitimate activity. This could also be a first step toward considering that there are other potential meanings in a text apart from the authors, even though this did not come up in our class. It is important to ask at this point, why is there space for this kind of critique now, when in the previous year's class this kind of critique was not supported?

One answer I can give to this question is, my own values and beliefs about texts changed. The time between year one and two was filled with a great deal of reading in the critical and postmodern traditions. In the intervening year between 98 and 99 I participated in a small study

group that attempted to assemble an understanding of

critical literacy. We engaged with a broad range of ideas

from critical social theory to critical pedagogy (Freire,

1970) and critical literacy (Mclaren, 1992). Critical

literacy, specifically, condones an approach to reading

that seeks to illuminate the ideological and political

forces that underpin a texts construction. That is,

> students need to be encouraged to research, speculate
> about and second-guess the institutional agendas,
> ideologies and human agents behind and at work in the
> text (conditions of production). . .This requires more
> than a technical analysis of language, but as well a
> 'reading of the cultures' around, behind, underneath,
> alongside, after and within the text (Luke, Comber &
> O'Brien, 1996).

I took this way of thinking seriously. And it was not that

I actively encouraged students to engage in the kind of

critique they did, in fact, only a year prior to this I

actively tried to sidestep this kind of critique because I

believed it to be superfluous to the kinds of discussion I

thought we needed to be having. What changed, in part, was

that I did not discourage the critique of text. I

recognized that the students had different readings of the

works we were engaged with, and I became curious about what

a discussion of their critical readings would produce.

Since I came to understand texts as artifacts designed for particular purposes, as representative of politics and views of the world, it made sense to create a space for the kind of critique we engaged in; this activity began to feel like a natural part of philosophical inquiry.

In the year three community of inquiry, the stance towards text takes a very different twist. In this community, there was exegesis, critique of texts, but unprecedented in the philosophy teaching examined in this study, textuality as an issue in and of itself, became a topic for inquiry. We talked about textuality, its relationship to perspective, and what it means to read.

The following segment, which I offer at length, is the bulk of a discussion the year three community of inquiry had around the topic of "text". This topic arose out of a dialogue the community had about two different books we had read. One of the books was a work of historical fiction, <u>Morning Girl</u> (1999). This novel was written from the perspective of Arawak Indians immediately prior to the arrival of Columbus. We then discussed a section of a

middle school social studies textbook (American Nation, 1989) that discussed the arrival of Columbus to North America. At the time we were beginning to inquire about the different representations of this period in history offered by each of these pieces. After discussing the section on Columbus in the middle school textbook, I asked the question, "Why are they called textbooks?", and the following dialogue ensued.

---Begin Data Segment---
(Day 7, Class 00B - Transcript)

Michael: Why are they called textbooks?

Emily: are those the things that we're supposed to read in class?

Michael: why are they called textbooks?

Sophie: Cause they have text

Several: all books have text

John: what about picture books?

Caitie: well, usually when a teacher says read this text its going to be something really boring. . text means that it's a book of boring words.

Liza: maybe it means that its only text, there's not, its just text

Emma: there's no meaning behind it, its just a bunch of facts that we're supposed to memorize.

Tayler: Your thinking to specifically, a textbook is just a word that makes us think about a big book of information, your thinking way to specifically, trying to determine what "text" means and what "book" means. You've got to think about the whole word and what it makes you think about.

Michael: What about. . um, what about a song (student: lyrics), could we think of a song as a text.

(Some comments about listening to the words and listening to the music. Some talk about specific bands.)

Michael: But could we think of a song, that had lyrics, as a text?

(Some "yea's" and "I guess" – there is reluctance to entertain this notion)

Linda: songs are like poetry that have a melody

James: Well, when you're using text very loosely, yeah, I mean that depends on the specific series of text.

Michael: What if we're using, like according to the definition we're discussing.

James: Well is the musician an author, is he classified as an author?

Sophie: Well songs aren't always written down, when you hear them there not exactly text because their not written down when you hear them. You can't hear things that are written down.

James: Are we trying to distinguish between sight and sound?

Michael: No, I'm actually pushing the question of what are texts?

Sophie: Now if the lyrics are written down it could be text cause their written down.

Michael: Well when you read, when you read words on a page don't you hear them?

Janice: yes

Sophie: In your head, yes, but its not really sound.

Mika: unless you're trying to speed read.

Tayler: But what about when you're speaking, just speaking, not reading off anything.

James: Text is written

Michael: Couldn't it be a spoken text?

Sophie: yeah you have to read it off the page and its spoken text

Liza: yeah but I don't think if your not reading a long it counts as text, like, there's books on tape, I know some people that prefer that, and because you don't have the book right in front of you, I don't think its seen as text anymore.

Sara: But isn't the person on the tape reading text?

Liza: they're reading text but to you its not really text anymore. Cause you don't have words (Caitlin: text is something you can see it isn't what you hear) on a page to look at.

Michael: But can't hearing a book being read to you in the same way reading a text, create sort of all of the images and thoughts that reading the book would?

Several: yeah..uh-huh [Much skepticism]

Liza: but also you'd see different things cause you would have, more time, time to actually think about em. Cause your not concentrating on going back to the next word, and you know seeing, and if your being read to you can think of other things and not pay attention and see things differently.

Janice: But its kind of the same kind of thing, just different

Michael: How's it different?

Janice: Well, like she said, if your being read a book or something you have more time to concentrate on the image instead of the words

Mika: you can go at your own pace and you can look back, like you have to actually focus on reading, its not like some people can listen to something and do something else. When your reading most of the time you have to actually focus on reading, (T: okay) so you absorb most of the material.

Michael: When I, let's see, if I see two people, I'm just sitting in front of the building, and I see two people meet, and one person, ya know, shakes the other person's hand, and they're talking, and one person looks like they get really angry and they, they sort of stomp off and I look at that situation, I have some understanding, I mean, I can sort of make up a story about what just happened there, ya know somebody just got really mad about something and they disagreed and they stomped off. . Did I read that situation.

Mika: In a sense

James: It depends how your translating it.

Liza: you didn't read it.

Sophie: by the definition text is something written down on a page.

Mika: you read into what information you gathered

Chen: you read signals to

Liza: you don't read through your mind and form the words

Sophie: its not text cause text is written on a page

Michael: did we say that it had to be words on a page or an author's intent?

Linda: I know like, at the library books on tape are considered audio-text because your listening to the author's words

James: Isn't that word contradictive though, audio-text, think about it, audio-sound, text-written.

Michael: Why is it contradictory?

Matt: a text doesn't have to be written down .   .

Anna: well we're defining text right now it doesn't necessarily have to be…(inaudible)

Matt: according to the first half of our definition it doesn't need to be written down

Nyali: yeah it doesn't have to be written down it just mean's somebody's reading it

Tayler: Let me ask something, let me ask something for all of you. Are we all agreed to the idea that text is always in written form?

Several students (in different tones of voice): no; no; ugh-ugh; mmngh-mmngh; that's what we're talking about!

Tayler: okay, alright (apologetically)

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Michael: Well, if, if reading a book and listening to a book being read, or listening to a song, all make you think of things, and you know, feel things, do what they do, why couldn't we consider them all, and perhaps other things, texts?

Janice: Because I think that everyone has always like, kinda been taught that you have to read it for it to be text.

Caitie: It's not that you read it, because like, if I hear a song on the radio, the words to the song would be text, but if I know the song from memory, then I can just sing it without reading anything or hearing the radio.

Nyal: Well that would be the author's words.

Caitlin: yeah but it wouldn't have to be reading.

Michael: So when I see two people arguing across the street, and I make up an explanation for what happened between them, (Nyal: you're the author) aren't I the author?

Several: yeah, yes

Liza: but if you write it down and someone else reads it, it is text but its not (inaudible)

Michael: what if I tell somebody, like I just told you

Sophie: if you actually say it in words then I think it is text. .but it has to be the actual words

Caitie: But then everything that you think in your head would be text because you're the author of your thoughts…

----End Data Segment----

Intrigued by the critique of texts we engaged in during

year two, I designed this section of the course, where we

would look at three different representations of the same

historical time period (the arrival of Columbus to the

Americas), to see if I could cultivate a more intensive

critique of texts and get into issues of "representation".

Why these issues?

Between the second and third year of philosophy I

undertook a more serious study of both critical and

poststructural ideas. Between year one and two, I became

sensitive to the constructed, ideological position of

texts; between year two and three, I read Derrida, and

seriously considered his phrase, "there is no outside text"

(Derrida, 1976). I became sensitive to issues of

textuality. As Derrida (1982) states,

> It is precisely for strategic reasons that I find it
> necessary to recast the concept of the text by
> generalizing it almost without limit, without any
> limit that is. That's why there is nothing 'beyond the
> text'. That's why South Africa and apartheid are, like
> you and me, part of this general text, which is not to
> say that it can be read as one reads a book. That's
> why the text is always a field of forces:
> heterogeneous, differential, open. That's why
> deconstructive readings are concerned not only with
> library books. . .they are not simply analyses of
> discourse. They are also effective or active

interventions that transform contexts without limiting
themselves to theoretical utterances even though they
must also produce such utterances. (p. 167-8)

The idea of textuality, that features of the world are

subject to interpretation and readings that consider the

discursive formations, and must be read in multiple ways to

unearth differential relations of power and ideological

positions, is a powerful one that changed the way I think

of reading. This explodes the notion of reading as

potential readers become interpreters who interpret for

different purposes depending on their time, place, status

in society and gender (amongst other things) (Cherryholmes,

1999). These politicized notions of text and reading come

from poststructural thinking, which can be characterized

by,

> Attention to questions of language, power and desire
> that emphasizes the contexts in which meaning is
> produced and makes problematic all universal truth and
> meaning claims; a suspicion of binary, opposition
> thinking. . .; a suspicion of the figure of the
> humanistic human subject, challenging the assumptions
> of autonomy and transparent self-consciousness while
> situating the subject as a complex intersections of
> discursive, libidinal, and social forces and
> practices; [and] a resistance to claims of unversality
> and unity, preferring instead to acknowledge
> difference and fragmentation (Schrift, 1996, p. 452).

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At many points in this discussion it occurred to me that our discussion had strong poststructural undertones. We were talking about what texts were, what authors were, and what it meant to read.

The shifts in my own thinking from year one to year two helped me make space in the community's discourse for previously illegitimate activities (critique of texts). Shifts in my thinking from year two to year three opened up more space not only for textual critique but also for topics not previously explored in philosophy for children, at least not in any of the discussions I had led or observed. In fact, my orientation in the third year (in one of the sections of philosophy) even caused me to break from using any of the canonical texts normally used in this teaching. I chose only a few works of literature to try out this representation and historical place experiment, the rest of the text came from the students: Topics they wanted to talk about, things they wanted to read, shared experiences from their own lives in and out of school.

I will say more about the overall implications of this first attempt at teaching in a postmodern social

constructivist way in the chapter on implications, but this

analysis gives one demonstration of the shift in my

teaching from year one through to year three. The shifts in

my views on the treatment of texts created new spaces in

the community of inquiry for critique and discussions of

textuality and readings where there was once only room for

exegesis.

Analysis 2: Opening Day

At the beginning of year two, I remember thinking, "I don't

want to start class this way". In the first and second year

of the philosophy class I began the first day of class with

an exercise central to the teaching of philosophy for

children. The exercise begins when I ask my students, "what

is a question?" When I initiated this exercise in year one,

I did not doubt the merit of this inquiry. After all,

questions and question asking are central to philosophical

inquiry. When I began class in year two, I was less

comfortable with beginning the class in this way, but I did

not understand enough about my mixed feelings to change

what I was doing. In year three I understood my ambivalence

a little more, and decided to do things differently. The following analysis compares the opening day of the first and third year classes.

In year one, the first day of philosophy class opens (after customary introductions) with me putting forth a question for the class to consider. The question I posed is, "What is a question?" The students' offered several different responses to this question that had to do with "why" we ask questions. For example, Greg said: "A person asks questions when they want to know something or find something out." Basically, they responded to my question by giving several different reasons that a person might ask a question. Reasons like, to find out information, to indirectly command ("Could someone close the door?"), to begin an inquiry ("Why are frogs green?"), or, for the questioner to open a place to speak for themselves, like when a teacher asks a rhetorical question ("How did World War I begin?"). They were very familiar with questions like this. The students', with some gentle prodding from me, generated quite an impressive list of reasons why a person

might ask a question. We made a list on the board of some

purposes we have for asking questions.

1. When we don't know

2. When we want more information

3. When we don't understand

4. When we want to know the truth

5. When we tell a joke

6. As a polite command

7. When we are suspicious or want to accuse someone

8. When we already know the answer but want to see if

others know (teachers do this)

9. When we want to allow ourselves to speak (rhetorical)

I asked the students this question to "get them"

thinking about something important to philosophy (asking

questions), which they may not have thought much about

before. The list they generated is noteworthy for its

variety. I paraphrased the students' contributions when I

listed them on the board (I put the students' contributions

in my words). The activity looked very much like a

traditional Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (Cazden 1988)

exercise where the teacher asks a question, waits for a response, and then evaluates the student's response. I spent a lot of time handling each contribution, asking follow-up questions, and asking the students to think of examples from their own experience. Short discussions came out of several of the responses but not all of them. We then spent several minutes talking about rhetorical questions and I gave a short lecture near the end of this class period where I explained that, "the asking of questions is very important in philosophy, will be important to what we do in this class, and will be something I want you to do whenever a question occurs to you."

This topic was important to me. In traditional Philosophy for Children teaching, encouraging students to ask questions, especially questions of the form, "What is X?" is a form that lies at the heart of Philosophy. Philosophers have been asking "what is" questions for at least two thousands years. The very form of this question suggests that there is "something" at the heart of the matter, in this case, at the heart of a question.

Customarily philosophers have asked this question in search of a fundamental nature or essence. Plato is perhaps most famous for this as most of his dialogues feature Socrates conversing with some interlocutor over the nature of justice, beauty, love, piety, etc.

Interestingly enough, I do not announce to my class that there is such a nature to questions, nor do I insist that their inquiry yield a definition that would serve as essence. In fact, I allow the class to shift the discussion to the purposes of question asking, a decidedly different project than essence finding. I do this in much the same way Socrates will allow his interlocutor to offer examples of justice just so he can later pounce on their indiscretion of offering many where there should only be one. But I do not pounce. While I phrase my question in the traditional manner, "What is X?", I do not insist, as Socrates does, that an identity be made, "A question is X." However, I do have the students' create a list of possible X's, and I do consider this topic central to the discipline.

I was very directive in trying to explore this issue of questions. I focussed on picking this issue apart. I really wanted to explore the different kinds of questions that can be asked, and I really wanted to get at the students' understandings of what kinds of questions are in their world. I jumped all over the response from one student who brought up the subject of rhetorical questions. I remarked, "I think you're right". . ."sidebar" and point out to students that if you take the "a" and the "l" off of rhetorical, you get the word rhetoric. Then I ask the students if they know what rhetoric is. When a student offers an example of what they think rhetoric is. I side-step it and begin to lecture about what rhetoric is.

I was thinking about rhetoric as a branch of philosophy attributed to the Sophists (particularly Protagoras) that has to do with making the weaker argument the stronger, or, the art of argument: I was thinking about it in classical terms for the most part.

At this point, I was centered on the idea that my students' need to understand the importance of question asking to the enterprise of philosophical discourse. I

began the year one philosophy class with a typical topic and taught them things about question asking that I believed they were unaware of. Also, I believed that they needed to know something about "questions". I remember feeling very ambivalent about this class session when it ended. This ambivalence lingered with me for months, and with even greater ambivalence and more doubt, I did the same opening exercise in year two. However, communing with the critical and postmodern ideas mentioned in the "treatment of text" analysis forced me to reconsider the introduction to the course, and in year three of the philosophy class I started things out differently.

In year three I began the first discussion of the course in a similar, yet importantly different way. I did ask the students a question, but it was not a question about something so central to philosophical inquiry as asking them to consider the nature of question asking. I asked them, "Why are you here?" "Why are you here. . .in school, now, this summer,". The following discussion ensued:

Michael: Dean did you have something?

Dean: Um, cause we're smart.

Michael: Cause your smart?. .okay

Carrie: I'm here cause I like to learn. I like school.

Michael: You like school, you like to learn

Dean: Cause summer's boring. .without anything to do

Michael: Okay, so this is better than -- Dan: Watching TV or something Michael: (revoices) Watching TV (at the same time)

Oliver: I would be sleeping right now.

Donna: (hesitantly) Umm, my parents made me

Michael: your parents made you, alright, that's an honest answer

Oliver: I liked the listing of the topics that they had

Michael: So you read the course descriptions and this sounded interesting, more interesting than your alternatives? Did you have any alternatives? What were the alternatives?

Oliver: Um, I go down to a parking lot that has a big (couldn't hear) in it and play.

Michael: Alright, so this was better than that, at least seemed better than that. . . Others. .why are you here?

Jack: At first like I wanted to take the two computer classes, and neuroscience, but they changed neuroscience and both the computer classes were filled up. So then I thought that philosophy 1 would be okay.

---End Data Segment---

What is important about this shift in opening topics is

that starting the courses in such different ways arose out

of a certain discontent with stance in the first years of

philosophy. I began to question why it was I would start

the class in the way I did when I did not even know how the

students had come to be in this class in the first place.

These concerns were spurred on by my postmodern and

critical studies which speak of the importance of time,

place, location, in short, context. I thought to myself, if

I begin the class with a lesson on question asking, and the

importance of rhetorical questions, yet I do not even know

how these students have come to be in my class, then I am

guilty of beginning my relationship with these students

without an appreciation for the context of our situation.

This did not sit well with me as it did not reflect the

appreciation I began to have for the contextual factors

that determine much of our existence. It was important for

me to know that Donna was in my class, in fact the program

itself, because her parents made her. It was important for

me to know that philosophy was Jack's last choice, and that

he really wanted to be in the computer classes. It was

important for me to understand that several of my student's

did not know why they were in the program let alone this

class. This was, I think, the beginning of my trying to

translate into pedagogy the postmodern concerns of

historical location and one's place in their social world.

On one level, this is not just an attempt by me to

appreciate something of my students' situation, it is me

trying to make my students' motives a more explicit

consideration of the class curriculum. As I look back to

year one, I can construct a plausible motive for my

question exercise: I was trying to find out what my

students' understood about questions so I could make use of

those understandings in our discussion of the importance of

question asking in philosophical inquiry. But I was not

trying to understand my students in any meaningful way that

would help me understand their motives. In some ways this

distinction is subtle, because in both cases I am asking

the students for information about themselves: in the first

case a question about their understandings of questions and

in the second case a question about their purpose for being

in the philosophy class. This difference has two important implications.

First, I am still asking a question, and initiating the first inquiry of the class. One of the seductive, even illusory elements of constructivism is that it can lead us to believe that there is more freedom for students than is really the case. While in certain respects there is more freedom, the notion that there is considerably more freedom is a seductive illusion. So, while my asking students to share their personal experiences about question asking was inspired by a commitment to a modern constructivist teaching, I chose and asked the question and I shaped the discussion to illustrate something I wanted students to understand.

Secondly, year three was different from the standpoint that I felt the need to appreciate my students' situation in relation to the course. I did not have a specific motive for asking them that was tied to getting them to understand something about philosophical inquiry. It was meant to allow me to appreciate the circumstances by which they have come to be in the class. This reflects an attempt to

appreciate our place in time and society, and the situated

condition of our circumstance.

Analysis 3: Topics of Discussion

In a further attempt to understand the differences in the

three years of philosophy teaching and the dilemma of

constructivism I have confronted, I decided to look across

the topics of discussion for each of the years of the

philosophical inquiry class. I believe this to be another

way of looking at my stance as a teacher shifting from a

modern form of constructivism to a more postmodern social

constructivism. In Figure 1, I have listed the topics of

discussion for each year of the philosophy. This Figure

will allow for a quick comparison between the topics.

One thing that is apparent as I look across the topics

we discussed across the three years is the focus, during

year one, on topics that are central to philosophical

inquiry in the philosophy for children tradition. One

aspect of this that is important is the fact the these are

topics that, one way or another, I knew would become part

of the class before the class even started. Syllogisms, the

values of the community of inquiry, making arguments,
questions, etc. are all topics I would make it a point to
bring up in my classes. Several of the other topics came
directly out of the printed texts we were dealing with. The
questions "Who are you?", and "Where does the world come
from?", as well as the discussion about Plato and
Aristotle, came directly out of Sophie's World (1994). The
topic of animal/human rights came directly out of the
Philosophy for Children novel, Lisa (1983). While a few of
the topics on that list were introduced by the students,
they were sanctioned topics from the standpoint that they
came out of the printed texts we were reading.

The fact that almost all of the topics we discussed
were either pre-selected by me or came directly from the
printed texts we read suggest to me that the constructivist
teaching going on here had more to do with how the
Students' experiences, developing understandings, and
background knowledge were related to topics that were not
so much of their choosing as they were mine. And while I
allowed a fair amount of space with regard to how the

Table 1: Analysis of Discussion Topics Across Three years of Philosophy

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-What is a
 Question?
-Who are you? -
 Where does the
 world come from?
-Syllogisms/If-then
 statements/All
 statements (Logic)
-What are we doing
 in philosophy?
-Creation and
 Evolution and
 Religious Belief
-Animal
 Rights/Human
 Rights
-Values of
 Community of
 Inquiry
-Plato and
 Aristotle on
 Society
-Making arguments
-Cultural
 Relativism/Ethical
 relativism

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-What is a
 Question?
-Purpose of Life
-Freedom of
 Speech/Rights
-Friendship
-What happens in
 our discussions
-Religion and
 Mythology
-Belief and action
-Political
 correctness-
 Popular Culture
-Disney's
 distortion of
 historical events
-Identity and role
 playing
-What it means to
 be a living being
 (medical ethics)
-Pro-life vs. Pro-
 choice
-Morality-
 Consistency
 of belief and
 action
-Time/Calendars-
 Measuring time

00

-Why are you here?
-Ways of Reading/
 Perspective
-Student response
 to literature
-We give ourselves
 Native American
 Names-Meaning of a
 name
-Historical Fiction
 and Textbook
 representation of
 history
-Text and
 Textuality
-Historical
 Location-Context
-Who writes
 History?
-Perspective
-Forms of
 Government
-Power/Media
 Influence
-Peer pressure as
 an indirect form
 of media influence
-Sharing Music &
 Poetry
-Eastern Philosophy

students related to these topics in our discussions, the students' interests did not really become primary texts for the class. My teaching stuck very close to my mission of cultivating formal philosophical discourse (Pardales and Cervetti, 1999).

In the second year topics are related to the printed texts, but, we take a decided step away from a pre-determined set of topics. Four of the first five topics we discuss are either brought up by me or come from the printed texts we are engaged with. The topics related to political correctness, Disney's distortion of history, and Identity and Role playing were brought up by the students, but the life I helped give them in our discussion was influenced by my readings in critical pedagogy. These topics stemmed from issues the students' raised and seemed interested in. But, the direction I took these conversations in was influenced by my interests as well. One key moment in our discussion over Disney movies occurred when I made a move that was uncharacteristic of my teaching in prior years. I asked the students if they would

consider taking action against the distorted portrayal of

Pocahontas in the Disney movie of the same name.

----Begin Data Segment-----

Jana: I mean like in Disney shows, like MULAN, you wouldn't
have seen that back in 1970, 1960. But like it still has
like the same plot and the same basic meaning. But it has
different womanly heroic characters. It's still the same
thing, though. It's really not much different.

Michael: Is there anything that we could do to make things
actually change?

Shauna: Write Disney and send them a whole bunch of angry
letters?

Chris: Yeah!

Bryan: In my class, we kind of almost did that once, but
nobody really wanted to go through with it.

Michael: What -- what kind of letter might we write if we
were going to write one.

Lucia: Well, like say don't always make the girls get
rescued by the guys. Try to make it equal and like try to
stay true to the story.

Seely: Stop corrupting our society.

Lucia: And they shouldn't take like historical events and
sort of totally rewrite them just to make a movie. If
they're trying to inform kids about like history, then it's
not the way to do it by changing it. When everyone dies,
they shouldn't be like they all live happily ever after.

Michael: Would you --.

Matt: They should just end it before they die.

Michael: Is there any interest amongst you in doing that?

Bryan: I would.

Seely: I would.

James: I wrote a letter to the Kool cigarette company, but I never sent it.

---End Data Segment---

I had never before proposed that we move from our discussion towards taking some action related to what we talked about. The students' showed a lot of interest in discussing how many of the movies they watch are distorted or re-written for greater appeal. I definitely encouraged this kind of critique. In particular, it was passages from Giroux's (1996) book <u>Fugitive Culture's</u> that spurred me in this direction,

> Given the influence that the Disney ideology has on children, it is imperative for parents, teachers, and other adults to understand how such films attract the attention and shape the values of the children who view and buy them. As a producer of children's culture, Disney should not be given an easy pardon because it is defined as a universal citadel of fun and good cheer. On the contrary, as one of the primary institutions constructing childhood culture in the United States, it warrants healthy suspicion and critical debate. Such a debate should be limited to the home, but should be a central feature of the

school and any other critical public sites of
learning. (pp. 95-96)

So, while I did involve the students' interests as a
more significant subject of the class, I also encouraged a
different kind of inquiry in the second year. In this way
my teaching was more social constructivist than it was in
the first year, but in some ways, aspects of my
philosophical agenda were replaced by my burgeoning
critical agenda.

In Class B (00), I made a sincere attempt at letting
the students' background experiences and interests become
genuine texts in our class. I still needed to chose some
printed texts for the class and have some activities
planned, but more than I ever have before, I tried to
harbor less of a pre-determined agenda. And while having
less of a pre-determined agenda is still an agenda, I was
determined to dictate fewer of the topics of discussion. We
began with a different kind of question, and over the next
several days, we talked about the student's responses to
the novels we were reading. I let our conversations in

these days revolve around what the students found

interesting in the novels.

One of the activities I did design was the reading of

three different texts that provided different

representations of Columbus's arrival to North America.

This activity resulted in our discussions about historical

fiction/representation, text/textuality, who writes

history, and historical location. The rest of the topics

were ones that came directly from the students; in other

words, they told me explicitly that they wanted to discuss

these other topics.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The analyses made in the previous chapter were conducted in order to help me answer the research questions stated in chapter three. I will now respond to each of these questions and offer some response to them based on my analyses.

1) How does a postmodern social constructivist pedagogy differ (for the teacher) from a modern form of constructivism?

When I taught philosophy in 98, my goal was clear: teach my students philosophical inquiry. Do this by apprenticing the students to philosophical ways of talking, thereby helping them internalize the discourse of philosophy and think more critically and reasonably. I actively scaffolded students' induction into this discourse.[3] I would publicly identify when good reasons were given, arguments were constructed,

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[3] In year one, some of the students were very willing to be inducted, others less so, and some, resistant. I concerned myself with the first two groups mostly. There was even one student, who, while very interested in traditional philosophical topics, was consistently ignored by me because her attempts to bring up these topics did not mesh with the agenda I had. I have not stopped thinking about my treatment of this student and fear she left my class quite frustrated and justifiably soured to my brand of philosophical inquiry, probably to anything called philosophy.

effective counterexamples were offered, and when sound reasoning was portrayed. And when students' attempts at participation fell outside of these acceptable forms of participation, sometimes I would re-voice a contribution so that it took the form I deemed appropriate, other times I would ask students' to reconsider what or how they said what they said. It is clear though, I clear in my purpose and way of teaching philosophy to them. I wanted my students to understand something of philosophical discourse. My agenda was clear (at least to me). Both the form and content of our discussions was important to me, and I largely controlled both. By any normal standards, I was engaged in modern, social constructivist philosophy teaching.

Also in year one, I tried to include my students' experiences, background knowledge, and developing understandings into discussions even though I largely influenced most of the topics and the rules of engagement. I felt compelled to form a community of philosophical inquiry. I was enacting a social constructivist pedagogy, just not a postmodern social constructivism.

In year two, I was ambivalent towards the project of teaching philosophical inquiry displayed in year one of this study. My studies of critical pedagogy led me to be suspicious of attempts to apprentice others and made me very sensitive to the act of imposing the discourse of reason (philosophy) onto my students. I began to think of myself as colonizing an exploiting an unsuspecting people. I also began to question what at one time seemed to me a tacit good, the teaching of rational argumentation and critical thinking. The privileging of reason was largely a product of Enlightenment rationality which my readings in post-structuralism and critical pedagogy had forced me to begin to criticize. This gave me reason to want to include more of my students' experiences and to take a softer line toward my influencing of both the form and content of our discussions. I encouraged social critique, and in one instance, a pivotal moment in this summer's teaching, I even encouraged social action. I was more genuinely open to the students making their specific interests part of the text of the class. And this is evidenced in how a larger

proportion of the topics we discussed were not the

traditional projects detailed in year one.

Yet, by year three, I had even begun to question my

encouragement of a critical pedagogy style of social

critique and action. As Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) argues,

critical pedagogy,

> is still tied to the mastery and masterfulness of
> reason with the consequence that the role of the
> critical pedagogue becomes one of ensuring that
> students are given the chance to arrive at the
> "universally valid proposition" underlying the
> discourse of critical pedagogy – namely, that all
> people have a right to freedom from oppression
> guaranteed by the democratic social contract – in
> other words, there is the danger of an agenda being
> established where learners are led to pre-defined
> goals; (p. 304)

Ellsworth goes on to argue that critical pedagogy,

> masks a reconfiguration of the imbalance of power
> between teacher and student in its discourse of
> empowerment and dialogue: student empowerment has been
> defined in the broadest possible humanist terms, and
> becomes a "capacity to act effectively" in a way that
> fails to challenge any identifiable social or
> political position, institution, or group. (p. 307)

Adhering to modern social constructivist premises of

teaching, which critical pedagogy can be included as, can

put a teacher into a position of creating illusions for

themselves. These illusions are potentially dangerous as they can compel a teacher to think they are doing something much more innocent that they are. By taking students' ideas, background knowledge, and life experience seriously, a teacher can seduce himself into believing that he is imposing less on students. A teacher can deceive himself—believing he is starting from where the students are. Thus, the teacher can be lulled into the idea that he is really allowing the students' concerns and interests to become primary texts of the class when he is actually seducing students into learning what he wanted them to learn in the first place.

A teacher may also be seducing himself into believing he is being more humane to his students than if he were inconsiderate of students' background knowledge, experiences, and beliefs. The seduction is strong. Even in year three I was bringing some modern ideas/structures into the text of the class, sometimes overtly sometimes covertly. To the extent that I made these topics central to the teaching, and did not render my motivations transparent

to my students, I was engaged in as insincere a form of constructivist teaching as I was in year one.

Alas, was my teaching in year three really any different than what I did in year one/two? Is it anymore sincere or insincere than my teaching in year one/two? When, in year three, some of the postmodern social constructivist elements were present (textuality, authority, power, etc.) I made it clear what I thought the issue was and why I believed it to be worth discussion. I tried very hard to only discuss these topics as they seemed pertinent to the students' experiences. I was less covert in my actions and I think I presented a style of teaching that was more transparent.

I began to see that one has to have an agenda, or at least be part of a system that demands that one have an agenda, in order to teach. Trying to rid myself of an agenda led me to a brief state of paralysis. I did not know what or how to teach. So, with a much more modest and open agenda than ever before, I still entered my teaching of class B--year three--with the agenda of being sensitive and open to the elements of a postmodern social constructivism

as well as my students' interests and experiences. The only position I have been able to live with is to resolve to be forthright with my students about what I consider important and why. To justify to my students what I think I am doing, how I view their role in the process, why I think this activity is important to them, and to be sincere in my attempts at actually making student texts a part of the curriculum of the class. Even this stance, though, must be accompanied by a willingness to open up aspects of one's teaching to scrutiny by oneself and one's students. I do not think I did as good a job of this in my third year of teaching as I might have. I did this far more than I did in either of the first two years, but, there is still plenty of room for reducing illusion and increasing sincerity.

I am using the term "sincerity" to indicate a forthrightness and honesty regarding what it is I thought I was teaching. In year one/two I was not honest with my students about the discourse I was attempting to initiate my students' into. In some ways I wanted to induct them without their awareness of what they were being inducted in to. This reflected the belief I had that we learn best by

assimilation (Gee, 1989). My project in year one/two was to

get students to internalize the discourse of philosophy by

following the norms of philosophical inquiry (in year one),

and social critique associated with critical pedagogy (in

year two). To the extent that I was not honest or

forthright about my intentions and use of the students'

ideas, experiences and understandings, I was engaged in an

insincere form of social constructivist teaching. My

motivations remained opaque instead of more transparent.

Regarding the aspect of my theorizing about a

postmodern social constructivism, there was one thing I was

not able to achieve. I never managed to open a critique of

the discipline of philosophy in my classroom. One reason

for this was that I was unsure I was still teaching

philosophy. One would have to have some understanding of a

discipline in order to critique it, and while in year one I

taught a method of philosophy that the students had learned

enough about to critique (Pardales & Cervetti, 1998), I was

far less clear of what it was we would critique in year

three. Postmodern social constructivists do critique the

very enterprise of disciplinary inquiry, but we were not in

a position to critique philosophy in year three because we

were doing as much literary criticism, social and political

critique, and historiography as we were doing something

that resembled philosophy. I personally engaged in many

critiques of the discipline, and the enterprise of

philosophy over the course of this study, but never was

able to make disciplinary critique of philosophy a

substantive part of the class.[4]

2) How does a teacher trying to enact a postmodern social
constructivist pedagogy remain faithful to both subject
matter and their students' ideas, experiences, and
developing understandings?

In year one of philosophy class I faithfully enacted the

teaching of philosophical inquiry as outlined in Philosophy

for Children. To this extent, I enacted a modern from of

social constructivism and as outlined above, introduced

formal philosophical inquiry to my students, and initiated

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[4]We came close one day in year two when we talked about the distinctions
between mythology, religion, and fables. This discussion bordered on
disciplinary critique from the standpoint that we were discussing
genres of writing. Also, in year three, Class B, we engaged in a
similar exercise when we talked about "who writes history", which
broached the topic of the differences between fictional and non-
fictional representations of history. Considering aspects of

them into the discourse of philosophy. This was my primary

objective and I did not have, as a central concern, this

tension between the curriculum on one hand, and

disciplinary faithfulness on the other. I took students'

ideas, experiences, and developing understandings into

consideration in service to the apprenticing of my students

into philosophical discourse.

In year two I sought to make students' ideas

experiences, and developing understandings (i.e. student

texts) a more genuine part of the class, and this was

evidenced in the way I took students' critique of texts and

topical interests more seriously. But as the analysis of

topics suggested, this lead us into areas not traditionally

part of philosophy for children discussions. And my

encouragement of social critique and aspects of a critical

pedagogy brought discussions and printed texts not

traditionally part of philosophical discourse. We began to

transgress and cross the tradition borders of philosophy.

By year three we were engaged in an activity genuinely

different. Student texts became primary texts for the class

disciplinary faithfulness is the subject of my second research

and I no longer worried about an ultimate balance between student texts and traditional philosophical texts. We read and responded to literature according to student interests and we embarked on discussions over topics that were of concern to the students. Of course, I did initiate some discussions and topics that were aligned to issues related to my burgeoning postmodern concerns. But my agenda here was less dogmatic than it was in year one, and I tried to make my motivations for raising such topics more transparent to the students. In short, I tried to justify why I thought such issues were important.

It is pertinent to raise the question of whether we were still doing philosophy in year three. As I argued earlier, we seemed to be engaged in reader response to literature and a more open-ended style of dialogical inquiry about the printed texts we were reading and the students' emergent texts. It could even be described as a rhetorical inquiry of a particular sort; we spent a lot of time considering how we use language and words. This leads me to suggest that when one makes student texts a

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question.

significant part of the inquiry, it becomes difficult to remain squarely within the borders of a discipline.

3) What role does "community of inquiry" play in modern and postmodern forms constructivism?

As I argued in chapter two, community of inquiry can be applied to groups of students in classrooms, or, to the practitioners of a discipline like history or chemistry. Peirce theorized that philosophy should adopt the kind of community of inquiry that characterized communities of inquiring scientists where each scientist was faithful to the scientific method as they made their own individual inquiries and then subjected his/her findings to public scrutiny. Dewey naturalized this conception of community of inquiry and applied it to schooling. Lipman gave a distinctive characterization of philosophical communities of inquiry while arguing for the place of philosophy in K-12 education. Other thinkers have called for the creation of communities of inquiry as the new form groups of teachers and students should adopt. This would yield classrooms where teachers and students would inquire into topics of mutual interest with one another. Classrooms

would become places where interest-inspired inquiry would become the new curriculum, replacing the model where teachers and other authorities alone dictated what and how things are learned. This is especially the case where an inquiry approach to education is being practiced because an inquiry approach, with its emphasis on student interests, is used to structure discussion.

In each year of the philosophy classes, characteristics of a community of inquiry specified in chapter two were enacted. But in year one, the community of inquiry was less genuine. I say it was less genuine because I largely dictated both the content and rules of participation in the community; in the year one class the community was one mostly by my designation and not one of the communities creation. One person does not a community make. One aspect of a group of people being a community is that they, to some extent, dictate the terms of their relationship to one another. Now, there are many instances where individuals join communities and accept that the rules they are agreeing to are not one's of their making. In fact, joining a political, social, or academic

organization often requires that one accept certain terms

of membership without having a say in those terms. But

communities of inquiry in classrooms, where the community's

mandate requires that student interest, and mutual respect

and concern, are key elements of the community, requires

that the members of the community be active in determining

some of the constitution of the community.

Apart from the unspoken agreements that are part of

any classroom environment, this did not happen in any

significant way in year one or year two. As the teacher, I

imposed the rules of engagement and the mandate that we do

philosophical inquiry. In year one and two I even presented

an exercise from a philosophy for children teaching manual

that gave characterizations of behaviors that were and were

not part of communities of inquiry. My job was to engage

students in a discussion of the behaviors on this approved

list and get them to agree to the behaviors that were

sanctioned as legitimate aspects of a community of inquiry.

If I had allowed the space for a more genuine critique of

the values and behaviors of community of inquiry, this

would not have been a problem. But I did not allow for this space.

A community of inquirers must have some freedom to dictate how it will operate and what it will operate on. In the first two years of philosophy I never opened up a space for the class to talk about how we should be with one another. In year two I allowed more space for student inspired topics of discussion to be legitimate parts of the class, but I did not allow for or create a space for the community to negotiate its own terms. And while most of the communities we belong to are not constituted by our preferences, philosophical communities of inquiry are supposed to be more genuine in their determination of community constitution.

In year three, we did have some discussions of how we would be with one another. On two occasions, in each of the classes, the students put forth the idea that on some occasions it would be good for students who wanted to discuss particular topics to break off into small groups and have separate discussions. They also decided that we

could do things that would make it more conducive to a

larger number of people participating in our discussion.

Though I attempted to create spaces where students might

dictate the terms by which we would become a community in

year three, I still have a long way to go in re-thinking

what community of inquiry will mean in my teaching.

As I ask myself the question, "Was community present

during any of the years of philosophy class?" many thoughts

arise. My purpose in asking the question is not to answer

"yes" or "no" so much as to consider of what importance

community is in my teaching of philosophy. In Peirce's

conception of community of inquiry, the community was

important because it held the public criteria by which

scientific work would be inspired, critiqued, scrutinized,

and legitimated. In Philosophy for children the community

served these purposes though focussed on one's reasoning

over philosophical matters; it was also a place where

mutual respect and concern for all participants is a

primary value. But the term "community" denotes a

fellowship or togetherness that may not be a necessary

condition for the kind of inquiry we had in the philosophy

classes. Community might be something to strive for, but takes a long time to develop, and may not be essential.

In the meantime, teachers can still try to have inquiry be a sincere part of the day by limiting the topics of possible inquiries to those topics mandated by districts and tests. The work of Ball and Levine-Rose are exemplary on this point. While I consider this somewhat of a compromise, to act otherwise could handicap students in an environment where their futures are heavily determined by high-stakes tests.

A Look to This Summer's Philosophy Class

In the coming Summer (2001) I will again teach philosophical inquiry. If I had the power to change the title of the course, which I will next year if I am still teaching in the same program, I would rename it "Philosophical Encounters with Literature". I say this because, while we still engage in many of the activities related to philosophical inquiry mentioned in chapter 2, issues of <u>reading</u> have begun to be more important and central to the class. Because of this, I have chosen more

genuine literary texts that take on postmodern issues, and, I am resolved to make student text a legitimate part of the course curriculum. Language, representation, power, textuality, etc. will become important themes in the class that I will attempt to occasionally culture and justify to my students. In this way we will be engaging in some of the same things members of a literary criticism class might. We will make central to our projects reading, discussions of perspective, interpretation, and other topics that the students deem important. I will do my best to be sincere with the students when I take a discussion in a particular direction or am pushing an aspect of my agenda.

Concluding Remarks

The analyses I made of the data suggest that social constructivist teaching can have potential dilemmas of reading and sincerity. I would like to offer some final remarks on these dilemmas.

The problem of reading came out most clearly in the first analysis made in chapter 4. In that analysis I showed how my stance toward the purposes of reading contributed to

different treatments of text, and hence, very different

kinds of activities and discussions in my classroom. As I

began to think about texts differently the issue of what to

read, how to read, and what reading is, led into issues of

textuality. We moved from reading traditional philosophy

for children texts and issues to reading less traditional

texts, and, more of the students' experiences and

understandings. My own notion of reading exploded and this

effected the kinds of discussions we had in class. We moved

from doing mostly exegesis to treating texts as socially

constructed artifacts, and eventually, we discussed texts

as representations of ideology and power. We began to read

the world.

The other issue central to this dissertation is that

of sincerity. I used the term sincerity in at least three

different ways earlier in this chapter. The three ways are,

1) being clear and up-front with my students and myself
   about what my agenda for the class is;

2) taking students' ideas and understandings seriously
   enough to allow them to become curriculum, and,

3) having a modest vision of the goals of the class,
   and creating a genuine space for students to develop
   their own understandings.

In chapter 1 I suggested that constructivist views of teaching which claim to take students' ideas, interests, and understandings into consideration, but, which only do so in order to teach a well defined, pre-determined, curriculum, can be charged with being a seductive form of humanism that is at best illusory and at worst insincere. To the extent that I taught philosophy with a clear vision of the end product our class discussions were to conform to, I was engaged in what I think was a less than sincere form of social constructivism.

It is rarely, if ever, possible to be completely honest or transparent. After all, there are times when we are not clear about our own motivations. For this reason, it would be futile for me to advocate the strong position that, "we must always be completely honest about our agendas with our students". I submit the idea that it is insincere for teachers to use constructivist thinking in support of deceiving their students in ways that allow them to more comfortably transmit specific content. This is an insincere use of constructivist thinking and I submit that there is more to be gained by being sincere in one's

teaching in the ways I discussed. Given my discussion of

the issues of sincerity in one's teaching, for

constructivists especially, it can no longer be ignored.

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