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Religious Beliefs, Practices, and Representations as Humanly Enacted Realities: Lucian (circa 120-200) Addresses Sacrifices, Death, Divinity, and Fate

Abstract   Lucian of Samosata (circa 120-200) may be primarily envisioned as a poet-philosopher from the classical Roman era. However, the material he develops on religion not only anticipates important aspects of contemporary pragmatist/constructionist approaches to the sociology of religion but also provides some particularly compelling insights into religion as a humanly engaged realm of reality.

Following an introduction to a pragmatist approach to the study of religion, this paper presents a synoptic overview of several of Lucian's texts on religion. In addition to the significance of Lucian's materials for comprehending an era of Roman and Greek civilization, as well as their more general sources of intellectual and aesthetic stimulation, these texts also provide an array of valuable transhistorical reference points and alert scholars in the field of religion to some ways in which the study of religion could be more authentically approached within the social sciences.

The paper concludes with a consideration of the affinities of Lucian's depictions of religion with pragmatist, interactionist, and associated approaches as this pertains to the study of religion as a realm of human involvement.

Keywords   Religion; Pragmatism; Symbolic Interactionism; Social Constructionism; Sociology of Religion; Lucian of Samosata; Fate and Agency; Greek Olympian Gods

Although virtually unknown among social scientists, a number of texts that Lucian of Samosata (circa 120-200) developed on people's religious beliefs, practices, and representations have a particular relevance for pragmatist (especially interactionist, constructionist) approaches to the study of religion.[2]

In addition to (a) the more situated, descriptive materials Lucian provides on a particular era of the Roman Empire, his texts are valuable for (b) a sense of continuity of the development of Western social thought. Still, they assume a substantially enhanced

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In addition to his work on the developmental flows of pragmatist social thought in poetics (fictional representations), he also has been studying the flows of Western social thought in the interrelated areas of rhetoric, philosophy, ethnohistory, religion, education and scholarship, love and friendship, politics and governing practices, and deviance and morality. As part of this larger venture, Robert Prus has been developing a series of papers on Emile Durkheim's "pragmatist sociology and philosophy of knowing." Working with some substantial, but much overlooked texts developed by Emile Durkheim, this statement addresses the more thorough going pragmatist features of Durkheim's later works on morality, education, religion, and philosophy. It indicates the conceptual affinities of Durkheim's work with Aristotle's foundational emphasis on the nature of human knowing and acting, as well as Blumerian symbolic interactionism. Still, no less importantly, it also considers the contributions of Durkheim's scholarship to the broader pragmatist emphasis on the study of community life as this takes place in interactively accomplished process terms.

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relevance because of (c) the resources they provide for transhistorical and transcultural analyses of people's involvements in religion and (d) the more particular insights Lucian offers on the ways in which people experience (i.e., practice, maintain, promote, and defend) their notions of divinity.

Lucian may write as a philosopher-poet, and at times he is openly depreciative of those who adopt religious standpoints. However, Lucian also is a remarkably astute student of the human condition and, in important respects, anticipates what presently may be defined as a pragmatist, interactionist, or constructionist approach to the study of religion.[2]

Further, because Lucian discusses religion as a *field of activity*, he draws attention to the reality of as well, I define religious beliefs in reference to people's conceptions of "the sacred." Whereas notions of the sacred imply a division or separation between exceptional and mundane (profane) things, people's conceptions of the sacred also imply intense emotional sensations (as in awe, joy, sadness, fear, and anger) in conjunction with some phenomenon (potentially anything to which people collectively might attend).

Moreover, the excitation associated with the sacred (including things considered exceptionally good, as well as evil) is linked to human experiences and activities. Thus, the sacred also is accompanied by a sense of force or agency that not only seems considerably greater than oneself and other mortal beings but that also can dramatically shape the things people experience. Although not fully understood, and certainly not fully controllable, this "greater than life force" is something with which humans in their comparative (group-based) states of dependency—with respect to this force—must contend.

Still, while acknowledging the centrality of notions of the sacred for people's religious beliefs, I (like Durkheim 1915 [1912]) adopt the viewpoint that religion has no existence apart from the particular groups or communities of people who, through ongoing collective interchange, are/have been actively involved in developing and maintaining this belief system. From this standpoint, religion achieves a collectively experienced, behaviorally engaged, and emotionally involved realism.

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[2] This paper, along some other material on Lucian (e.g., Prus 2008a; 2008b), was developed as part of a much broader ethnohistorical examination of the development of pragmatist social thought from the classical Greek era (circa 700-300 BCE) to the present time. Some materials derived from this larger project can be found in Prus (2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2008c; 2008d; 2009; 2010; 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2011d; 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2015), Prus and Burk (2010), and Prus and Camara (2010).

[2] Like Durkheim (1915 [1912]), I begin with the premise that religion not only is a group phenomenon, but that religion also has its origins in and is maintained through group interchange (individualized notions of religion are extensions or variants of group-based religious thought and practices). Like Durkheim,

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religion as a humanly engaged process, something that is overlooked in many contemporary (especially structuralist, factors-oriented) considerations of the sociology of religion.

In what follows, I (1) briefly address the nature of a pragmatist approach to religion, focusing somewhat more particularly on symbolic interaction both as a sociological extension of American pragmatist philosophy and mindful of its affinities with social constructionist approaches. Then, after (2) quickly acknowledging some scholars from the classical Greek and Latin eras whose works on religion predate those of Lucian, but who nevertheless address some related matters, I (3) provide a more sustained synoptic overview of some of Lucian's texts that deal more directly with religion.[3] The paper concludes with (4) a broader consideration of the sociology of religion and the ways in which texts such as those developed by Lucian may be used to inform or sustain inquiries into the nature and realism of religious life.

Pragmatist Motifs and the Sociology of Religion

As with the contemporary social sciences more generally, the predominant emphasis in the sociology of religion is that of striving to uncover the factors or variables associated with particular conditions or outcomes. Thus, whereas some consideration may be given to (a) things (e.g., divorce, crime, delinquency) thought to be associated with diverse aspects of religion (e.g., particular denominations, church attendance) and (b) other factors (e.g., social class, race) often are introduced to account for people's religious involvements (e.g., denominational preferences, church attendance), much less attention in the social sciences has been given to (c) the ways that people actually engage and experience religion. Further, of this last emphasis, comparatively little "qualitative" research is (d) informed by a theoretical paradigm or seems concerned about developing comparative analyses of more sustained conceptual sorts.

From a pragmatist viewpoint, especially the sort associated with George Herbert Mead (1934) and Herbert Blumer (1969), quantitative approaches to the study of human group life have severely limited viability. If the world can be known only through human experience (activities, analyses, knowledge, technologies, and adjustments), then the emphases in the social sciences should be on attending to the nature of human lived experience rather than striving to reduce the complexities of group life to highly abstracted sets of factors or notions of independent and dependent variables.

Those adopting a pragmatist viewpoint, thus, consider the ways and instances that people (as agents) enter into the processes of community life within the prevailing practices and notions of reality that exist within their particular "theatres of operation."

From this viewpoint, nothing is inherently good or bad, religious or profane, but all aspects of human awareness acquire meanings as people attend to, act towards, and define [these things] to be. In these respects, pragmatist notions of reality very much resonate with what (following Berger and Luckmann 1966) has become known as a "social constructionist" approach. However, from a pragmatist viewpoint, even more than a constructionist standpoint, reality is not just a socially accomplished phenomenon; it is to be envisioned as a *situationally located, mindedly engaged, and sensate-emotionally experienced field of activity*.

Still, as an approach to the study of human group life, pragmatism only realizes its fuller potential when combined with extended examinations of instances of human knowing and acting through *ethnographic inquiry* and a more sustained *quest for the articulation of concepts* derived from the comparisons (similarities and differences both within and across particular settings) of instances of human knowing and acting.

Without addressing the theory and methodology of symbolic interaction in detail (see: Blumer 1969; Strauss 1993; Prus 1996; 1997; 1999; Prus and Grills 2003), a summary listing of the assumptions that undergird Chicago-style or Blumerian symbolic interactionism may help establish a more mutual frame of reference.

Briefly expressed, symbolic interactionism theory may be characterized by the following premises: *Human group life is* (1) *intersubjective* (is contingent on community-based, linguistic interchange); (2) *knowingly problematic* (with respect to "the known" and "the unknown"); (3) *object-oriented* (wherein things constitute the contextual and operational essence of the humanly known environment); (4) *multiperspectival* (as in viewpoints, conceptual frameworks, or notions of reality); (5) *reflective* (minded, purposive, deliberative); (6) *sensory/embodied and (knowingly) materialized* (acknowledging human capacities for stimulation and activity, as well as practical [enacted, embodied] human limitations and fragilities); (7) *activity-based* (as implied in the formulative [engaging] process of people doing things with respect to objects); (8) *negotiable* (whereby people may anticipate, influence, and resist others); (9) *relational* (denoting particular bonds or affiliations); (10) *processual* (as in emergent, ongoing, or temporally developed terms); (11) *realized in instances* (attending to the specific "here and now" occasions in which people "do things"), and (12) *historically enabled* (being mindful of the ways that people build on, use, resist, and reconfigure aspects of the "whatness" that they have inherited from their predecessors and learned through their associates). These emphases have been most extensively pursued in Blumerian or Chicago-style symbolic interactionism with scholars in this tradition embarking on research and analysis of human group life across a seemingly unlimited range of subject matters (for overviews see: Prus 1996; 1997; 1999; Prus and Grills 2003).

However, despite the extensive potential this approach offers for the study of religion, as well as the comprehension of human group life more generally, religion as a field of study very much *remains understudied* both in sustained interactionist-informed ethnographic inquiry and in comparative analytic terms. Indeed, comparatively little work on religion has been developed mindfully of

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[3] Lucian's texts are apt to be more familiar to those in classical studies, but I have presented these in summary terms, with "chapter and verse" references so that readers who are less familiar with these materials not only may be informed of their basic contents but also would more readily be able to assess the claims I have made for Lucian. Still, since I have condensed these materials as much as I reasonably could, there is no substitute for examining the richer, fuller, more engaging texts that Lucian develops.

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pragmatist, interactionist, and constructionist approaches to the study of religion.

Thus, although both Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, the authors of *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), have written on religion, neither Luckmann's *The Invisible Religion* (1967) nor Berger's *The Sacred Canopy* (1969) offer much in the way of a sustained constructionist analysis of religion. Whereas both Luckmann and Berger (1966) assume pluralist, constructionist viewpoints in a more general sense, their subsequent, individually authored texts on religion assume more abstract, functionalist qualities. Indeed, when writing alone, both Luckmann and Berger focus on the institutionalization of religion to the relative neglect of religion as a humanly experienced, humanly engaged process. They also seem relatively oblivious of the particular relevance of ethnographic inquiry for comprehending the ways that religion is accomplished (or experienced) in the instances in which "religion is given life" through the activities of members of the group. Like most social scientists, neither Berger nor Luckmann show familiarity with the resources of classical Greek and Latin scholarship.

The American pragmatists do not fare much better. Thus, whereas Charles Sanders Peirce and George Herbert Mead have written little about religion, William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) may be better characterized as more psychological, individualistic, and spiritual than pragmatist in emphasis.[4] John Dewey's *The Common Faith* (1934) engages a number of issues pertinent to a sociological

pragmatist viewpoint, but seems more intent on establishing a general pluralist, humanist approach to religion than attending to the ways in which people engage and experience religion in practice.[5]

Further, while some instructive research on religion has been conducted within the interactionist tradition (e.g., Simmons 1964; Lofland 1966; Shaffir 1974; 1978a; 1978b; 1991; 1993; 1995; 2000a; 2000b; 2001; 2002; 2004; 2006; 2007; Heilman 1976; 1983; Prus 1976; 2011c; 2011d; 2013; Kleinman 1984; Shepherd 1987; Jorgensen 1992; McLuhan 2014), as well as in some studies that display strong affinities with the interactionist tradition (e.g., Mauss and Hubert 1898; 1902; Durkheim 1915 [1912]; Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter 1956; Van Zandt 1991), more work along these lines is required in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of religion as a humanly engaged realm of activity.

One finds considerably more materials of an experiential sort on religion if one extends the qualitative frame, but this broader corpus of literature generally is not well informed conceptually (where it is not more diffuse or conceptually mixed) and is highly idiographic in development. Thus, anthropological and ethnohistorical works aside, these materials offer little basis for sustained analytic comparisons.

Although seldom envisioned in pragmatist terms and only vaguely known to most pragmatists, interactionists, and constructionists, as well as the

sociological community more generally, it is Emile Durkheim's (1915 [1912]) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* that not only provides one of the most consequential pragmatist statements on religion in the literature but that also offers particular promise for developing a more sustained, process-oriented study of religion.[6]

Moreover, although it is not apparent that Durkheim has read the statements on religion developed by Lucian or discussions of religion written by other scholars (e.g., Plato, Cicero, Dio Chrysostom) from the classical Greek and Latin eras, the parallels are notably striking. As Durkheim in *The Evolution Of Educational Thought* (1977 [1904-1905]) would contend, this reflects the residues, continuities, and occasional revitalizations of these materials in the notably fragmented collective consciousness of the academic community.

To summarize, it may be said that if we are to achieve more adequately informed notions of group life as scholars, it not only will be necessary (a) to examine human group life in the instances in which group

life takes place as these are experienced by those in the settings at hand but also to do so (b) in more sustained comparative terms and (c) to invoke all related resources of our collective memories in order to do so more effectively.

Somewhat ironically, given the notably extensive disregard of the literature of the more distant past on the part of social scientists, some materials developed many centuries ago are consequential not only for the transhistorical comparisons that they offer contemporary social sciences but also for the more direct and enabling insights they provide on religion as a realm of human lived experience. It is with these notions in mind that we return to the scholarship of antiquity.

Analytic Precursors in the Classical Greek and Latin Eras

Without addressing the classical Greek literature in detail, it is important to acknowledge that Lucian is by no means the first to discuss religion as a realm of human lived experience.

Thus, even if one excludes the materials developed by Homer (circa 700 BCE), Hesiod (circa 700 BCE), and other poets (producers of fiction) of the classical Greek era who contributed to people's notions of divinity, we find that some other Greek authors were attentive to the pragmatist or constructionist features of religion—that is, as something that developed and was maintained as *a feature of community life*.

In addition to Protagoras (circa 490-420 BCE) who insisted that, "man is the measure of all things" and Herodotus (circa 485-425 BCE) who explicitly

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[4] Readers also will find a fairly sustained (but still somewhat general) pragmatist statement on religion in George Santayana's *The Life of Reason* (1998 [1905-1906]).

[5] Although John Dewey's central emphases in *The Common Faith* (1934) correspond with some basic (pragmatist) features of Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915 [1912]), it is not apparent that Dewey is familiar with Durkheim's much more conceptually detailed, ethnographically informed text.

[6] To be sure, Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* is among the most frequently cited of all sociological texts. Nevertheless, few sociologists, including those squarely in the "sociology of religion," have a comprehensive familiarity with this text. Most will have read "snippets" and the more conscientious scholars may have read the introductory and concluding chapters. However, very few appear to have read this book in its entirety. Still, Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* provides the most sustained pragmatist analysis of religion developed in the last century.
It is ironic, thus, that most of the research conducted in the sociology of religion has almost completely disregarded the central emphases of Durkheim's work on religion and, instead, has approached the study of religion in structuralist, quantitative terms (i.e., abstract variable analysis)—seemingly oblivious not only to the actively engaged features of people's experiences with religion but also to the ways that people's involvements in religion become one with their notions of reality. By contrast (as will become evident later), Lucian of Samosata is much more attentive to religion as a humanly engaged phenomenon.

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describes the Olympian gods as the social fabrications of Homer and Hesiod, Plato (see: *Republic* [1997] and *Laws* [1997]) clearly recognizes the problematic nature of claims about divinity, as well as the mutual interdependence of religion and law in generating a functional/operational cohesiveness of the community.[7] Further, it seems most unlikely that Aristotle who insists on humanly known reality as *the* paramount reality would have taken particular exception to Protagoras' views of religion.[8]

As well as others who may be referenced from the Greek or Roman classical eras, it may be appropriate to cite Cicero's (106-43 BCE) *On the Nature of the Gods* (1951; see: Prus 2011d) and the Greek author Dio Chrysostom's (circa 40-120) *The Twelfth or Olympic Discourse: or, On Man's First Conception of the Gods* (1932; see: Prus 2011c) as other noteworthy precursors to the materials that Lucian develops.

Although Lucian's references are not sufficiently precise to establish more definite lines of influence with earlier authors, it is apparent that he has had considerable exposure to Greek philosophy, rhetoric, and poetics. Nevertheless, and despite the overtly skeptical, often sarcastic manner in which he approaches the validity of people's religious beliefs, Lucian brings "to life" a number of features of religious views and practices in ways not encountered elsewhere in the classical literature.

Lucian on Religion

A Greek educated Syrian, Lucian of Samosata, may be envisioned as a philosopher-poet or poet-philosopher, depending on one's emphasis.[9] The eight volumes in the Loeb edition of Lucian's works contain about 80 articles. While many of these texts deal with matters involving theology, philosophy, rhetoric, and education, Lucian's other statements are considerably more diverse in their coverage.

As the present statement indicates, Lucian has written a number of dialogues that focus on the ways in which people engage aspects of religion. Lucian's texts may have been developed in more poetic (and frequently satirical) prose, but many of these are remarkably attentive to the socially constituted features of people's religious beliefs and practices (also see: Prus forthcoming).

Relatedly, while Lucian's texts lack the empirical depth that can be achieved through more sustained

instances of ethnographic inquiry, many of his depictions of people's activities have a quasi-ethnographic, as well as a cross-cultural character. Further, his analyses often assume instructive comparative qualities.[10]

Accordingly, whereas Lucian's texts on religion have been developed mindfully of people who subscribe to polytheistic notions of divinity on the one hand, and those who are openly skeptical of the existence of divine essences of any sort on the other, it would be mistaken to overlook the relevance of Lucian's materials for comprehending religious viewpoints that are more pointedly monotheistic in emphasis.[11]

Indeed, Lucian not only is attentive to a wide range of viewpoints on divinity (Greek and barbarian) but also recognizes the competitive, comparative, and shared qualities of differing religious standpoints. Lucian's "anthropology of religion," thus, is strikingly pluralist and generic.

While other of Lucian's statements also engage aspects of religion, the present paper focuses on: *On Sacrifices*, *On Funerals*, *Icaromenippus*, *Menippus*, *The Parliament of the Gods*, *Zeus Rants*, *Zeus Catechized*, and

A Conversation With Hesiod.[12]

The present paper can provide only limited coverage of these statements, but readers are reminded that, as a poet, Lucian is not bound by the scholarly openness of a social scientist. As well, readers should not expect his texts to fit into a coherent package or to display a singular pragmatist emphasis.

In generating these statements on religion, Lucian deals with a wide, somewhat overlapping assortment of issues. Among the more central themes he considers are people's (a) sacrifices and other attempts to influence divine essences, (b) notions of fatalism or predestination, (c) debates about the existence of divine beings, (d) ways of legitimating divine beings, (e) images of and preparations for the afterlife, and (f) intrigues with the supernatural.

Because of the diversity of Lucian's poetic, philosophic, and theological emphases, people may engage (approach, experience, discuss, analyze) this selection of texts in many different ways. The material following has been given an order for presentational purposes, but Lucian's texts have not been developed as a systematic series and could be read in various sequences.

Notably, too, while it would have been instructive to limit this discussion to one or two of Lucian's

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[7] For an extended consideration of Plato's pragmatist scholarship as this pertains to "representing, defending, and questioning religion," see: Prus (2013).

[8] Although Aristotle (often referenced as a pagan philosopher in early Christian texts) is reputed to have written on religion or aspects thereof, these texts appear to have been lost and/or destroyed.

[9] While some philosophers may be quick to denounce Lucian as a philosopher (making references to Lucian's more poetic, satirical style), it is apparent that Lucian engages religion in notably philosophic (i.e., relativist, comparative, pragmatist, constructionist) terms. As well, although Lucian is openly skeptical of much of the philosophic enterprise, he also engages philosophy in more direct ways.
In the process of highlighting some of the more pretentious, cultic, and religious features of philosophy (e.g., *Philosophies for Sale*, *The Dead Come to Life*, *Double Indictment*, and *Hermotimus*), Lucian not only draws attention to the contradictory and irreconcilable nature of some major philosophic claims but also provides thoughtful considerations of philosophic life styles.
Thus, whereas Lucian is dubious of the value of much of what passes as philosophic (and virtuous) scholarship, he may be seen to provide a "philosophy of philosophy" that is much more attentive to *the lived experiences of philosophers* than are most philosophic approaches to philosophy. I mention this, in part, because Lucian's approach to philosophy very much parallels his considerations of religion where the two do not more directly overlap (as in Lucian's commentaries on the philosophies of Plato and the Academicians, the Stoics, and the Epicureans).

[10] Although I have not found specific reference to Herodotus (circa 485-425 BCE) who provides ethnohistorical accounts of a series of Eastern Mediterranean life worlds in Lucian's texts, Lucian seems quite aware of what now is often termed "cultural relativism."

[11] Still, as Augustine (circa 354-430; *City of God* [1984]) observes, Judaic-Christian theology is not as singularly "monotheistic" as is often assumed. Indeed, any claims about evil agents and/or other interventional essences that possess supernatural abilities introduce notions of multiple "gods" even if there is alleged to be a single overarching divine source or creator.
For a somewhat parallel Greek version of the Judaic-Christian creation story (and possibly a common source), see: Plato's (circa 420-348 BCE) *Timaeus* (1937). Notably, variants of the creation story can be found in Mesopotamian texts dating back to about 2000 BCE (see: Daley 1989).

[12] Because my discussions of Lucian's texts build so extensively on his work, I am much indebted to A. M. Harmon who translated volumes I-V of Lucian's works. In referencing the materials within specific articles, I have used the standardized notation references that accompany the Greek text in the (Greek-English) Loeb edition of these works. When quotations are used, these will contain references to the page numbers in the particular Loeb edition volumes, as well as the standardized Greek text notations.

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statements, the broader set of materials introduced here provides a more adequate sense of the scope and context of his texts than could be achieved by presenting one or two of those works. Thus, while concentrating on the more central sociological (as in human knowing and acting) features of Lucian's productions, I use the broader discussion to help portray the pragmatist or constructionist features of Lucian's work.

In developing the present statement, Lucian's *On Sacrifices* is used as a convenient departure point. Although it is not apparent that Lucian read Dio Chrysostom's (circa 40-120) text *The Twelfth or Olympic Discourse: or, On Man's First Conception of the Gods* (1932; see: Prus 2011c), Lucian's statement on sacrifices not only maintains considerable conceptual continuity with some material developed by Dio Chrysostom but also introduces several topics that are developed more fully in Lucian's other statements.

On Sacrifices[13]

In view of what the dolts do at their sacrifices and their feasts and processions in honor of the gods, what they pray for and vow, and what opinions they hold about the gods, I doubt if anyone is so gloomy and woe-be-gone that he will not laugh to see the idiocy of their action. Indeed, long before he laughs, I think, he will ask himself whether he should call them devout or, on the contrary, irreligious and pestilent, inasmuch as they have taken it for granted that the gods are so low and mean as to stand in need of men and to enjoy be-

ing flattered and to get angry when they are slighted. (Lucian, *On Sacrifices*:1 [Vol. III:155; Harmon trans.])

Lucian's *On Sacrifices* (*OS*) is a short satire that focuses on people's attempts to communicate with, please, and influence the gods. Writing as a skeptic, Lucian is inclined to dismiss these practices as folly on the one hand, and as an occasion for pity on the other. Still, in developing this statement, Lucian displays considerable insight into the ways in which people might engage "divine essences."

Following his introductory note (see the preceding quotation), Lucian (*OS*:1-4) briefly considers some of the differing ways that Greeks and barbarians define, envision, and act towards their gods.

Pursuing this theme, Lucian (*OS*:5-7) quickly acknowledges Hesiod's *Theogony* or genealogy of the Olympian Greek gods. While emphasizing the absurdities of the origins of these characters, as well as the apparent impropriety of their conduct, Lucian is aware that the general public seems untroubled by these (fictional) accounts and remains oblivious to the many contradictions Hesiod's account entails.

Still, continuing with popular conceptions of the Greek gods, Lucian (*OS*:8-9) next articulates a series of images suggesting how things might be arranged in a world inhabited by the Olympian divinities. Lucian, thus, presents Zeus as the patriarch with an array of other gods in his midst. While communing with one another, the gods are depicted as intensively focused on earthly matters. Thus, despite any other things that these divine essences might do, they seem particularly attentive to the things that people

do. This presumably is with the hope that some humans might acknowledge them, possibly offering sacrifices in which the gods might take great delight.

Noting that people have dedicated and consecrated objects such as mountains, birds, and plants to their gods, Lucian (*OS*:10) also observes that different peoples not only have claimed certain gods as their own but also have generated accounts of their origins and developed other histories for these deities.

As well, Lucian (*OS*:11-13) states, people not only construct temples, altars, and material embodiments of their gods but they also have developed elaborate formulae and rites that honor their divinities. Relatedly, Lucian is attentive to the public nature (display) of the sacrifices that people make and the roles that priests or other holy agents play in dramatizing these events for onlookers.

After commenting further on the diverse ways in which people approach sacrifices (and select items to be offered to the gods) and referencing the many faces and forms (as with the Egyptians) that people may assign to the gods, Lucian (*OS*:13-15) points to the importance of tradition and written records for perpetuating people's religious beliefs. In concluding this text, Lucian says that he is not proposing censorship, but instead is inclined to laugh, as well as cry over such human folly.

Whereas Lucian (a) questions the wisdom of people making sacrifices to the gods, he also (b) considers people's practices and motives with respect to their sacrifices, and (c) points to the variations one encounters in people's sacrifices to the gods across

both Greek and barbarian states. Relatedly, Lucian also (d) acknowledges people's tendencies to develop (as in identifying, naming, honoring, affirming, and owning) regionalized gods, and (e) is attentive to the presumptions people make in thinking that divine essences would respond to human displays of devotion.

Although Lucian's skepticism is clearly evident in *On Sacrifices*, sociologists, classicists, religious studies scholars, and other students of the human condition may well acknowledge Lucian's attentiveness to the ways in which people perpetuate, institute, or "objectify" particular aspects of religion (Durkheim 1915 [1912]; Berger and Luckmann 1966) through (a) the creation of forums (temples and their contents) for the gods, (b) the development of images of the divine (poetic accounts, genealogies of the gods, material representations), (c) the institution and activities of human agents (priests who purport to communicate with the gods), (d) people's involvements in ritual occasions, practices, and sacrifices, and (e) people's attempts to control or help determine their own futures through the patronage of those essences to whom they have attributed supernatural capacities.[14]

Despite his satirical manner, scholars also may appreciate Lucian's attentiveness to (f) the anthropomorphic qualities that people associate with the gods through Lucian's willingness to (g) "take the

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[13] I am grateful to A. M. Harmon for his translation of *On Sacrifices* in *Lucian* (1921 [Vol. III:153-171]).

[14] Readers are referred to Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert (1898) for another highly insightful, but more distinctively sociological account of "sacrifice" that builds more explicitly on cross-cultural ethnohistorical sources. Mauss and Hubert (1902) also provide an exceptionally instructive analysis of "spiritually-enabled magic." Here as well, readers will encounter many parallels with Lucian's portrayal of sacrifices.

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role" (Mead 1934) of the essences to which these sacrifices are directed. Building on the images generated by the poets, theologians, and others, Lucian considers how the gods to whom people direct sacrifices might make sense of and appreciate these (seemingly shallow) human endeavors.

Even though Lucian deals with these topics in more fleeting terms in *On Sacrifices*, he pointedly comments on these aspects of religious endeavor. Still, these and other emphases of Lucian's work will become more evident as readers consider his other texts.

On Funerals[15]

Funerals may be seen as ways in which the surviving members of a group collectively acknowledge the loss of one or more of their associates. Still, funerals also represent occasions in which people may invoke notions of divinity and afterlife experiences. When engaged thusly, Lucian's *On Funerals* (*OF*) may be seen to convey instances of people's emotional expressivity and religious devotion amidst their more situated involvements in these collective assemblies:

> Truly, it is well worth while to observe what most people do and say at funerals, and on the other hand what their would-be comforters say; to observe also how unbearable the mourners consider what is happening, not only for themselves but for those whom they mourn. Yet, I swear by Pluto and Persephone, they have not one whit of definite knowledge as to whether this experience is unpleasant and worth

grieving about, or on the contrary delightful and better for those who undergo it. No, they simply commit their grief into the charge of custom and habit. When someone dies, then, this is what they do—but stay! First I wish to tell you what beliefs they hold about death itself, for then it will become clear why they engage in these superfluous practices. (Lucian, *On Funerals*:1 [Vol. IV:113; Harmon trans.])

Referencing the contributions of the Greek poets, Homer and Hesiod, to people's notions of the afterlife, Lucian (*OF*:2-10) distinguishes three realms of the afterlife. First, there is a heavenly place where the souls of good people live the best life; secondly, a sunless place where the souls of wicked people are severely punished for their wrongdoings; and, thirdly, a middle area where people's spiritual essences are dependent on the activities of living others (through prayers, sacrifices, deeds) to shape their eventual afterlife fates.

Acknowledging the great distress that people typically exhibit following the death of a loved one and (prototypically) portraying the intense emotion expressed by a father whose son has died, Lucian observes:

> But as to the old man who mourns after this fashion, it is not, in all probability, on account of his son that he does all this melodramatic ranting that I have mentioned, and more than I have mentioned; for he knows that his son will not hear him even if he shouts louder than Stentor. Nor yet is it on his own account; for it would have been enough to think this and have it in mind, without his shouting—nobody needs to shout at himself. Consequently it is on account of the oth-

ers present that he talks this nonsense, when he does not know what has happened to his son nor where he has gone; in fact he has not even considered what life itself is, or else he would not take on so about the leaving of it, as if that were something dreadful. (Lucian, *On Funerals*:15 [Vol. IV:121-123; Harmon trans.])

In developing this satire, Lucian (*OF*:16-20) also asks what funerals might look like from the viewpoint of the (hypothetically) departed soul. Thus, Lucian considers the viability (and absurdity) of the parent's commentaries from this other set of viewpoints.

Then, noting that all peoples seem to experience a sense of loss and grief after the death of a close associate, Lucian (*OF*:21-24) subsequently observes that those in different areas deal with human corpses in highly diverse manners (as in burning, burying, encasing, consuming, and preserving human remains). Likewise, Lucian states, one finds great variation in the ways in which those most centrally affected by the death act afterwards (as in eulogies, pleading for the deceased, fasting and feasting). While Lucian (as a poet) considers these practices (along with other religious sacrifices) foolish, if not ridiculous, sociologists may recognize Lucian's comparatively early account of death-related practices as enacted instances of community constructions.[16]

As well, much like Dio Chrysostom (see: Prus 2011c), Lucian is attentive to the collectively sustained prac-

tices that foster continuity, as well as conviction in people's religious beliefs. Still, Lucian also is mindful of the ways in which people's notions of religion become synthesized with certain physical sensations (as in sights, sounds, and aromas) and the particular (often intense) modes of emotional expression that people invoke as they engage aspects of their religion in more situated and enacted terms.

Lucian is clearly cynical about people's afterlife existences, particularly as these are portrayed in theological circles. Nevertheless, he is still attentive to people's images of the hereafter. Thus, in what may be seen as a sequel of sorts to Plato's (420-348 BCE) "vision of Er" (*Republic*, IX [1997]), Lucian more directly addresses people's images of the afterlife in two other texts, *Icaromenippus* and *Menippus*.

While these satires are partially directed against philosophic pretensions, as well as Stoic notions of divine determinism, justice, and accountability somewhat more specifically, many of the afterlife images that Lucian addresses also are consistent with Judaic-Christian theology.[17]

Icaromenippus[18]

Icaromenippus (*ICM*) is an account of Menippus' voyage to the heavens. Still, rather than describing the souls of the departed, this satire on religion has

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a more pronounced philosophic emphasis. Although Lucian does not portray the afterlife existences of the departed in *ICM*, this statement is instructive for indicating the problematic linkages of philosophy, knowledge, virtue, and religion.

After attempting to learn about the nature of life and the universe from the philosophers, Menippus (*ICM*:4-7) found himself deeply disappointed. Indeed, despite his eagerness to learn and his willingness to pay for this education, Menippus found himself perplexed not only by the contradictory positions of the philosophers but also by their presumptive, pompous manners. Elaborating on some of the discrepancies he has encountered, Menippus says:

> As for the contradictory nature of their theories, that is easy to appreciate. Just see for yourself, in Heaven's name, whether their doctrines are akin and not widely divergent. First of all, there is their difference of opinion about the universe. Some think it is without beginning and without end, but others have even ventured to tell who made it and how it was constructed; and these latter surprised me most, for they made some god or other the creator of the universe, but did not tell where he came from or where he stood when he created it all; and yet it is impossible to conceive of time and space before the genesis of the universe. (Lucian, *Icaromenippus*:8 [Vol. II:279-281; Harmon trans.])

Related philosophic disputes, Menippus (*ICM*:8) notes, revolve around matters of ideas and incorporeal essences, notions of the finite and infinite, arguments about limited versus unlimited universes, and claims whether there is one world or many.

Further, Menippus (*ICM*:9) states, he not only has encountered wide ranges of objects (spiritual, animate, and inanimate) to which divine status is assigned but also people who insist on one god, as well as those who claim multiple gods and even give them orders of prominence. Similarly, whereas some claim that the divine essences have no form or substance, others attribute material qualities of various sorts to divinity. As well, while some contend that the gods control and direct all matters, human and otherwise, in the universe, some philosophers claim that there are no gods and that the world has always been on its own.

It was a consequence of this agonizing bewilderment that Menippus (*ICM*:10-22) journeyed to the heavens in hopes of finding some answers to questions of these sorts. Having there encountered Zeus, Menippus (*ICM*:23-28) comments on the stereotypic and sometimes contradictory messages that Zeus (*ICM*:29-31) receives from people's prayers, sacrifices, and demands. Menippus then focuses more directly on the problems that Zeus (as a religious spokesperson) has dealing with the disbelief and scorn of the philosophers.

While particularly displeased with the Epicureans who deny that the gods intervene in human matters or even care what happens to people, Zeus (*ICM*:32) defines the philosophers as a rather pretentious and argumentative lot. He says that they are more caught up in word-mazes and superficiality than honest virtues.

Indeed, Menippus observes, the entire assembly of the gods (*ICM*:33) is incensed with philosophic pre-

tensions and is eager to dispose of all philosophers. Righteously indignant, Zeus insists that if they were not in the midst of a (four month) festive season, the philosophers would be annihilated immediately.[19] Next year, however, Zeus proclaims, the gods can be assured that the philosophers will be eliminated.

Menippus[20]

Whereas *Icaromenippus* portrays a journey that Menippus made to the heavens, *Menippus* (*MN*) is Lucian's account of the same cynic's trip into Hades. Although the two afterlife satires share some related emphases, they seem to have been developed rather independently of one another. Notably, too, while Lucian remains critical of philosophic contradictions and pretensions, *Menippus* also is used to denounce those who have used positions of wealth and influence in less virtuous terms (readers may recall Lucian's skepticism of any afterlife existence).

Noting that he had developed a youthful intrigue with the gods and their activities from the poets Homer and Hesiod, Menippus (*MN*:3) says that he was later puzzled by laws that not only contradict the claims of the poets but outlawed many activities in which the gods participated.

While hoping that the philosophers might help him resolve these issues, Menippus (*MN*:4-5) found the philosophers themselves not only were perplexed by these and other matters but also argued effective-

ly for an assortment of contradictory positions. Even more unsettling to Menippus, however, was the failure of the philosophers to practice the very virtues they themselves had promoted.

Thusly disillusioned in his quest for the truth, Menippus (*MN*:6) went to Babylon in search of a sorcerer whom he had heard could safely take him into Hades and back.[21] With his guide's assistance, Menippus gained access to Hades. Eventually finding himself in the presence of evildoers and their overseers, Menippus (*MN*:11-12) provides an account of the judgments leveled against the diversified collection of undesirables who found themselves in Hades.[22]

After witnessing Minos holding court for the wicked and assigning punishments befitting their crimes, Menippus (*MN*:13-14) and his guide visited the place of punishment. Here, Menippus describes the gruesome treatments to which the evildoers were subjected. Still, he notes that those who had been wealthier in human life were punished much more severely for their misdeeds than those from lower stations in life:

> Leaving the court reluctantly, we came to the place of punishment, where in all truth, my friend, there were many pitiful things to hear and to see. The sound of

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[19] It might be appreciated that Socrates' death sentence (see: Plato's *Phaedo* [1997]) was postponed because of a religious season.

[20] This statement is derived from A. M. Harmon's translation of *Menippus* or *The Descent Into Hades* in Lucian (1925b [Vol. IV:71-109]).

[21] Lucian's tale is somewhat reminiscent of Plato's "vision of Er" (*Republic* [1997]).

[22] Although Dante Alighieri's (1265-1321) *Divine Comedy*, organized around his journey into Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise with the Roman poet Virgil (70-19 BCE) as his guide (see: Prus 2014b), was developed in much more extended detail and presented within a distinctively Christian context, there are noteworthy parallels in the treatment that the rich, powerful, and especially evil, pretentious individuals receive in these two settings.

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scourges could be heard, and therewithal the wails of those roasting on the fire; there were racks and pillories and wheels; Chimera tore and Cerberus ravened. They were being punished all together, kings, slaves, satraps, poor, rich, and beggars, and all were sorry for their excesses. Some of them we even recognized when we saw them, all that were recently dead. But they covered their faces and turned away, and if they so much as cast a glance at us, it was thoroughly servile and obsequious, even though they had been unimaginably oppressive and haughty in life. Poor people, however, were getting only half as much torture and resting at intervals before being punished again. (Lucian, *Menippus*:14 [Vol. IV:95-97; Harmon trans.])

Next, Menippus (*MN*:15-16) describes the Acherasian Plain wherein the bones of the wicked (souls) sentenced to Hades had been piled up in indistinguishable, decomposing piles. Reflecting on this sight, Menippus comments on the role of Fortune as a pageant co-coordinator. Thus, Fortune ushers people through a variety of life styles and shifting circumstances, only in the end to return the remains of the participants to a common pile of decaying rubble.

When asked if people who had had more prominent monuments, statues, and other worldly markers were better honored in the afterlife, Menippus (*MN*:17) quickly dismisses this supposition and observes that the formerly wealthy are reduced to the most extreme levels of poverty and despair.

Also queried about the fates of the philosophers, Menippus (*MN*:18) says that they have not fared much better than the wealthy, but they still insist on

talking to any that will listen. However, Menippus (*MN*:19-20) observes, the most severe treatments were reserved for those who, as rich and powerful individuals, had treated others badly.

Just before leaving Hades, Menippus (*MN*:21) seeks direction about Menippus' own intellectual plight from one of the residents. Menippus is informed that the life of the common man is best and to forget about questing for knowledge of the universe and other philosophic nonsense. Instead, Menippus is advised to make the best of his present circumstances, to enjoy life, and to not take things too seriously.

The Parliament of the Gods[23]

In *The Parliament of the Gods* (*PGs*), Lucian presents a dialogue between Zeus, Hermes, and another god, Momus (who is known for honesty and the comparative absence of tact). Although presented in an entertaining fashion, this statement not only (a) recognizes the many characters that people (Greek and barbarian) have identified and acted towards as "godly essences," and (b) attends to the notions of comparison, competition, and resentment that exist among these humanly contrived "instances of divinity," but also (c) deals with the matter of establishing the authenticity of any essences for whom divine status is claimed.

Zeus (*PGs*:1) opens this dialogue with the observation that there have been rumblings among the gods. Some have become disgruntled, saying that

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[23] This portrayal of *The Parliament of the Gods* is based on A. M. Harmon's translation in *Lucian* (1936 [Vol. V:417-441]).

others who share the status of gods are unworthy of the honor. Zeus has called a meeting of the gods (i.e., godly essences) to discuss this matter.

Momus (*PGs*:2-5) says that the discontent among the gods is both genuine and extensive. Many of the gods are concerned that the pretenders reap the same benefits as those who are legitimate gods. Elaborating on this position, Momus references an assortment of essences who not only do not qualify as full-fledged gods but who also bring ridicule to the gods more generally as a consequence of their appearances, activities, and backgrounds.

While Zeus quickly defends certain Greek characters (e.g., Asclepius, Hercules) against Momus' charges, Momus persists. Indeed, Momus (*PGs*:6-8) asserts that Zeus, himself, is somewhat to blame for the situation. Because Zeus cohabited with an assortment of mortal women, and did so in different forms, Zeus has opened the heavens to a variety of demi-gods. Some other gods have confounded the matter by copying Zeus.

Continuing his criticism, Momus (*PGs*:9-10) observes that some of those claiming godly status include barbarian representatives that do not even speak Greek, as well as some exceptionally strange creatures from Egypt. Quickly averting further discussion about the Egyptian gods, Zeus asks Momus (*PGs*:12-13) to name others.

After identifying a series of dubious essences honored as gods in Greek and barbarian territories, Momus continues, noting that the spiritual gods also are in competition with the non-spiritual (i.e., secu-

lar) gods of Virtue, Nature, Destiny, and Chance that have been created by the philosophers. Even though these latter essences lack intelligence, Momus protests, those who acknowledge these philosophic notions typically avoid making sacrifices to the gods.

While observing that much more could be said, Momus (*PGs*:14-18) introduces a motion to deal with the problem of godly imposters. Momus' proposal includes the selection of seven gods of full standing, including Zeus, to serve as a deputy counsel that will screen and evaluate the birth rights and qualifications of all those for whom godly status is claimed. The committee will either acknowledge particular essences as gods or return them to their origins. Relatedly, the philosophers are to be deterred from developing constructs that rival the gods. Pursuing the purification process still further, Momus proposes that the temples, statues, and other images of false gods are destroyed and replaced by those of Zeus, Apollo, or other bona fide gods.

Although initially inclined to take Momus' motion to a vote, Zeus (*PGs*:19) quickly realizes that the pretenders would outnumber the legitimate gods and promptly declares the motion carried. Lucian closes the dialogue with Zeus threatening to eliminate the primary criterion by which all of the gods achieve an existence:

[W]hen Hermes makes the proclamation, present yourselves, and let each of you bring unmistakable means of identification and clear proofs—his father's name and his mother's, why and how he became a god, and his tribe and clan. For if anyone shall fail to put all this evidence, it will make no difference to the

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deputies that he has a huge temple on earth and that men believe him to be a god. (Lucian, *Parliament of the Gods*:19 [Vol. V:441; Harmon trans.])

Zeus Rants[24]

Although scholars at least since the time of Protagoras (circa 490-420 BCE) and Plato (circa 420-348 BCE) have been attentive to the debates that people have had regarding the existence and quality of the gods, and Cicero (circa 106-43 BCE) in *On the Nature of the Gods* (1951) has engaged these debates in a particularly articulate manner,[25] few scholars have considered the ways in which these debates might be envisioned by the divine essences who are the objects of these debates.

As with Lucian's other satires on religion, it is instructive to envision Zeus as a representative of religious leaders rather than merely a (mythical) cultural artifact of a particular era. The problem that Zeus faces in dealing with atheists and other skeptics, likewise, is one that endures and continues to perplex religious leaders.

Zeus Rants also is instructive in the arguments that the speakers develop for and against the existence of divine, regulatory essences. Although Lucian develops these positions rather quickly and in an entertaining fashion, the foundational features of these claims and counterclaims have persisted in

Western theology and philosophy (e.g., Augustine, *City of God* [1984]; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* [1981]; Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* [1990]; Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* [1999]). Thus, whereas Lucian's statement reflects a broader Sophist skepticism about the gods, positions of these sorts represent additional challenges that those insisting on divine essences may encounter in proclaiming particular theological viewpoints.

While developing *Zeus Rants* (*ZR*) as a satire directed at the Stoics and others who argue for the existence of divine essences, Lucian also generates some insight into (a) theological protocol, (b) the practical limitations of fatalism, and (c) the reliance of existence of divine essences on people for the development and maintenance of theological standpoints.

Zeus Rants (*ZR*:1)[26] begins with Zeus' offspring Hermes and Athena inquiring into Zeus' apparent distraught condition. Hera, Zeus' spouse, quickly attributes Zeus' troubles to another of Zeus' love affairs. Quickly assuring Hera and the others that his concerns are of an entirely different sort, Zeus (*ZR*:3) insists the matter at hand is of paramount importance to the gods. At stake is the very issue of whether the gods will be recognized and honored or will be ignored and treated as non-existent.

Asked how this could happen, Zeus (*ZR*:4) explains that Timocles, a Stoic, and Damis, an Epicurean, have been involved in a dispute about fate. In the midst of the argument, Damis asserted that the gods do not exist. Likewise, Damis refused to acknowledge that

the gods guide or direct anything. While the two speakers attracted a large crowd of people, nothing was settled and the dispute on which the future of the gods hinges is to continue another day. Zeus is highly distressed, recognizing the fate of the gods rests with a single speaker, Timocles.

While Hermes and Hera suggest that Zeus call a meeting of the gods to consider the matter, Athena proposes that Zeus handle things more discretely and simply insure that Timocles will win the debate. Hermes, however, points out that everyone will know the debate was fixed and that the other gods will view Zeus as a tyrant if he does not seek their counsel on such an important matter.

Concurring with Hermes, Zeus (*ZR*:6) instructs Hermes to call a meeting of the gods. In what immediately follows, Zeus and Hermes (*ZR*:6-13) consider the problematics of assembling, arranging, and communicating with the gods (not all of whom [barbarian representatives] can even speak Greek). In addition to discerning the best way of announcing a meeting, Hermes and Zeus also assume the task assessing the centrality and merits of the particular gods so that they might be more appropriately arranged and acknowledged at the meeting. Finding themselves frustrated in matters of protocol (as in recognizing, positioning, and assessing the composition of various godly essences), Zeus and Hermes eventually decide to let each deity find his or her own place amidst the other godly essences.

Then, after puzzling about how he (*ZR*:13-15) should present his concerns to the other gods, Zeus (*ZR*:16-18) provides a fuller account of the humans' debate

to the gods. He explains why he is so alarmed. After restating the position of Damis, the Epicurean, that the gods do not exist and therefore cannot be expected to care for people or do other things, Zeus notes that Timocles took the position of the gods in every way. However, while Timocles had some supporters, he failed to sustain his claims and the crowd clearly began favoring Damis. The disputants agreed to conclude the argument another day. Continuing, Zeus says:

> That is why I called you together, gods, and it is no trivial reason if you consider that all our honor and glory and revenue comes from men, and if they are convinced either that there are no gods at all or that if there are they have no thought of men, we shall be without sacrifices, without presents, and without honors on earth and shall sit idle in Heaven in the grip of famine, choused out of our old-time feasts and celebrations and games and sacrifices and vigils and processions. (Lucian, *Zeus Rants*:18 [Vol. II:117; Harmon trans.])

When Zeus had concluded his speech, Hermes requested advice from the gods of full standing. With no one else responding, even after some prodding, Momus began to speak.

However, instead of providing the helpful suggestions that Zeus and Hermes had anticipated, Momus (*ZR*:19-22) states that the current problem is no more than what Momus had expected and he began to criticize the gods more generally. Saying that they should not blame Damis and others adopting skepticist standpoints, thus, Momus emphasizes the longstanding failings of the gods:

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[24] This statement has been enabled by A. M. Harmon's translation of *Zeus Rants* in *Lucian* (1915b [Vol. II:89-169]).

[25] It is not apparent that Lucian, a Greek speaking Syrian, has access to Cicero's (Latin) texts on religion (see: Prus 2011d). However, both share somewhat common Greek educations in rhetoric, as well as philosophy (encompassing theology).

[26] The text numbers cited here correspond with the Greek text of *Zeus Rants* in the Loeb (Greek-English) edition.

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I vow by Themis that it is not right to be angry either at Epicurus or at his associates and successors in doctrine if they have formed such an idea of us. Why, what could one expect them to think when they see so much confusion in life, and see that the good men among them are neglected and waste away in poverty and illness and bondage while scoundrelly, pestilential fellows are highly honored and have enormous wealth and lord it over their betters, and that temple-robbers are not punished but escape, while men who are guiltless of all wrong-doing sometimes die by the cross or the scourge?

It is natural, then, that on seeing this they think of us as if we were nothing at all … We, however, are vexed if any humans not wholly without wits criticize all this and reject our providence, when we ought to be glad if any of them continue to sacrifice to us, offending as we do. (Lucian, *Zeus Rants*:19-20 [Vol. II:119-121; Harmon trans.])

In concluding his statement, Momus insists that the gods are getting only what they deserve when people eventually realize that it is pointless to make sacrifices or hold religious processions. In any event, Momus adds, as a god who never had received much honor from humans, there is not much he will miss.

After Zeus (*ZR*:23) instructs the other gods to ignore Momus, Poseidon proposes that Zeus strike Damis dead with a thunderbolt. This will show people that the gods are not to be treated thusly. Zeus (*ZR*:25) quickly chastises Poseidon, asking if Poseidon has forgotten that Zeus, as well as Poseidon and the other gods, is powerless to oppose that which has been fated for Damis or anyone else.

Identifying himself as one of the younger (less established) gods, Apollo (*ZR*:26-29) tentatively enters into the discussion. Observing that Timocles, the Stoic, tends to obscure his arguments with propositions and discussions that are rather unintelligible, Apollo suggests that Zeus find someone who is more clear, direct, and eloquent to speak for Timocles.

While concurring with Apollo's assessment of Timocles, Momus (*ZR*:28) abruptly points out the folly of bringing a spokesman in to represent one of the philosophers in a debate.

Undeterred, Apollo (*ZR*:30-31) next suggests that he might be able to resolve the issue if Zeus could arrange for Apollo to present an oracle for the speakers. Intervening again, Momus quickly dismisses Apollo's oracles as absurd, as well as obscure.

Hercules (*ZR*:32), another of Zeus' offspring, then offers to destroy the building in which Damis will be debating. However, after cautioning Hercules about the resultant injuries to other people, as well as the extensive damage of the building itself, Zeus reminds Hercules that he, too, is subject to the fates and is helpless to act in this manner.

Then, recognizing that the gods are quite unable to deal with the matter at hand, Zeus (*ZR*:34-35) suggests that they at least might listen to the debate. Still, he laments at the outset, Timocles (who is championing their position) seems apprehensive and confused. However, Zeus also notes that Timocles is openly abusive of his opponent and suggests this may be Timocles' one advantage.

As the debate unfolds, Timocles (*ZR*:36) establishes that Damis rejects the idea that the gods have control over the future, as well as the notion that the universe is not under the administration of any god, but instead is a random process. Becoming incensed, Timocles demands that the people witnessing the debate stone Damis for his villainous claims. In response, Damis asks why Timocles attempts to arouse anger on the part of the others when the gods have not directed any harm at him, if indeed there are gods to listen.

When Timocles asserts that Damis will pay for his insolence in the afterlife, Damis asks when the gods might have time for him given all of the other things they are trying to do. Damis also notes that Timocles, who has been less virtuous than ideal, has not been punished for his misdeeds.

Continuing, Damis (*ZR*:38) asks why Timocles believes that the gods exercise providence or dominion and foresight over all things, Timocles refers to the order of the universe, to the presence and nature of all of the creatures, to motion, and other objects and regularities in the universe. Damis says that Timocles is merely begging the question; that orderly or recurrent patterns do not prove providence or godly control, but could be explained as random events that have become routinized over time.

When Damis asks him to try again, Timocles (*ZR*:39) invokes the authority of Homer, the best of all poets. It was Homer, Timocles states, who convinced him of the providence of the gods. Replying, Damis (*ZR*:39-40) says that Homer may be the best poet, but, as a poet, Homer is not to be considered

a viable source on such matters. Continuing, Damis then asks which of various (absurd or contradictory) passages from Homer Timocles had found most convincing.

With the crowd applauding Damis, Zeus (*ZR*:41) observes that their representative is faring badly. Not yet finished, however, Timocles asks Damis if Euripides also is inauthentic in his stage portrayals of the gods saving heroes and destroying villains? Accusing Timocles of extreme gullibility, Damis states that Euripides not only created these images on his own but also notes that Euripides (in one of his own plays) states that he only knows the gods through hearsay.

Timocles (*ZR*:42) next asks if the peoples of all nations can be mistaken in believing in the gods and celebrating their existence? While acknowledging the religious practices of the various nations, Damis points out that there is great diversity in people's beliefs, as well as an extremely wide range of particular (spiritual, human, animate, and inanimate) things that people define as divine essences. Focusing on this contradictory and incoherent state of affairs, Damis asks if the whole matter is not rather amusing when viewed thusly.

Also monitoring these human interchanges, Momus reminds the other gods that he had said this would happen. Zeus agrees that Momus was correct and states that he intends to make amends if the gods can overcome the present threat.

Still championing the gods, Timocles (*ZR*:43) next references the oracles, insisting that these (prophecies)

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can be nothing other than the works of the gods. In reply, Damis points to the selective nature of Timocles' evidence for the oracles and proposes that they also consider the many well-known instances of the failure of the prophecies signified by the oracles.

Again cautioning Damis that he is inviting the wrath of the gods, Timocles (*ZR*:44-46) next asks Damis how he could account for all motions and movements in the world if not for the gods. Timocles likens god to the captain of the ship and asks what keeps the universe in motion if not for this guide. In developing his response, Damis (*ZR*:47-49) embarks on a discussion of the responsibilities of the captain of a vessel, concluding that Timocles' captain of the universe has not been doing a very good job, particularly in overseeing the ordering (and justice) of human affairs.

In another attempt to affirm divinity, Timocles (*ZR*:51) resorts to a syllogistic proof whereby he states that, "If there are altars [or other human artifacts and practices], there also are gods, but there are alters, ergo there are also gods." Mocking Timocles' syllogism, Damis (*ZR*:52) says that if Timocles can do no better than to take refuge in the existence of altars, it is time to conclude the discussion.

As Timocles continues to heap hostilities on the departing Damis, Zeus (*ZR*:53) reconciles himself to Timocles' defeat. Zeus meekly asks about the future of the gods and what they might now do.

Seemingly having reflected on the matter at hand, Hermes at this point assures Zeus that all is not lost.

Referencing the Greek comic poet (Menander) who stated that no harm has been done if no harm is acknowledged, Hermes (*ZR*:53) asks if much damage can be done if only a few people remain convinced that the gods do not exist. Most Greeks, Hermes insists, still believe in the gods, as do virtually all the barbarians. While appreciating the value of Hermes' insight, Zeus concludes the dialogue saying he still would have one Damis on his side than a thousand others.

Zeus Catechized[27]

In *Zeus Catechized* (i.e., instructed; hereafter *ZC*), a human speaker, Cyniscus, engages (and instructs) Zeus on the matters of predestination and agency.[28]

Adopting a cynicist or skepticist viewpoint, Cyniscus encourages Zeus to provide an explanation of Stoic thought. However, while Cyniscus is interested in exploring the place of human agency in a schema in which all is fated, Cyniscus also uses his encounter with Zeus as an occasion to consider godly agency and responsibility in a universe in which all is fated.

Although Lucian directs this satire at Zeus and the Stoics, the materials developed herein pose philosophic problems for all who insist on the presence of an active, benevolent divinity who knows all and

[27] This statement is developed from A. M. Harmon's translation of *Zeus Catechized* in *Lucian* (1915c [Vol. II:59-87]).

[28] Although Cicero (circa 106-43 BCE) has addressed a variety of related matters in *On the Nature of the Gods* (1951) and *On Fate* (1942), it is not apparent that Lucian (a Greek speaking Syrian) has had access to Cicero's (Latin) texts. In this sense, the writings of Cicero and Lucian attest to more enduring Greek (see: Prus 2011c philosophic debates on the nature of the gods [and predestination]). For a fuller consideration of Cicero's highly instructive analyses of religion, see: Prus 2011d.

oversees all matters (human and otherwise in the universe).[29]

Opening the dialogue, Cyniscus (*ZC*:1) asks Zeus if it is true, as Homer and Hesiod have said, that each person's fate is determined at birth. Zeus indicates that it is true indeed and that there is no prospect of changing any aspect of one's destiny.

Cyniscus (*ZC*:2) then asks Zeus if Homer is speaking nonsense when he tells people to mind their conduct lest they end up in the tortuous depths of Hades. Maintaining his position on predestination, Zeus says that Homer is mistaken in this latter regard. Zeus explains that when poets compose under the spirit of the Muses, they represent the truth. However, when left to their own human devices, mistakes of this sort are to be expected.

In response to another question from Cyniscus, Zeus acknowledges that there are only three Fates (Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos), whereafter Cyniscus (*ZC*:3) asks about those named Destiny and Fortune. After Zeus evades the question, Cyniscus (*ZC*:4) next asks Zeus if the gods also are under the rule of the Fates. Zeus affirms that this also is the case. Reflecting on Zeus' answer, Cyniscus com-

[29] The most sustained conceptual theological analyses of these and related matters are those developed by Augustine (circa 354-430) in *Confessions* (1961) and *City of God* (1984), and (especially) Thomas Aquinas (circa 1225-1274) in *Summa Theologica* (1981). On matters of divinity, both Augustine and Aquinas adopt positions that largely parallel those of Plato (see: *Timaeus* [1997], *Phaedo* [1997]). Although Augustine may be aware of Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods* (1951), he gives it little explicit attention. Aquinas knows some of Cicero's work, but likely not this text. Neither Augustine nor Aquinas seem likely to have known about Dio Chrysostom's (see: Prus 2011c) or Lucian's (Greek) critical appraisals of religion, or Lucian's related considerations of human good and evil, afterlife justice, and human accountability.

ments that he formerly had thought the gods to be wonderfully powerful. Now, however, he has begun to realize that even Zeus, the greatest of the gods, also is under the control of the Fates.

Asked to elaborate, Cyniscus (*ZC*:5) says that if all is indeed fated, it seems pointless for people to make sacrifices to the gods and pray to the gods for benefits when the gods themselves are in no position to act on people's behalf.

Becoming more exasperated with Cyniscus' questions and commentary, Zeus (*ZC*:6) says that Cyniscus has been prompted to ask these questions by the Sophists. It is the Sophists, Zeus adds, who have generated skepticism of this sort and who have dissuaded others from sacrificing to the gods by claiming that the gods have no concern for the people and no abilities to influence the affairs of people.

After stating that his questions only followed from their earlier conversation, Cyniscus asks for Zeus' indulgence in explaining things as best as Zeus can. Continuing thusly, Cyniscus (*ZC*:7) and Zeus return to the matter of people making sacrifices to the gods. Acknowledging that the gods can do nothing in return, Zeus says that people make sacrifices to honor the gods for their superiority.

Now, Cyniscus observes, a Sophist would ask if the gods really are superior to humans, since both the gods and humans are subject to fate. Indeed, Cyniscus suggests, the immortality of the gods makes their position inferior, since people can at least escape control through death. By contrast, the slavery of the gods is eternal.

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When Zeus (*ZC*:8) counters, saying that the lives of the gods are blissful and harmonious, Cyniscus points to the imbalance of affairs among the gods, their misadventures involving one another, their troubles relating to humans, and the mistreatments to which the gods are subjected by temple robbers and others who exhibit disrespect for these deities. Still, Cyniscus comments, this, too, has been fated.

After Zeus (*ZC*:9) cautions Cyniscus that he will regret his insolence, Cyniscus reminds Zeus that nothing can happen to him that has not already been decreed by fate. Cyniscus adds that even most of the temple robbers appear fated to escape punishment for their misdeeds.

Amidst Zeus' protests, Cyniscus (*ZC*:10) persists with his questions. Most especially, Cyniscus wishes to know about the nature of Providence that, in Zeus' terms, seems to control all. While Zeus says that Cyniscus' intention is to establish the absence of godly providence in human affairs, Cyniscus says that he can take no responsibility for that which is fated, that is, unless Zeus has changed his position on fate.

When Zeus reaffirms that, indeed, fate controls everything, Cyniscus (*ZC*:11) suggests that the gods are only the instruments or tools of the Fates. Instead of sacrificing to the gods, people might do better to sacrifice to Destiny. Likewise, it would be of no help to honor any of the (three Greek) Fates, since even the Fates seem unable to change any of the destinies of anyone.

Acknowledging the viability of Cyniscus' inferences, Zeus (*ZC*:12) says that people might still honor

the gods for their abilities to foretell the futures that the Fates have decreed.

Responding to Zeus' claim, Cyniscus (*ZC*:12-14) points out that an awareness of future events would be of value only if this information would enable people to act in ways that would benefit their circumstances. However, since all is fated, foreknowledge is of no value. Further, Cyniscus notes, most oracles and other signs are so ambiguous that people cannot even be sure of what they are being told. Still, Cyniscus adds, perhaps that obscurity also is fated.

Observing that he is being ridiculed with reason, Zeus (*ZC*:15) points out that he has a thunderbolt he could unleash against Cyniscus. Replying to Zeus, Cyniscus says that if he is fated to die thusly, he cannot blame Zeus, but only the fate that controls Zeus. In the interim, though, Cyniscus has another question.

Why is it, Cyniscus (*ZC*:16-17) asks, that temple robbers and other wrongdoers are allowed to escape justice and yet innocent, virtuous people suffer calamities? Why is it that evildoers end up wealthy and happy, while good people experience poverty, disease, and even death at the hands of others?

These seeming injustices, Zeus (*ZC*:17) explains, will be restored in the afterlife, wherein evildoers will be punished severely and the good will be greatly rewarded.

After Cyniscus (*ZC*:17) says that he would prefer justice and happiness in mortal life, regardless of

how long or short this may be, than to suffer as some people have done, Cyniscus pursues Zeus' notions of the afterlife.

Cyniscus (*ZC*:18) says that he has heard that afterlife punishments await those who have behaved badly, while those who have been good and virtuous are allowed to join the souls of (human) heroes. After Zeus concurs, Cyniscus asks Zeus if people should be punished for the things they do unintentionally or conversely, if they ought to be rewarded for the good things they have done unintentionally?

After Zeus says that these things should not be done, Cyniscus states that no one should be rewarded or punished. When Zeus questions Cyniscus on this, Cyniscus explains that if everything people do is in keeping with the inevitable necessity of fate, then only Fate or Destiny should be punished.

Refusing to answer any more questions, Zeus (*ZC*:19) says he will depart. Even as their dialogue concludes, Cyniscus has yet more to consider. Where do the Fates reside, he wonders, and how do they manage things in such precise detail? Relatedly, given all of the things they manage and all the cares they must have, it appears that they have no freedom whatsoever.

Viewing things thusly, Cyniscus says that he would not trade a poor human existence for the life of the Fates or Destiny. In closing, Cyniscus expresses gratitude for the insight Zeus has provided on Providence and related matters, adding that that may be all Cyniscus was fated to hear.

A Conversation With Hesiod (*CH*)[30]

Although Hesiod (circa 700 BCE) may seem a vague, distant figure of little or no consequence to most contemporary readers, those familiar with classical Greek scholarship are aware that Hesiod (with Homer as a major literary accomplice) played a major role in establishing the existence of the Greek gods.[31]

The Greek Olympian gods that Hesiod (*Theogony* [1988]) describes appear to have had their origins in the representations of divinity developed by the Egyptians and other Mediterranean peoples. As well, various classical Greek scholars (e.g., Protagoras [circa 490-420 BCE], Herodotus [circa 485-420 BCE], Plato [circa 420-348 BCE], and Aristotle [circa 384-322 BCE]) envisioned these divinities as mythical long before Lucian's time. Nevertheless, this does not deny the more general fascinations that the Greeks, Romans, and other people who had contact with Greek religion over the millennia to the present time have had with the Olympic gods. In developing his commentary, Lucian goes back to Hesiod as a root source.

In this brief set of fictionalized interchanges, Lycinus (*CH*:1) begins by commending Hesiod's poetic abilities in depicting a genealogy of the gods (*Theogony* [1988]), as well as providing advice to farmers (*Works and Days* [1988]). Still, Lycinus observes,

[30] I am grateful to K. Kilburn for his translation of *A Conversation With Hesiod* in *Lucian* (1959 [Vol. VI:227-237]). The reference numbers are to the Greek text in the (Greek-English) Loeb edition.
[31] Homer (also circa 700 BCE) is the author assigned to *Iliad* (1990) and *Odyssey* (1991), two of the earliest and best known texts of antiquity. Although the gods are given much less focused attention in Homer's texts than in Hesiod's *Theogony* (1988), the gods assume notable roles in Homer's two extended epic (heroic/adventure) poems.

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Hesiod has failed to deliver on his promise to provide something yet more important to people, as well as something that more uniquely would reflect divine inspiration. Lycinus refers here to Hesiod's claim to provide a prophecy of the future.

Continuing, Lycinus (*CH*:2-3) says that Hesiod is liable to one of three charges: Hesiod lied when he said that the Muses promised him the gift of prophecy; the Muses kept their promise, but Hesiod, out of spite, has kept this to himself; or Hesiod has not yet released the things he has written on this matter. It seems inappropriate, Lucian adds, to suppose that the Muses failed to deliver on their (divinely-enabled) promise.

Responding to Lycinus, Hesiod (*CH*:4) says that he wrote only what the Muses had given him and Lycinus should ask the Muses about the matter. Noting that he can be held accountable only for the things that he knew himself, Hesiod references his work on farming and shepherding as a case in point. The goddesses, Hesiod assures Lycinus, share their gifts with others as they choose.

Still, Hesiod (*CH*:5) states, he will defend his poetry. He begins by asserting that it is inappropriate for people to examine poetry in exacting detail, as well as to criticize seeming oversights. To do so would be to rob poets of freedom and poetic expression, the greatest of the resources. Hesiod adds that the poets, including Homer, have been unduly criticized in these ways.

Then, facing the matter of prophecy more directly, Hesiod (*CH*:6) says that an examination of his *Works and Days*, wherein he gives timely advice to farming

and promises rewards for conscious effort, will provide ample indication of his value as a prophet.

Although appreciating the relevance of Hesiod's *Works and Days* for farmers, Lycinus (*CH*:7-9) says that advice on farming is not the sort of thing that one might expect from the Muses and divinely inspired poets. Lycinus also states that the farmers are much better prophets on these matters than are the poets. Noting that he, too, can make predictions that attest to the practical wisdoms of people, Lycinus says that if (divinely-inspired) poets are to be of any value in these regards, their prophecies need to be of a more compelling nature. Expressed truthfully, Lycinus concludes, Hesiod knows nothing of prophecies, and if Hesiod has had divine inspiration, it certainly is not very reliable.

Lucian in Context

Mindful of the more immediate practical limitations of space, I have deliberately excluded Lucian's *The False Prophet* (in which Lucian debunks a then thriving religious venture), as well as *The Lover of Lies* (wherein Lucian attends to the tendencies of notably responsible people to become caught up in extraordinary claims about the supernatural [Prus forthcoming]), as well as some other statements Lucian has developed on aspects of religion. I also have omitted some related materials on philosophy (most notably *Philosophies for Sale*, *The Dead Come to Life*, *Double Indictment*, and *Hermotimus*) in which Lucian considers various contradictions, pretensions, and cultic, quasi-religious involvements of philosophers.

Nevertheless, the materials introduced here provide considerable evidence of Lucian's attentiveness to

pragmatist (also interactionist and constructionist) motifs. Lucian's conceptual frame is much less explicit than that developed by Mead (1934), Schütz (1962; 1964), Berger and Luckmann (1966), or Blumer (1969). Nonetheless, Lucian provides a remarkably wide array of materials and observations that pointedly attest to the humanly articulated nature of people's religious experiences. Lucian may be openly skeptical about the viability of people's religious beliefs and practices, but he provides considerable insight into people's encounters with religion, as well as the ways in which these notions become objectified and sustained within a community context.

In Perspective

> Symbolization constitutes objects not constituted before, objects that would not exist except for the context of social relationships wherein symbolization occurs. Language does not simply symbolize a situation or object which is already there in advance; it makes possible the existence or the appearance of that situation or object, for it is a part of the mechanism whereby that situation or object is created. (Mead 1934:78)

Lucian of Samosata may be almost entirely unknown to sociologists of religion, as well as many others in the broader field of religious studies. Likewise, although Lucian may have approached aspects of people's religious beliefs and practices in skeptical, as well as openly depreciative terms, he lays bare the problematic quality of a great many consequential assumptions, claims, and practices regarding people's representations of divinity and their relations with these essences. Moreover, the materials that Lucian has presented, along with other texts developed by various authors

in the classical Greek and Roman eras, represent noteworthy comparative cross-contextual and transhistorical resources for considering and analyzing the many viewpoints and practices that people may invoke as they experience, express, and endeavor to comprehend [religion] as a realm of human knowing and acting.[32]

Thus, whereas some may be inclined to envision Lucian's texts as the quaint productions of an author from a distant time, this paper locates these quasi-ethnographic materials from the past within a conceptual scheme that addresses people's experiences with religion in broader processual terms. In this way, by giving more focused attention to the ways in which people engage notions of divinity, we should be able to arrive at a more adequate appreciation of "the realism of religion."

As noted at the outset, there is much in Lucian's considerations of religion that resonates with a pragmatist approach. Indeed, Lucian not only seems remarkably attentive to (a) the idea that religion is a deeply entrenched community-based phenomenon that is maintained through people's images, practices, and emphases but also (b) the notion that religion is a humanly enacted, humanly engaged experiential process.

Relatedly, despite the apparent conceptual and methodological discrepancies that can be found in people's beliefs and practices, *religion takes on a realism* because of the ways that people act towards the objects of their

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[32] Although some believers may be offended by Lucian's depreciation of religion, it might be noted that some of the most hostile literary criticisms of record are those directed at other religious viewpoints and practices by representatives of particular religions. Indeed, an important part of "the realism of religion" may be seen to revolve around "jealous gods, their detractors, and their fervent supporters."

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religion. This includes their viewpoints, practices, and acknowledgments of one another, as well as other matters that involve a great many aspects of their day-to-day lives (especially see: Durkheim 1915 [1912]). Thus, despite the deficiencies one may attribute to religion, there is a resilience (perseverance and resistance) to people's religious beliefs and practices that (externally considered) reasoned challenges generally are unable to overcome.

Expressed differently, the pragmatist standpoint is that reality does not inhere in something external to people, but takes shape only as people act toward things and adjustively assign meanings to the things to which they attend. Still, it is only in the context of group interchange that people (in the process of attending to and making indications toward particular phenomena in the midst of others) may achieve shared, more enduring, and more consequential terms of reference.

Lucian does not address the symbolizing process as explicitly as does Emile Durkheim (1915 [1912]) or George Herbert Mead (1934), but Lucian is highly attentive to the instructed, displayed, enacted, and emotionally experienced features of group life for maintaining the relevance of localized traditions for the ways that people approach and engage matters of religion.

Pursuing the study of religion as human lived experience requires that scholars examine religion mindfully of the sensations, concerns, activities, and relationships to which people attend in these realms of endeavor. It also means focusing on the things that people do to maintain (articulate, protect, preserve, and promote) their notions of religion with respect to the uncertainties, fears, hopes, aspirations, and resources that they

associate with both the present and the future—as well as their attentiveness to lessons from the past.

Whereas those who attempt to explain religion in more structuralist sociological and psychological terms generally overlook these aspects of people's religious involvements, these experiential features are of great importance for those who actually maintain the realism of religion—the members of particular religious communities.

Indeed, people's "participatory experiences" in religion entail linguistically-enabled definitions of situations, focused activities, and adjustive interchanges, as well as particularized modes of emotional expression. These things not only attest to the *enacted*, sociological nature of people's religious experiences but also serve to embed these experiences in the socially achieved, humanly engaged fibers of people's consciousness.

As instances of humanly engaged activity, people's involvements in religion also take participants into realms of openness, mutuality, and resistance. This is signified by matters such as receptivity, intrigue, affection, devotion, coordination, cooperation, loyalty, compromise, competition, regulation, animosity, and conflict. This includes people's attempts to affirm, support, and promote particular viewpoints, as well as their ways of dealing with the resistances they encounter from close associates, other group-based insiders, disinterested others, skeptics, and those promoting other religious viewpoints.

Like those representing other life-worlds, it is important to consider the ways that people experience and engage religion as humanly promoted and contested

arenas of community life (see: Blumer 1971; Prus 1996; 1997; 1999; Prus and Grills 2003).[33] Thus, in addition to the rationales that those articulating religious standpoints offer in making sense of human existence, experiences, losses and enjoyments, and the like, people also may use religion to promote social order and perpetuate particular moral viewpoints, as well as enable certain people to assume more prominent (influential) roles in their respective communities.

Beyond the resources that religious paradigms generally offer people for (a) making sense of the things that happen and (b) helping them deal with the dilemmas, troubles, and losses of the present, people also (c) may invoke notions of divinity in attempts to anticipate and more effectively shape the future.

Although sociologists and others have tended to approach matters such as religion, politics, education, medicine, and recreation as unique arenas of human endeavor and scholarly specialization, Lucian's texts also serve to remind us that these divisions of community life are rather artificial and serve to conceal the many ways in which particular aspects of people's life-worlds may be integrated into other realms of human endeavor—not as factors, but as ongoing, interfused fields of activity and interchange (also see: Plato's *Republic* [1997] and *Laws* [1997]).

Lucian's texts also point to an exceptional assortment of engaged (actively-focused, emotionally-embedded, sometimes entertaining, sometimes unsettling, and frequently intensely experienced) features of people's

religious involvements. These are signified by the collectively-achieved embeddedness of people's religious beliefs and practices in their broader sets of community-based viewpoints, activities, and emotional experiences. In addition, one may recognize a socially achieved synthesis of people's religious experiences with their more comprehensive (embodied and active) senses of self.

Lucian's statements are instructive, too, for acknowledging people's intrigues with matters that transcend human capacities for knowing and acting. Likewise, this material provides scholars with a valuable reminder of the uncertainty with which people live, their concerns about the afterlife, and the ways in which these notions may be integrated into people's here and now existences.

Still, if there is one message that pervades the selection of Lucian's texts considered in this paper, it revolves around the more comprehensive enterprise that accompanies people's notions of religion and the extent to which "the realism of religion" is so deeply rooted in and contingent on the *human activity* that constitutes the longer and shorter term developmental flows of community life.

Acknowledgements

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[33] Those familiar with Durkheim's (1915 [1912]) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* will find much in this conclusion that resonates with the conceptual materials Durkheim develops therein.

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From Total Institution to Status Bloodbath: Goffman as a Comparative Researcher and Grounded Theorist

Abstract   Erving Goffman has not only had a huge impact upon his home discipline of sociology but may be its most cited, as well as best known member ever. Nevertheless, Goffman continues to be heavily criticized by his fellow sociologists for his allegedly undecipherable and sloppy methods for conducting empirical research and constructing and accumulating general theory. We demonstrate here that while some of his specific practices were intuitive and unorthodox, and perhaps not always available to Goffman himself through self-reflection, they often included systematic empirical comparisons and generalizations, and grounded, general theory. It is tragic that he apparently died lamenting that these common characteristics of his work have been so little recognized (Berger 1986). He encouraged Verhoeven (1993), among others, to rectify this, and hopefully our own efforts here have contributed to this important, but unfinished business.

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Erving Goffman is one of sociology's best-known practitioners. He has often been credited with superior powers of observation and analysis, producing "aha!" experiences in laypeople, beginning undergraduates, and mature sociologists alike. Lofland (1984) wrote this about his legacy for sociologists:

> Goffman was the master coiner of exactly the apt concept, the champion selector of the quintessential label for the once dimly perceived, but henceforth crystallized reality. He has peppered our language with words and phrases that have new meanings, some of which have become part of our taken-for-granted worlds, and we no longer even associate them with Goffman. Impression management, total institution, stigma, mystification, encounter, interaction ritual, and presentation of self are among the most widely circulated. (p. 10)

This statement alludes to the great breadth of Goffman's impact within sociology itself. Thus, whereas the presentation of self and impression management in general and of stigmas in particular refer mainly to "micro" social psychological phenomena, interaction ritual and total institutions allude to sociologists' quintessential concern with "macro" social organization or structure. Nevertheless, while Goffman argued for studying naturally occurring social phenomena with relatively unobtrusive methods like participant observation, psychologists have easily employed and corroborated Goffman's claims in studies of the Internet, as well as experiments in laboratories (Brown 1998; Link and Phelan 2001; Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs 2006). Furthermore, historians and political scientists have used Goff-

man's late works (1986 [1974]) to explain how social movements "frame" themselves and their environments, choose strategies, win over allies in their struggles against authorities, and handle success and failure (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Benford and Snow 2000). Similarly, Goffman's earlier claims that total institutions "mortify" inmates' selves are alleged to have influenced psychiatry and contributed to the "de-institutionalization" of mental patients (Peele et al. 2000).

This is an impressive legacy, but Goffman and his methods for doing research and constructing theory have been much debated and criticized.

Thus, as an observer of social reality, Goffman has variously been characterized as biased, incomplete, or not particularly interested in precise empirical observations in the first place. With regard to bias, in his early critique, Gouldner (1971) suggested that Goffman's social position as a member of the new middle class and his adherence to Blumer's symbolic interactionism seriously affected what he saw and studied, leading him to presume that face-to-face interaction (hereafter FTFI) is episodic rather than heavily constrained by wider and longer social organization, and that humans are naturally Machiavellian self promoters and manipulators of others. Later, Weinstein (1994), a psychiatrist, claimed that Goffman's allegations about the mortification of mental patients' selves were tainted because he sided with patients against staff and was anti-psychiatry, leading him to ignore studies with contradictory findings, including surveys reporting that a majority of patients have been positive about their hospital stays.

As for incompleteness, others, like Lofland (1980) and Smith (2006), have pointed out that while Goffman usually referred to his own fieldwork studies as "ethnographies," they do not meet the criteria for them; that is, complete accounts of entire, unique cultures. Instead, Goffman provided no such published accounts of any of his three, first-hand fieldwork studies (Shetland Isle, Central Hospital, and gambling in Las Vegas), preferring instead to mix seemingly scattered observations from them with those of other researchers and even laypeople and writers of fiction. Understandably, the latter procedure has raised concern about the reliability of such observations, and Goffman's failure to explicate the criteria for how he selected these various observations to begin with has done the same for their generalizability (Verhoeven 1993:341).

These criticisms presume that Goffman had pretensions to be directly empirical in the logical positivist sense, but some critics have expressed doubts about this and pointed to his frequent use of others' observations as evidence. Although Lofland (1980:31) excavated a number of empirical generalizations from Goffman's writings, he concluded that Goffman, "performs a kind of abstract ethnography organized around his own concepts rather than around those of a particular set of 'natives.'"

Williams (1988) characterizes the above critiques as a "critical orthodoxy": those who make them presume that the epistemological realism and empiricism of the physical sciences are appropriate for the social sciences, and then find Goffman's own methods wanting. Nevertheless, many of these critics recognize the intrinsic worth of the products of

his work, and therefore give him the benefit of the doubt. However, Williams argues that "normal" physical science is not in fact appropriate for the social sciences.

One of the principle differences is that social scientists share with laypeople consensually agreed upon observations about social reality that are not, and perhaps need not be, in question. Instead, the more important task is to better understand those relatively unvarying facts through comparing different concepts and metaphors, and accumulating an increasingly "thicker" and more convincing description. So, rather than a liability, Williams treats Goffman's apparent epistemological naiveté and failure to justify his own methods as normal science and his ethnographies of concepts as blessings. Although they do not go this far, Cahill, Fine, and Grant (1995:611) also argue that Goffman was not attempting to offer his own ethnographic descriptions, "[r]ather, his primary concern was to develop general theories of interactional politics and the organizational construction of persons." Therefore, criticisms of his empirical methods, such as his "unsystematic and non-participatory style of observation," are misplaced.

Despite their differences on Goffman's epistemology and empiricism or lack of it, Williams agreed with Lofland that Goffman relied heavily upon concepts, and also noted Goffman's use of Kenneth Burke's "perspective by incongruity." There, as Lofland (1980:27) put it, "by looking at the familiar through a new set of concepts the taken for granted becomes problematic." Since then other interpreters, like Burns (1992), Manning (1992), and Branaman (1997),

have followed these lines, but Manning (1992:55) in particular has argued that Goffman used concepts and metaphors like theater/dramaturgy, games/strategy, and ritual/ceremony in close conjunction with variations in empirical reality itself. Specifically, Goffman deductively "tested" provisional concepts and metaphors against that reality and then inductively modified or replaced them when he discovered they did not fit well.

Although the latter interpreters go farther than Williams in seeing Goffman as an empiricist and logical positivist, with the possible exception of Branaman, they, too, portray Goffman as having provided few empirical comparisons, generalizations, causal explanations, and general theory along the lines of normal physical science. However, still other interpreters disagree. Indeed, no less authorities than Glaser and Strauss (1967:139) wrote that Goffman, too, was a "grounded theorist," although they were not sure how.

Much later Davis (1997:372-373) was still maintaining that Goffman was a rigorous inductivist, so much of one that he never used his own theories deductively. If this were true, it might explain why he seldom cited his own previous work. Interestingly enough, Berger (1986:xii-xiii) claims, Goffman eventually became disappointed that even his admirers did not see his legacy as one of distinctive general theory, and deliberately tried to rectify this in *Frame Analysis* (1986 [1974]). However, there, Goffman (1986:1-13) maintained that (a) his explicit focus was only upon the way individuals' structure their internal perceptions about social reality, and (b) this was not what he usually did. Furthermore, the the-

ories Goffman claims to have built upon there are phenomenologies of individuals' experience rather than explanations for social organization itself.

The above sets of issues—Goffman's self-reflexiveness and objectivity or partisanship as an empirical observer; the degree to which, and how, he was a systematic comparative methodologist and grounded theorist and proceeded inductively versus deductively—are those we attempt to resolve in the rest of this paper.

In what follows, we argue that Goffman's epistemology was surprisingly conventional, and cannot be used to support claims that his objectives differed so much from mainstream sociologists that his work should be evaluated on different criteria. By both personal and theoretical inclination, Goffman probably did give participants' own experiences much less weight than he should have, yet there is considerable evidence supporting his emphasis in relative terms. Furthermore, although many of his specific methodological strategies were unorthodox, they have now often been acknowledged as "best practices" for increasing the validity and reliability of qualitative research.

With a few exceptions, Goffman himself was not very helpful on the problem of how he selected and compared observations and made empirical and theoretical generalizations. Nevertheless, one can detect practices and substantive explanations that go far beyond the formal concepts and metaphors most of his interpreters have stopped at. Here, too, Goffman may sometimes have un-self-reflectively allowed concepts and explanations he had adapted

from past sociologists' work to bias his own, yet we follow Huber (1973) in arguing that this problem is unavoidable and has usually been inadequately addressed by proponents of "emergent" or "grounded theory." As he did with his observational methods, Goffman also lessened the negative impact of his a priori deductions by often making his presumptions and qualifications for his empirical and explanatory generalizations explicit, so that others can test their validity. On balance, when one does the latter, as well as takes into account his methodological acuity more generally, the aforementioned "aha!" nature of his work becomes more understandable.

Was Goffman a Reconceptualizer, Not a Researcher?

In the interview with Verhoeven (1993 [1980]:327), Goffman did characterize himself as "unsophisticated" on epistemological matters, yet immediately added that he was also "conservative and old-fashioned." He had read Parsons' *The Structure of Social Action* (1968 [1938]) early on and found his rendering of the "epistemological realism" of Weber and Durkheim appealing. There is an objective social reality "out there," which can be observed and analyzed relatively directly and objectively, yet has not already been fully revealed to us in our everyday experiences.

Clearly, how we perceive it and give it meaning affects how we and others react to it, and Goffman made considerable use of Thomas' (1923) "definition of the situation" and "theorem" (defining a situation as real is likely to heavily affect its reality), and presumably also Mead's (1934) and Blumer's

(1969) emphasis upon the importance of meaning. The latter seems clear in Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* [*PS*] (1959:9-14), where he frequently used the terms "definition of the situation" and "working consensus." Nevertheless, Goffman told Verhoeven (1993:327, 323-324), "So I don't take a radical, evaluational, subjectivist view. I'm not an ethnomethodologist by any means," and strongly resisted Verhoeven's suggestion that he might be a social constructionist. We are all social constructionists to some degree, Goffman countered, but because of unforeseen and unintended consequences and norms and roles that predate and impinge upon FTF encounters, their nature and course cannot be reduced to shared definitions of the situation and narrow social contracts (also see: Goffman 1963a:7-8, 104-106; 1983:5-6.)

If there is any doubt that Goffman aspired to be a realist and empiricist, one need only closely examine his answer when Verhoeven (1993) asked him,

[V:] … can I formulate it in this way, that you have … a hypothesis, and then you look at society through different examples to find a confirmation of this particular hypothesis.
[G:] I guess I would go along with that except I wouldn't use the term *hypothesis*. I think that's rather optimistic … I [do] try to draw the lot [of concepts that I employ] to see whether they survive after being thought about or tested or applied or used. But, I think it's very much an exploratory, tentative undertaking. (pp. 327-328)

Admittedly, the latter process includes conceptual exercise (thinking about), but also operations on

what one presumes is a relatively objective reality also recognizable by others (testing, applying, using). In fact, later in the interview, Goffman (Verhoeven 1993:338) made a point of portraying the former as only "scholarship," as opposed to true "research," "participant observation in the main, some sort of deduction from one's data."

> [G:] I still believe, that given what one studies, one can come up with something that wasn't in one's head, but was in the data, within limits. Otherwise there wouldn't be much reason to continue in the business except as a livelihood. It would just be a question of who could paint a picture that would sell. (Verhoeven 1993:340)

Returning to the debates with which we began, we can see that Goffman was neither naïve nor radical in his epistemology. He considered himself a direct, empirical researcher and logical positivist. He was not simply doing ethnographies of others' and his own concepts, as Lofland (1980) had complained, but later appears to have changed his mind about (Lofland 1984:11), and Williams (1988) had praised him for, albeit with reservations about how to develop better non-directly-empirical criteria by which to evaluate the worth of Goffman's products.

Observational Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability

In the earlier talk "On Fieldwork," Goffman (1989 [1974]:125-127) told his graduate student audience that he preferred direct, participant observations of people's everyday actions and interactions. Goffman often defended this choice on two grounds. First,

he was primarily interested in naturally occurring rather than experimentally or otherwise "staged" interaction, and he wanted to employ methods of observation which are least obtrusive and likely to alter the interaction studied. Second, he felt that most of the time, most people are circumspect and reticent about expressing what they actually believe and feel, and present and defend their beliefs and feelings, as well as overt actions in idealistic and self-serving ways. Clearly, Goffman had good reasons for this stance.

For one thing, the Hawthorne researchers (Roethlisberger and Dickson 1964) had suggested that the mere knowledge they were being observed may have affected the workers studied and the results of the research. Furthermore, understandably, the men in the Bank Wiring Room were initially suspicious of the researcher-observer and very circumspect in his presence because they (rightly) thought he was allied with management; whereas the women in the Relay Assembly Test Room may have felt they were expected to produce more, and done so to ingratiate themselves with the researchers, as well as management. After Goffman's own early research many others have demonstrated the existence of "effects" for both "experimenters"/researchers and "subjects"/the observed, including self-fulfilling and self-negating prophecies (Cahill, Fine, and Grant 1995; Meeker and Leik 1995).

For another thing, that researchers and the researched would affect each other is a logical consequence of the interactionist theories that emerged at Chicago, and being circumspect in the presence of others and ingratiating oneself with them are

central assumptions of Goffman's own theory of impression management. In her critique of symbolic interactionist traditions, Huber (1973) worried that such researchers would be overly influenced by powerful informants and their biases and overly influential upon relatively powerless ones. Nor, as Becker (2003) had suggested, would siding with "underdogs" absolve researchers of their responsibility for validity and reliability. Either way, to the extent that researchers rely heavily upon the views of those they study, they are in danger of "going native" and losing their objectivity. In fact, Silverman (1989a; 1989b; 2005) has directly demonstrated how much one can bias results if one relies upon informants' own views to the extent that qualitative sociologists, as well as cultural anthropologists and oral historians typically do.

In their review, Adler and Adler (1998:89) identify the unobtrusiveness of direct observational methods and the relatively less likelihood of researcher and informer effects as their greatest strengths. However, following Blumer (1969), Denzin (1989:19-21) had questioned the validity of Goffman's direct methods precisely because they allegedly neglect the subjective experiences of those studied. In addition to the latter, Adler and Adler (1998:87-88) referred to the more general problems of validity and reliability when one usually has only one observer and one case study, "without statistical analyses to confirm the significance of observed patterns or trends." Nevertheless, they followed Denzin in suggesting other strategies to increase validity and reliability.

Earlier, Denzin (1978) had suggested that the limitations of any one method can be lessened by "triangulating" it with several others, including, of course, accessing the subjective experiences of the observed. However, in addition to the latter ([b] in the list below), the Adlers (1998:89-90), who, like Goffman, are primarily interested in direct observation, suggest other means as well: (a) using multiple observers; (c) presenting results and conclusions in ways that third-party social scientists and other readers can recognize as similar to their own personal observations and experiences about everyday life; (d) looking for negative cases, and (presumably) showing either that they do not exist, can be systematically accounted for by one's own theory, or/and qualifying one's claims and theory accordingly; and, relatedly, (e) showing that one's observations hold up in other case studies of other settings and/or times.

Another suggestion can be extrapolated from another of the Adlers' claims (1998:90): "[a]lthough direct observation may be marred by researcher biases, at least they are consistent and known." We do not believe that this is necessarily or even usually true. Yet, (f) to the extent that researchers are aware of their biases and do declare them and suggest ways they can be allowed for or their validity tested, then this, too, should increase the validity, reliability, and generalizability of their claims.

Not being aware and not declaring their biases and providing means for testing them was another complaint that Huber (1973) made against Mead, Blumer, Glaser and Strauss, and others who have stressed allowing theory to "emerge" only during rather than before the process of empirical research. Thinking one does not have "biases" and an already

existing theory, and not declaring them, contribute greatly to the aforementioned tendency to "go native." One's theory is still likely to bias one's results, but even if it does not do so directly, it and the absence of methods for allowing for one's own biases may mean not being able to resist biasing influence from others. A major problem with Mead and Blumer, Huber (1973:278-282) argued, was that their undeclared liberal, optimistic biases and theories made them not see or downplay inequalities in power. Whereas Weinstein's (1994) criticism of Goffman appears to have been that his biases were conscious and led him to deliberately ignore or deny contrary evidence, Gouldner's (1971) is like Huber's (1973); that is, Goffman's allegedly naïvely liberal and episodic, astructural conception of interaction is supposed to have limited his awareness and analysis of large-scale systematic inequalities.

With these criteria in mind, how do Goffman's apparent methods hold up?

(a) Only a Single Observer and Case Study?

Strictly speaking, Goffman did not use multiple observers and run validity and reliability "checks." He preferred to work alone and did not believe he would receive large research grants to study the phenomena he wanted to. Nor, one suspects, would he have wanted the responsibility and accountability that would have come with such grants. On the other hand, Goffman did frequently use other researchers' observations of similar conditions, events, and sequences of events (processes) alongside his own, and often presented these other researchers' observations in great detail, in their own words. Al-

though the events observed were not precisely the same ones Goffman himself had observed, demonstrating what many others have "seen," for example, "role distance," approaches both "convergent internal validity" (different others have recognized similar orders of events and explained them similarly) and "external validity" (similar orders have been recognized and explained in similar ways by different observers in different settings and times). These practices then legitimate Goffman's work, particularly when one considers the further problem of not being able to afford additional observers for one's own case study, or of hiring only young, untrained, and inexperienced ones.

The same logic applies to case studies: Goffman relied upon those of many other researchers besides his own. Thus, Goffman told Verhoeven (1993:340-341) that he had somehow managed to make valid and reliable conclusions about mental hospitals, despite having "by and large" studied only one of them. In fact, however, he read and reported the findings of a huge number of other cases studies, of schools and prisons, as well as mental hospitals, and those in Masters and PhD theses, as well as published reports.

As for the Adlers' concern that such settings and case studies are seldom chosen statistically, Goffman (Verhoeven 1993:339-340) had some interesting suggestions in his defense. These included his charge that all too many statistical samplers have not explored and identified the relevant populations enough before drawing their samples. More importantly, for him, the most relevant populations were neither settings nor individuals, but instances and

sequences of FTFI, which occur almost everywhere. Therefore, identifying the entire population would probably be impossible.

The general lesson here is that sampling should probably fit the interests and purposes of the researcher as much as the reverse. Furthermore, this is particularly true when, as may be the case with most qualitative researchers, one's initial purpose is to develop rather than test theory. As Eisenhardt (1989) has put it,

> Such research relies on theoretical sampling (i.e., cases are chosen for theoretical, not statistical, reasons) … While the cases may be chosen randomly, random selection is neither necessary, nor even preferable … given the [small] number of cases which can be studied, it makes sense to choose cases such as extreme situations and polar types in which the process of interest is "transparently observable." (p. 537)

(b), (c) Participants' and Third Parties' Views

On these criteria Goffman's performance was mixed, but not a "write off" either. Although, as we have seen, Goffman had good reasons to weight others' points of view less than his own direct observations, his own descriptions and explanations relied considerably upon participants' shared "definitions of the situation," and the same is true for beliefs in the applicability and often justness of social norms and the trustworthiness or untrustworthiness of others. Therefore, Goffman probably should not have discounted and failed to directly study participants' own views as much as he did. Richard (1986) has argued this for the "next of relation" for inmates

of total institutions. Whereas Goffman implied that they almost always collude with institutional staff against patients, Richard demonstrates that this is not so. Yet, here, too, Goffman often attempted to compensate for not interviewing people by using indirect methods.

Interestingly, when he described these methods in "On Fieldwork," Goffman (1989:131) began with Cooley's "sympathetic introspection": using one's own experience of the situation to understand others. Thus, Goffman (1989) advised students,

> Write [your field notes] as lushly as you can [without trying to defend what you have written to absent professional others whose roles you are nevertheless taking] … as long as you put yourself into it, where you say, "I felt that" … you've got to start by trusting yourself … Now don't *just* write about yourself [or to too great a degree] but put yourself into situations that you write about so that later on you will see how to qualify what it is you've said. You say, "I felt that," "my feeling was," "I had a feeling that"—that kind of thing.[2] (p. 131)

What Goffman was suggesting here is that sympathetic introspection is one useful way of attempting to take the role of those one is studying, and therefore understand their experiences without having to actually ask them and initiate the biasing processes referred to earlier. By itself, of course, the latter strategy also risks privileging one's own response, and, when it is different from those of the people one observes, erroneously projecting it into others

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[2] All but the first bracket have been added.

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and biasing one's results. In fact, Mead (1964) had accused Cooley of projecting his own small-town middle class Christian perspective into others. Nevertheless, by discussing methods for accessing participants' own views, Goffman was obviously acknowledging the latter's importance. Furthermore, in that same passage, he did refer to taking into account "what they [participants] are saying" (Goffman 1989:131), and, one presumes, what they are thinking.

Of course, following Huber (1973), this by no means lets Goffman off the hook. After all, even when there is much overlap between the researcher's and participants' views, there remains the problem of which others and their views one has taken, and the possibility that overlaps have occurred through social influence rather than independent, accurate views of a relatively objective social reality.

With regard to the first problem, Weinstein (1994) criticized Goffman's claims about the mortification of patients' selves in mental hospitals not only on the grounds that he had neglected patients' own views, but that he neglected those of staff, and even admitted siding with patients against them. The latter is largely true (Goffman 1961a:x), but several important qualifications are in order.

One is that Goffman (1961a:54-57) offered several reasonable, methodological justifications for this. The reality of Central Hospital and other total institutions studied by others was that such settings tend to be divided along the lines of staff versus inmates—two competing "performance teams," in Goffman's terms—and if one is to gain good access

to inmates and their natural actions and views, one has to not be seen to be aligned with staff. Otherwise, patients would be as circumspect about revealing their experiences to the researcher as they are to staff. Goffman (1989:128) reiterated this in "On Fieldwork," and in his study of a narcotics prison hospital, Tittle (1972a) found that patients often did try to ingratiate themselves with staff in order to obtain an early release, by insincerely playing the role of the good, thankful, rehabilitated patient.

However, another qualification is that Goffman was by no means totally unsympathetic towards staff. This was true not only for young, idealistic psychiatrists who genuinely put therapy and rehabilitation before merely comfortable custody but custodians themselves, who, Goffman (1961a:78-82, 89-92) noted, were few in number relative to the patients at St. Elizabeth's (over 7000). In addition to having many needs and rights that required attention, patients were often distressed and difficult to manage.

Clearly, Goffman was highly critical of psychiatrists' propensities to reduce everything patients think and do to organic and psychogenic illnesses, and in addition to *Asylums*, other of his writings (1963a; 1971) were designed to counter such accounts with his own. Yet, Goffman (1971:373, 386) did not discount organic and psychogenic explanations altogether, and expressed sympathy for psychiatrists' dilemma of whether to side with patients and their stories or those of their responsible, "next of relation."

The Adlers' suggestion of stimulating third parties to recognize one's own experiences as a researcher and those of the participants one has studied may

have come from Glaser and Strauss (1967:230), but Goffman (1959) himself claimed to have deliberately used this in the *PS*:

> The illustrative materials used in this study are of mixed status: some are taken from respectable researchers where qualified generalizations are given concerning reliably recorded regularities; some are taken from informal memoirs written by colorful people; many fall in between. In addition, frequent use is made of a study of my own of a Shetland Island crofting (subsistence farming) community. The justification for this approach (as I take to be the justification for Simmel's also) is that the illustrations together fit into a coherent framework that ties together bits of experience the reader has already had and provides the student with a guide worth testing in case studies of institutional social life. (pp. xi-xii)

Again, consensus among observers of whatever type does not assure accurate information, but here, too, Goffman (1989) anticipated this problem:

> Then there's [the matter of] what to do with information [that one has recorded in notes to oneself]. Jackie takes seriously what other people say. I don't give hardly any weight to what people say, but I try to triangulate what they are saying [and my own experiences?] with events.[3] (p. 131)

In other words, the validity and reliability of subjective experiences, the researcher's included, are judged against overt actions and sequences of events that other scientific observers would probably also

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[3] All but the first bracket have been added.

see and report on in relatively unbiased ways. While Goffman did not provide an example there, one could easily employ his greeting and parting rituals (individuals say "hello" and "goodbye" to each other), and "remedial interchanges" (someone is challenged for something they have said or done, s/he justifies or apologies for their actions, and the challenger resumes interacting as they had before).

Given her criticisms of Mead for implying that one can experience social, as well as physical reality directly, Huber (1973:278) would probably still counter that such observations themselves are at least interpreted and perhaps stimulated in the first place by pre-existing concepts and theories rather than "pure" and unbiased. To follow up the above examples, Goffman was also inferring norms, desires to continue relationships, as well as lessen conflict that would threaten them, and so on. This was part of Huber's rationale for questioning the validity of "emergent" ("grounded") theory. Similarly, Silverman (1989a:38-39; 1989b:226-227) warned that overlaps among researchers' and participants' experiences of social reality and researchers' (seemingly) more direct observations of its more physical features (e.g., sequences of actions) may occur only because researchers and participants, and perhaps events themselves, are all organized by the same discourse. The events may be intelligible to both, but still misunderstood.

On the other hand, Huber (1973) did not deny either the existence or eventual discovery of an objective reality, and argued only that one offers and/or accepts well-established criteria for determining the validity and reliability of propositions about it. Sim-

ilarly, for all his seemingly relativist leanings rather than a continuous conundrum, Silverman (1989c:57) proposed a "cautious positivism" as a means of solving these problems. As we saw earlier, Goffman considered himself a realist and positivist.

(d), (e) Negative Cases and Confirmatory Comparisons

Goffman often appeared to be looking for negative cases, for how actions and sequences differ in different settings and circumstances, and then suggesting how his initial empirical generalizations needed to be qualified. Thus, whereas Gouldner (1971) had accused Goffman of imposing a middle class, Western view of human nature and interaction on his research, Goffman (1959:244-245), himself, cautioned readers of the *PS* that most of his material there came from "unsettled," relatively egalitarian "mass societies" like America, and that without further, independent case studies, one should be cautious even about characterizing such societies themselves as a whole, let alone automatically generalizing from them to more settled, less egalitarian ones.

This is presumably why Goffman used observations from his dissertation on Shetland Isle—a small, settled community with a single "laird" and several squires—as a baseline in the *PS*. Although long-term status relationships, close physical proximity, and familiarity apparently limited the scope and intensity of dramaturgy, there, too, residents appear to have engaged in it. Hence, he concluded, his observations and theory of impression management are fairly widely applicable. On the other hand, after comparing self-presentation and protection

by patients inside Central Hospital and outside, in pluralistic civil society, Goffman qualified the generalizability of the theory considerably. Because patients were not free to present themselves as they had on the outside, they were seldom able to protect their selves, which were then "mortified" (also see: Lofland 1980:42-43; Branaman 1997:lii-lviii). Nevertheless, as we shall see below, this generalization, too, was later qualified.

(f) Declaring, Testing, and Neutralizing "Bias"

Whereas Gouldner (1971) complained that Goffman was not aware of and did not declare his biases, Weinstein's (1994) point was that he both had and declared them, but then still allowed them to bias his research. We doubt that either claim is accurate. Like the rest of us, Goffman probably attempted to be "objective," but frequently failed; but just as often made firm presumptions (had "biases," if you will) that he then declared and either tested empirically himself or/and justified in ways that allow others to do so.

We have already seen hints of this in the comparisons between Shetland Isle and the United States in the *PS*, and these practices are more explicit in *Asylums*. There Goffman (1961a:x, 65-66, 152) warned readers from the beginning that he may have exaggerated how many and much patients' selves were mortified by incarceration because, as a middle class male, he took much personal distinctiveness and autonomy for granted, and may have experienced Central Hospital as more degrading than working class patients may have. This would then allow other researchers to question and test this possibility,

by comparing the responses of different types of patients. Unfortunately, few researchers have done this. However, Tittle (1972b) did compare male and female patients in his narcotics hospital, and as one would expect, extrapolating from the logic of Goffman's hypothesis about class differences, women there were more likely to rely upon other inmates for support and views of themselves than men did, and less likely to express self derogation.

Besides such "biases," *Asylums* is replete with qualifications about which additional circumstances Goffman's empirical generalizations about mortification presupposed. Goffman (1961a:131) carefully noted that mortification occurs particularly in large, "closed" hospitals, where the vast majority of patients are there involuntarily, cut off from their previous lives on the outside. Unlike pluralistic civil society on the outside, such institutions are also "impermeable": work and family, class, race, and ethnic relationships are not segregated by time and space, preventing patients from avoiding different others and protecting their own selves (Goffman 1961a:119-123). Furthermore, mortification begins soon after incarceration, but then lessens as patients develop supportive relationships with each other and secondary psychic adjustments, which provide alternative definitions and evaluations for their hitherto mortified selves (Goffman 1961a:133, 146-149).

Unfortunately, most subsequent researchers have failed to take into account Goffman's own qualifications, what he took to indicate mortification, and/or the processes of self-presentation and protection that he believed come between those institutional circumstances and patients' private selves. Thus,

Peele and colleagues (2000) revisited "Central Hospital" (St. Elizabeth's) some twenty years later and reported less "institutionalization" than Goffman had. They did note that the hospital had become much smaller and that the majority of inmates were there voluntarily, yet, since they did not look for mortification, theirs is not a good test of Goffman's own claims.

Quirke, Lelliott, and Seale (2006) also reported less "institutionalization" in three small, acute care hospitals in London, England, and to their credit they attributed the alleged differences from Central and similar hospitals during Goffman's time to the openness and permeability of their own hospitals. Nevertheless, they, too, did not directly observe patients' presentation and protection of their psychic selves and mortification. Meanwhile, Tittle (1972b) did not control for whether patients in the narcotics hospital were there voluntarily; measured mortification with a self-administered, albeit relatively unobtrusive, instrument; and wrongly interpreted Goffman as having expected mortification to be greatest in the middle rather than the early stages of patients' hospital stay. Therefore, his own qualifications of Goffman's claims remain suspect.

How Was Goffman Comparative and Grounded?

Thus far we have felt reasonably confident about Goffman's methods because we have had Goffman's explicit qualifications for his claims for the mortification of selves in *Asylums* (1961a); his seemingly candid, detailed description of his observational methods in "On Fieldwork" (1989); and his straight-

forward account of his (surprisingly conventional) epistemology in the interview with Verhoeven (1993). Nevertheless, we are less sure of his methods for selecting and comparing observations and generalizing from them to theory. This is so not only because he seldom explicated them but because he steadfastly insisted that he did not know what they were, could not have excavated them even if he tried, and had he done so, readers would find that his methods were used inconsistently and may even have been contradictory (Goffman 1986:15; Verhoeven 1993:323, 340-341).

Why Goffman took this stance and whether he was sincere is an interesting problem in its own right. Interestingly enough, Becker (2003:660) reports that Goffman told him this was a deliberate strategy on his part; that if he were to make his methods explicit, his critics would insist that he always use and justify them, even when they were not appropriate. This is consistent with Goffman's own theory of impression management; that is, we avoid presenting cues and making impressions that others would then insist we abide by in order to make interaction predictable and sustainable, and to obey rules of considerateness (which prevent others from losing face and becoming embarrassed) and self-respect (consistency is necessary for predictability).

Obviously, we cannot know what Goffman was "really up to." On the other hand, Goffman did graciously suggest a resolution for our dilemma to Verhoeven (1993:322-323). To wit, because we should regard all sociologists' accounts of their methods as more impression management than reality, the best way to discover Goffman's methods for selecting,

comparing, and generalizing is to take the entire corpus of his written work as a population of events about what he actually did, and then draw our own conclusions.

In fact, we have already begun that process here by noting Goffman's juxtaposition of impression management in the civil societies of developed Anglo-American countries with less developed Shetland Isle in the *PS*, and the still more confined circumstances of traditional *Asylums*. In addition, *Stigma* (1963b) deals with intermediate circumstances where individuals' successful impression management is likely to be limited by the fact that others will already have formed an impression if one has a visible stigma, and one will be threatened and insecure about interacting with others if, for example, as an ex-mental patient, one worries that they will discover one has an invisible yet discreditable stigma (Goffman 1963a:42). Branaman (1997:lviii) alludes to the former, and Misztal (2001:317) points out that "Goffman's description of the process of 'passing for normals'" is "an application of impression management."

Meanwhile, the moderate constraints of relationships with family and friends, as well as larger ones with employers and political authorities can be contrasted with the much greater freedom at social parties, especially where a large proportion of those in attendance are strangers or only acquaintances (Goffman 1961b:78; 1963a:135-136, 170-171; 1971:207-208). There, rather than "keeping one's place," may be a "status blood bath"; a "free-for-all" competition for status that may include a great deal of impersonation and other forms of misrepresentation; rather

than the kind in a large, public asylum, where one is forced to interact with very different others and not permitted to escape.

In *Behavior in Public Places* (1963a:198-199) and *Relations in Public* (1971:206-207), Goffman wrote about still more anonymous and fluid settings and relationships, and differentiated among them according to how "loose" as opposed to "tight" they are in terms of the number of norms that apply to them, to whom they are most likely to apply, how serious deviance from them is likely to be regarded, and therefore also how punitive sanctions are likely to be. For example, task actions and "focused gatherings" are likely to require more continuous displays of involvement than expressive actions ("socio-emotional" in Parsons' terms) and "unfocussed" gatherings. Furthermore, although all settings, tasks, and relationships are likely to have some opportunities and rights to display "role distance," middle class members will usually have more (Goffman 1963a:46-47, 110, 127). However, depending upon the gender aspects of the norm and role, women may have either more or fewer opportunities and rights than men (Goffman 1963a:50-51, 206-207; 1971:207-208).

This type of dissection of Goffman's writings is clearly useful, but it seldom goes beyond abstract concepts and "perspective by incongruity" (e.g., the "Free" versus "The Confined Self"). Exceptions have been Branaman's (1997:lii-lviii) catalogue of the social and psychic processes Goffman used to explain the mortification of selves in *Asylums*, and Misztal (2001:312-14) having noted Goffman's underlying substantive dimensions of normality and trust, of norms for establishing both, and of all three

for increasing the predictability and success of interaction and participants' security.

Admittedly, concentrating upon specific substantive dimensions and explanations involves considerable digging and extrapolation, and may detract from the "thickness" or "richness" of Goffman's explicit accounts. Nevertheless, as Silverman (2005:211) suggests, relying mainly upon rich description can be a serious liability when it comes to arriving at valid and parsimonious explanations, and in our case, it might mean never discovering Goffman's comparative methods and substantive theory. With this in mind, let us closely re-examine some of Goffman's major texts.

There are four passages in the *PS* where Goffman compares his observations about interaction on Shetland Isle with his own and others' about "civil society" in more developed Anglo-American communities. In the first passage, he generalized that most performers use status and other symbols to present a positively idealized view of their performance and selves (Goffman 1959:35). "In fact, however, many classes of persons have had many different reasons for exercising systematic modesty and for underplaying any expressions of wealth, capacity, spiritual strength, or self-respect." (Goffman 1959:38).

The case studies or other illustrations from which the latter is inferred are (1) "the ignorant, shiftless, happy-go-lucky manner which Negroes in the Southern States sometimes feel obliged to affect during interaction with whites" (Goffman 1959:25); (2) "American college girls did, and no doubt do,

play down their intelligence, skills, and determinativeness when in the presence of datable boys" (Goffman 1959:48); (3a) Shetland Islanders' grandfathers having not fixed up the appearance of their cottages to prevent lairds from increasing their rents; (3b) Americans in the Great Depression appearing poorer than they were when visited by relief inspectors; and (4) current Islanders who were no longer crofters (subsistence farmers), nevertheless dressing and otherwise appearing to be so. Although "the many different reasons" for such modesty are not stated, it is not difficult to infer what they are likely to have been: (1) avoiding physical and/or verbal abuse, losing one's employment, and perhaps being lynched; (2) being disapproved of, ostracized, and perhaps not getting a husband; (3) paying higher rent, not getting or receiving less relief; and (4) being disapproved of and rejected by the few people available to work and socialize with.

In all of these cases, one has to interact with others upon whom one is dependent, at least to avoid unpleasant consequences, and who therefore have power over one.

In another passage, Goffman (1959:78-79) dealt with the more complex circumstances surrounding performance teams. Here, performers are interdependent and must coordinate their performances to make a favorable impression and otherwise influence third-party audiences upon whom they, too, are dependent; that is, their employers, customers, and/or competing performance teams. The generalization is that the performance is likely to express the characteristics of the task and team, not those of its members as individuals.

One set of observations comes from Goffman's own case study of a medical ward, where interns taking over from their counterparts from the day or night before had to appear knowledgeable, competent, and make definite recommendations about patients, despite not having seen and diagnosed them before, and having only colleagues' earlier charts to go on. Another set was from Shetland Isle. There, in the tourist hotel, the host and hostess managers presented themselves to guests as if they were middle class, while the local girls who were waitresses and maids presented themselves subserviently. However, outside that setting the latter came from higher status families, and even within the hotel, once guests were no longer present, the subservience of employees ceased. Two other observations were wives appearing more subordinate to their husbands when hosting dinner parties than they usually were, and white and black co-workers being more formal to each other when third party whites were present.

In the third passage, Goffman (1959:220) referred to which particular strategies for presenting themselves performers are likely to employ in general, and to deal with such dilemmas as keeping close to the facts about oneself to safeguard the show and one's self versus idealizing oneself enough to make an especially favorable impression. There Goffman was still more elaborate and explicit about the sources of such strategies.

One category (in effect) has to do with incentives: "care will be great in situations where important consequences for the performer will occur as a result of his conduct. The job interview is a clear example"

(Goffman 1959:225). In addition, Goffman made much of the fact that the mere presence of others and interacting with them involves the risk of discrediting oneself and/or one's team, and losing various other benefits in the process. Nevertheless, opportunities to lessen such risks vary considerably by additional circumstances.

Thus, risks are less the shorter the time one is in front of and performing for the audience, and the more resources one has to manage a longer show. It is easier to maintain a show for guests for short periods of time, and even in Anglo-American communities, "only in the upper-middle and upper classes do we find the institution of the week-end guest" (Goffman 1959:142). However, in less affluent Shetland Isle, most crofters "felt they could sustain a middle class show for" only a tea or meal, and "many Islanders felt it only safe to perform for middle class audiences on the front porch, or, better still, in the community hall, where the efforts and responsibilities of the show could be shared by many teammates" (Goffman 1959:221-222).

Finally, one's familiarity with others is important, in its own right and in interaction with incentives and opportunities. On the one hand, if one is familiar with others (and interaction has been rewarding), one is likely to identify and sympathize with them, which will, in turn, foster trust, tact, and cooperation (Goffman 1959:230-232), and therefore also less risk to one's self and more relaxed interaction. The latter also occurs because the impression each has of the other is likely to depend upon past interactions much more than any new one (Goffman 1959:222). Increased security from familiarity seems to be the

logic behind this later comparison between Shetland Isle and America:

> [W]ith settled inegalitarian status systems and strong religious orientations [presumably against presenting oneself falsely], individuals are sometimes less earnest about the whole civic drama than we are, and will cross social barriers with brief gestures that give more recognition to the man behind the mask than we might find permissible. (Goffman 1959:157)

Of course, this presumes that in (allegedly) unsettled, "mass" societies like the U.S., individuals are less likely to be familiar with most others and more likely to believe that they can present themselves more positively than is warranted by their class position and personal characteristics. If this is true, then the main determinant becomes opportunity rather than incentive. On the other hand, in those situations where one is familiar to and with others, one has less opportunity to misrepresent one's self and get away with it, and is less likely to attempt to do so (Goffman 1959:222).

Goffman then made other cross-cultural comparisons relevant to differences in familiarity. Specifically, in the United States, the combination of a lack of familiarity, the value on privacy, and rules specifying "civil inattention" among strangers means that individuals usually do not "intervene" to help others except in relatively unavoidable circumstances; whereas on Shetland Isle, the difficulty of avoiding others, the familiarity of others, and rules requiring one to help others even on trivial, solitary tasks meant that others could drop in on one unannounced, and that one could not refuse help even if

one felt it was an invasion of one's privacy and did not want it (Goffman 1959:230).

In his introductory and concluding passages for the *PS*, Goffman appears to have situated these relatively specific explanations within a more general theory. We not only seek information about another person and are circumspect about disclosing information about ourselves but do so in order to understand, predict, and influence him or her, and we "usually" do these for "quite practical reasons," especially "to call forth a desired response from him" (Goffman 1959:1). However, both from taking the roles of and understanding others and our knowledge that they are pursuing their own "enlightened" self interests and expecting us to abide by rules of, among others, considerateness and self-respect, we usually also pursue our own interests in an "enlightened" (tactful and considerate) way (Goffman 1959:249); depending, of course, upon particular incentives, opportunities, and familiarities.

Furthermore, the types of comparisons and general explanations related to them in the *PS* were continued in many subsequent writings. Thus, *Stigma* (1963b) relies mainly upon case studies and single observations by others rather than his own direct ones, yet Goffman's comparison point was impression management among "normals" in the *PS*.

Thus, when someone has a visible stigma, normals are unlikely to be familiar with it and them, and likely to have difficulty knowing what to expect and do themselves, and be fearful about what the stigmatized is likely to do. As a consequence, they will avoid interacting with the stigmatized or attempt to

be "civilly inattentive" to the stigma. If normals are instead associated and identified with the stigmatized, they may attempt not to be seen with them or to hide the stigma during interaction with outside audiences. However, family members are likely to be highly interdependent with the stigmatized and unable to avoid them, and will have more of an interest in protecting them, for their own, as well as the good of the stigmatized.

Meanwhile, the visibly stigmatized themselves will anticipate not being accepted by unfamiliar normals and therefore have an interest in avoiding interacting with them and associating with other stigmatized persons, as well as protective normals. Should the stigmatized have to interact with unfamiliar normals anyway, and especially when they have an invisible and potentially disclosable and discrediting stigma, "[t]he issue is not that of managing tension generated during social contacts, but rather that of managing information about his failing" (Goffman 1963b:42). On the other hand, the opportunity to do the latter may be absent, and there Goffman understandably mentioned the plight of the ex-mental patient. He or she is likely to fear that those who are familiar with his or her past as a patient will be uncomfortable, if not outright disapproving, but that those who are not familiar with his or her past will be threatened, disappointed, or patronizing should they find out. Either way, the stigmatized and interaction with normals will probably be tense.

We have already taken up many of the circumstances of mental patients themselves while in hospital, and mentioned some of Goffman's important comparisons and qualifications with regard to the

mortification of selves. Yet, Goffman also frequently compared the conditions for impression management and self-protection "inside" total institutions with those "outside" and "before" entering them. Furthermore, rather than only constraints upon self-presentation and protection in the abstract, his explanations and qualifications for mortification again rely heavily, and sometimes explicitly, on variations in incentives, opportunities, and patterns of familiarity.

Thus, whereas in civil society on the outside one's dependence upon and obligations towards employers, public service dispensing officials, family, and even friends are likely to be considerable, they will be segregated in space and time, and therefore also limited (Goffman 1961a:36-37). However, when one enters the hospital, one becomes nearly totally dependent upon staff for positive feedback about one's performance and self, as well as one's physical and psychic needs, including meaningful activity that indirectly contributes to one's social identity and sense of personal well-being (Goffman 1961a:6-10). Although this heavy dependence upon staff usually decreases as patients become familiar with other inmates and form supportive relationships with them, it returns in the period up to one's hoped for and/ or scheduled release, since actual release is likely to depend upon continued or renewed positive assessments by staff (Goffman 1961a:167-168).

Goffman made parallel comparisons for opportunities. Upon entry one is "stripped" of and prevented from displaying one's usual physical and social symbols of one's identity as a distinct, autonomous, competent, and contributing adult. These include not just one's full name and title (Goffman 1961a:20-21), but

> [a] margin of self-selected expressive behavior— whether of antagonism, affection, or unconcern … This evidence of one's autonomy is weakened by such specific obligations as having to write one letter home a week, or having to refrain from expressing sullenness. It is further weakened when this margin of behavior is used as evidence concerning the state of one's psychiatric, religious, or political conscience. (Goffman 1961a:43)

The latter interpretations are then recorded and stored by staff, and patients often worry that they will be used against them by third parties, as well as staff (Goffman 1961a:159). Contrary to the social, role, and audience segregation on the outside, patients are forced to be around and interact with others whom they would not normally meet and/ or engage with. Such "contaminative exposure" can threaten and weaken one's self-supporting identity (Goffman 1961a:28-31). The same is true for the substance of the interaction. For example, high status persons on the outside will be threatened by not being deferred to on the inside, while low status patients who must obey staff will be humiliated by not being "allowed a margin of face-saving reactive expression—sullenness, failure to offer the usual signs of deference," and so on (Goffman 1961a:36).

As for familiarity, patients are likely to feel that their "next of relation," their most significant other, has colluded with staff to get one into hospital and not visit frequently, and are therefore likely to feel abandoned and betrayed, such that their "next of relation" is no longer so familiar with one's own distress and not as supportive and trustworthy as they once may have been. Either way, unfamiliar others will now see one in various states of undress and physical, psychic, and social distress. Worse, one is forced to disclose the intimate details of one's own self and distress, and likely to be neglected or punished if one does not. Meanwhile, if one does disclose them, their origins and meaning will be interpreted for one. Should one's own view differ from staff's it is likely to be dismissed or reinterpreted (see above), but should one concentrate upon one's illness and "sad tales" to rationalize it and seek pity, others' agreement that everything one does and feels is ill might reinforce this and hinder rehabilitation.

In fact, Goffman continued such comparisons and specific, as well as general explanations in much of the rest of his writings, which can also be organized accordingly. If one starts with a more abstract dimension of constraints upon self-presentation and protection, one has total institutions like traditional asylums at a pole of most constraint, with subsequent amounts of constraint decreasing as one proceeds to communities with relatively "mechanical solidarity" like Shetland Isle, production and service organizations in the civil societies of Anglo-American societies, then more "private" relationships and groups like family and friends. The latter tend to be more encompassing, familiar, and supportive, and therefore conducive to security about others, thus one's own self-presentation. However, interdependence, familiarity, and many diffuse obligations also mean few opportunities to avoid others and change established impressions.

As had Park (1952:176), Goffman regarded friendships as less confining than families, but more impersonal encounters and relationships in public are still less so. In turn, between these two settings are private social parties, where there is often a mixture of strangers and mere acquaintances, as well as more established friends. There a lack of interdependence and much familiarity with many others often permit a great deal of impersonation; individuals can pretend to have much more social status, personal competence, and charisma than they normally do, to the point where there is a raucous—but exciting!—"status blood bath" (Goffman 1961b:78).

We could push the applicability of Goffman's comparisons and generalizations about impression management along the dimensions of (inter)dependence, opportunity, and familiarity still further. For example, the very distinctions that Goffman used in the rest of his writings appear to presume them. To wit, encounters, engagements, and interchanges involve more interdependence and risk of harm, as well as opportunities for new gains than mere "co-presence" in public does. Unfamiliar strangers are likely to be less predictable and more difficult to adapt to and influence than familiar family and friends are, but as we have seen, with the latter, opportunities for more freedom and more favorable impressions may be low. "Unfocused gatherings" provide more opportunities than "focused" ones that entail more interdependence and require more cooperation, and individuals will have more freedom to "save" and "make" "face" while working than in how they perform their work role itself (their contribution to the collective "focus"), but there will still be rules about expressing "role distance," as well as genuine involvement.

Again, Goffman seldom articulated the dimensions he used to select and compare his materials, and when he did discuss dimensions, he sometimes seemed to be only entertaining them provisionally, with his characteristic qualifications. For example,

> In the study of groups, the distinction between primary and secondary and between private and public meeting places may indeed be significant, but in the study of gatherings, all occasions when two or more persons are present to one another can be fruitfully treated initially as a single class. (Goffman 1963a:9)

Similarly, when Goffman (1963a:198-215) discussed the looseness versus tightness of gatherings, he agreed "informal" versus "formal" is often useful, but then made many qualifications. In addition to the abovementioned ones about class and gender (and age), they included whether or not high status and powerful officials were present to enforce compliance with norms. For attendants in Central Hospital, this meant only wearing ties when they were in the administrative wing, and not smoking when giving patients their "meds" only when doctors and nurses were present. Furthermore, whereas, for example, Parsons' "pattern variables" work in the same direction to produce "traditional" versus "modern" role relationships and societies, Goffman's qualifying dimensions are "nested" within others, making claims at this high level of generality difficult.

These considerations mean that the dimensions and comparisons we suggested above are just that: hypotheses. Nevertheless, since Goffman so seldom made his underlying dimensions and the logic of his comparisons explicit, we have had to make

such hypotheses, and recall that we have done so with his own blessing. In addition, the three dimensions we have induced from his comparisons and conclusions make sense of the latter, across many of his written works. They have also allowed us to do something about which both Goffman and his admirers have despaired; that is, indicate how much of Goffman's work can be organized by a general theory of impression management.

Finally, for present purposes, the substantive dimensions and explanations we have "teased" out of Goffman's writings overlap considerably with those used by earlier sociologists whom he acknowledged had inspired him. Specifically, Goffman often employed Cooley's and Mead's theory of role taking and empathy (e.g., see: Scheff 2006 [chapter 3]), and in that theory, their frequency increases with interdependence and their accuracy with interpersonal familiarity, as well as a common "universal discourse" more generally (see: Mead 1934). Similarly, in Park's and Hughes' "human ecology," independence and/or competing interests lead to avoiding others, whereas interdependence and/or unequal dependence lead to accommodation and cooperation or domination and exploitation, respectively. Goffman (1971:190) both referred to such explanations and used them for his own results.

Meanwhile, much of Durkheim's and Parsons' structural functionalism relies upon the distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity, which itself entails economic independence versus interdependence and competing versus complimentary interests, and Goffman's own tightness versus looseness implies the same intolerance or tol-

erance for individual differences. His distinctions between the "focus" of an encounter or relationship and the "face" of participants and focused versus unfocussed gatherings mirror Parsons' instrumental versus expressive actions and roles, just as Goffman's tightness/looseness parallels Parsons' diffuse versus specific obligations/rights.

On the other hand, despite this considerable support for our hypotheses on how Goffman went about making comparisons and arriving at substantive explanations, one certainly cannot reduce all of Goffman's work to these particular dimensions and his theory of impression management. Rather, in addition to such analyses and theories at the level of "individuals" and their relatively primitive organization (e.g., accommodation, mainly through only a "working consensus"), Goffman proceeded at the level of "social facts"; of the unintended consequences of individuals' and teams' actions and their organization by norms within role relationships, often segregated from each other, and within sequences of events like rituals and ceremonies. Indeed, Goffman often treated the latter as more or less self-equilibrating.

Nevertheless, whereas the latter phenomena require different types of explanations from those at the more individual, less organized level, Goffman appears to have used the same formal methods for comparing and generalizing from his empirical materials. That is, one chooses and compares circumstances and events that are similar and contrasting in order to infer substantive, cause-and-effect relationships. Indeed, Goffman's comparative methods at the level of social order can already be seen in his

use of Shetland Isle in the *PS*. Many Islanders would have preferred not to be helped by their neighbors and others, but rules specifying that one must help others, no matter how trivial the task, did not allow them the privacy they wanted. This was contrasted with the rule of civil inattention elsewhere, which may mean that people who want, as well as need help may not get it. In another comparison, Islanders could not maintain their privacy because norms allowed others to visit one's home unannounced, without even knocking (Goffman 1959:227).

Such "social facts" and how they occur take up a large portion of the first chapter on Performances and the summary of empirical generalizations Goffman provided near the end (1959:65). Furthermore, they are clearly based on and/or "illustrated" by comparisons like those just mentioned. For example, at one point, he illustrated the general phenomenon of a "working consensus" by inducing the common structure in different relationships with opposite substantive norms: for friends to express familiarity, involvement, and affection, but for specialists and clients not to (Goffman 1959:10). Goffman then took up how, because of norms of considerateness and self-respect, unintended impressions and the entire "show" prevail (1959:12-13). Finally, with empirical illustrations, Goffman argued that as long as performers perform well, whether or not they are emotionally sincere, does not make much of a difference either (1959:17-21).

That Goffman was aware of his use of such comparative methods to study norms and roles is clear in *Relations in Public (RP)* (1971). There Goffman (1971:225-237) explicates them with regard to hand-holding,

a type of "tie-sign"; that is, how individuals ritualistically express to third-party audiences, as well as each other the nature of their relationship. Thus, one strategy for studying such signs "is to try to assemble all of the environments in which the particular practice is found and then attempt to uncover what those various contexts have in common. Here, the 'meaning' of the practice is whatever co-occurs with it" (Goffman 1971:226).

Having begun to learn about the meaning of hand-holding by looking at those who do it and those who don't, we can go forward. Given the people who do it, we can ask when it is they do it, and when it is they don't (when they might) … [Where it is prohibited and] where hand-holding seems to be approved and even idealized … What groups were first to start using it? … How does a holder learn to hold hands? (Goffman 1971:228-232)

Having provisionally answered these questions, Goffman proceeded to suggest general explanations from and for his empirical generalizations: "[W]e can anticipate that certain functions can be performed that could not be conveniently performed otherwise [although in some cases, other practices may be equivalent and substitutable for the one in question]" (1971:234). Note that this explanation is structural functionalist along the lines of Durkheim and Parsons. The same is true for his comments about socialization:

[H]owever hand-holding is learned, it is likely that a wide range of other items in our ritual idiom is learned in the same way, and it is the connection between socialization techniques and this total

range of items that is interesting, not in particular how hand-holding itself is learned … In the face of all these easy opportunities [to have very different meanings attributed to hand-holding], a single understanding effectively orients the various holders and the various witnesses to the holdings. (Goffman 1971:235-236)

Meanwhile, note that these allusions to the origins and persistence of the practice (why some groups were the first to use it, the requirement for and effectiveness of common understandings, and therefore the socialization of new members) also suggest the social Darwinism of Spencer and Park. The same is true for Goffman's use of a statement by Spencer to begin *RP* (formal government evolved out of such more primitive, adaptive accommodations as only "working consensuses"), and this one: "It would be impossible to read effectively the social scene around oneself or to provide others a reading of it if one were not constrained by the same rules as the other participants regarding ritualized indications of alignment" (1971:237).

Such explanations are obviously highly general, but they are explanatory rather than only categorical and metaphorical, and Goffman clearly used them in close tandem with substantive empirical generalizations and explanations. Opportunities for and restrictions upon hand-holding are related not only to establishing and maintaining relationships in general, as most "tie-signs" are, but to the particular requirement of preventing incest and allowing bona-fide sexual partners to leave other considerations aside and become completely physically and emotionally involved (Goffman 1971:230-231).

Goffman's writings are replete with favorable references to explicitly Darwinian explanations (1963a:43-44; 1969:13-14; 1971:xvi-xvii), but as he did with most theoretical traditions from which he borrowed, he added his own qualifications. A main one occurred when he praised animal ethnologists as a model for his own work, but then cautioned that they, too, often assume that all the ways animals relate continue to have survival value. It bears noting that most of Goffman's main theoretical ancestors—Cooley and Mead, Park and Hughes, and Durkheim and Parsons—are united by some degree of social Darwinism. These links are taken up elsewhere (in progress).

Inductive Versus Deductive?

Having made our case that Goffman's research was heavily comparative and his explanations heavily "grounded" in it, what can we conclude about whether and how much he proceeded inductively versus deductively?

Goffman told Verhoeven (1993:328) that, "as you say, my approach is largely inductive," and we have seen several cases of this in the previous section: the systematic presentation of data and only afterwards empirical generalizations and explanations about performances in the *PS* and hand-holding in *RP*. Nevertheless, as we also noted there, when he provided general explanations for his empirical generalizations, he often appealed to established general theories from the past rather than constructed entirely new ones. Indeed, this is how Goffman (1959) prefaced the *PS* as a whole:

The perspective used in this report is that of the theatrical performance; the principles derived are dra-

maturgical ones … In using this model, I will attempt not to make light of its obvious inadequacies … The framework is presented in logical steps. (pp. xi-xii)

That Goffman was proceeding deductively, as well as inductively is also clear in his notorious statement near the end: "Now it should be admitted that this attempt to press a mere analogy so far was in part a rhetoric and a maneuver" (1959:254). He then outlined many of the ways in which everyday life is not staged to the degree that a play in a theater is. On the other hand, he then acknowledged that it remains a useful way for drawing out many of the central features of everyday social encounters: "The key factor in this structure is the maintenance of a single definition of the situation, this definition having to be expressed, and this expression sustained in the face of a multitude of potential disruptions" (Goffman 1959:254). Recall that this is also how Goffman closed his late account of hand-holding and other tie-signs.

In his Preface to the *PS*, Goffman (1959:xii) had told readers that, "The introduction is necessarily abstract and may be skipped," but were one to skip the Introduction, one would underappreciate the general nature and importance of Goffman's own theory of impression management, a theory that clearly guided not only *Stigma* and *Asylums*, as we have seen but one which Goffman continued to refer to in later works. As we also saw earlier, *Asylums* itself has heavily deductive elements. Goffman went into Central Hospital with certain expectations about what he would find, and what he reported on and how he qualified his generalizations involved the same hypothetico-deductive logic that we suspect underlies most scientific research and theorizing.

As we noted earlier, there have been tendencies to portray Goffman as either a pure inductivist (Davis 1997) or pure deductivist (Lofland 1980). Surely, however, such extreme interpretations are not warranted. Methodologically and formally, our own view seems closest to Phillip Manning's (1992:54-55) "spiral"; that is, Goffman both tested his concepts and metaphors against empirical reality and then qualified or rejected them accordingly. However, rather than stop at concepts and metaphors, we have followed Goffman and moved on to substantive empirical and explanatory generalizations.

We have emphasized the absolute importance of deduction from general substantive theory to fill important gaps in how Goffman has typically been interpreted. Nevertheless, we have also stressed how systematic, comparative, and genuinely empirical much of his work was. It is impossible to determine the exact balance or imbalance between after-the-fact induction and a priori, hypothetico-deduction in that work. All we have to go on are Goffman's writings and reflections, and given his theory of impression management and warning to Verhoeven, it is not surprising that physical and social scientists' reports of their research and conclusions have been found to be idealized performances, often competing team performances, rather than completely accurate accounts of what actually went on (Kuhn 1962; Kaplan 1964; Garfinkel 1967).

On the other hand, whereas the latter research helped spark a host of new epistemologies and methodologies opposed to positivism, we should be careful not to rush to judgment, let alone impose the latter upon Goffman. As we have seen, he had good reasons for resisting these trends. Unquestionably, Blumer and Glaser and Strauss were correct to warn against going into the field with one's mind already made up by pre-existing notions of what one is likely to find and how to interpret it. In fact, this was Goffman's complaint about much European sociology (Verhoeven 1993:343-344). Yet, surely Huber (1973) is no less correct: None of us goes into the field as a "blank slate," and rather than deny that we have presuppositions and preferred theories, we should make them available to others so they can decide how warranted our conclusions are.

In this regard, Glaser and Strauss themselves were anything but strict inductivists. Although they followed Blumer in recommending that we initially go into the field with only sensitizing concepts, they suggested that we then set out to verify or qualify our conclusions in realist and positivist ways (Charmaz 1998:254-256). Furthermore, when one examines the specific examples from their own research on awareness contexts Glaser and Strauss (1967) used to illustrate their methods for grounding theory, one finds a considerable gap between their findings and general explanations. Curiously, the latter look suspiciously like those in mainstream "role theory" and structural functionalism. There is nothing wrong with this per se. As per Huber (1973), the problem is when one denies one has presuppositions, which then are "snuck in through the back door" and affect one's research and theorizing anyway. Goffman's refusal to be consistently "grounded" in the new, pure, politically correct meaning of this term probably helped him strike a reasonable balance between the above two, equally dangerous methodological errors.

General Conclusion: A Parting Ritual

We have attempted to go beyond previous interpretations to provide a reasonable account of how Goffman went about selecting and comparing his and others' observations, as well as how he claimed to, and probably did, make his own direct observations. Although many of Goffman's specific methods were unorthodox when he first used them, by now they have often become "best practices." We have also found wanting claims that Goffman was either not a true empirical researcher in the first place or an unusually "biased" one when he did do empirical research. Furthermore, although we agree that Goffman's observations, empirical generalizations, and explanations were often organized by formal classification schemes and abstract metaphors, we have made a case that he went much farther. In particular, both his classification schemes and his metaphors appear to have been linked to substantive dimensions of in/inter/dependence, incentives, constraints versus opportunities, and unfamiliarity and familiarity, dimensions which had been used by Cooley and Mead to explain the frequency and accuracy of role taking, and Park and Hughes those of contact, competition, accommodation, and super/subordination.

Finally, attempts to present Goffman as an inductivist rather than a deductivist are clearly misrepresentations. Instead, unlike many others out of Chicago, Goffman often made his own "biases" and preferred explanations explicit, allowing others, as well as himself to verify or revise them, and to accumulate a body of well-supported, general, substantive theory. That so few of his interpreters recognized the existence and nature of the latter in his work was apparently a major disappointment for Goffman (Berger 1986:xii-xiii). Hopefully, we are now closer to acknowledging Goffman's contribution to general sociological theory, repairing his impression, and developing his legacy further by building upon that general theory, as well as his highly innovative methods.

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Trans*-Subjectivity: Exploring Research Positionality in the Field

Abstract   The focus on trans*[1] individuals as researcher subjects often problematizes trans* identity, limiting the possibility for trans* individuals to create and co-create bodies of knowledge. Drawing on three years of participatory research in the animal production industry, I discuss the implications of my subjectivity as a trans* man in this particular setting and in my research more broadly. Beyond being a self-reflexive exercise, this study seeks to make a number of theoretical and empirical contributions. First, feminist literature discussing one's subjectivity has largely focused on the dialectical existence between men and women, with little room for trans* or gender diverse perspectives. Further, studies that have acknowledged trans* identity have done so in relation to trans* persons as research subjects, with no recognition of their positionality or the possibility of the trans* researcher. This study seeks to change these paradigms by extending current feminist research frameworks on subjectivity to include greater gender diversity.

Keywords   Gender; Feminist Methodology; Transgender; Feminist Research; Subjectivity; Trans*

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My involvement as a researcher in any setting is often filled with moments of joy, excitement, agony, and self-doubt. The majority of these instances coincide with my gender performance, what it means to be a man in a particular setting and how I am expected to perform my gender accordingly. The negotiation of space, social roles, and language are all infused with gender connotations, made more pronounced by the fact that I was not born male, but rather that I transitioned from female-to-male in my late teens. In this paper, I address how my subjectivity as a transgender man influences how I conduct research and subsequently interpret my findings. My analysis is based on three years of field notes drawn from my participant observation research on the reintroduction of swine into small organic farm systems.

In the same way that a woman may draw on her gendered experience to understand a situation, trans* researchers can often draw on a variety of cross- and multi-gendered experiences to engage and assess the world. For example, I have been recognized and related to as a woman, man, and androgynous individual. These gendered moments have typically been accompanied by assumptions about my sexual orientation so that at various times I have been labeled as a lesbian, gay man, straight female, and straight male. With each label I have been granted access to some spaces and experiences, while effectively being excluded from others, causing my sense of place and space to simultaneously change with my outward presentation and perceptions of others. While this experience is common among trans* persons, there are few cis-gendered[3] individuals who can attest to experiencing life as both a man and a woman.

Outside of research related specifically to trans* individuals and their communities, the existence of the trans* researcher is largely ignored. While a number of scholars have written about their experience in the field as gay men or lesbians (Blackwood 1995; Bolton 1995; Kulick and Wilson 1995; Burkhart 1996; Goodman 1996; La Pastina 2006), none have addressed what it means to be a gender creative (e.g., see: Ehrensaft 2011) or trans* researcher, or how this unique positionality might impart new insights not only in the field but also in documenting the dynamics of gender.

Since 2009, I have been actively involved in a study addressing the social and structural dynamics of pig reintroduction into small organic farms. The study involves the transportation and relocation of pigs from a traditional confinement-based facility to a pasture-based, rotational grazing system at my university's Student Organic Farm (SOF). The pigs are then raised through collective management at the SOF until they reach target weight. At that point, the pigs are transported for slaughter. This paper draws on participant observation notes, chronicling my relationship with the pigs, fellow researchers, and the physical environment to assess how I, as a trans* researcher, conduct, document, and interpret the research process and results in relation to my gender identity. Beyond being a self-reflexive exercise, this study seeks to make a number of theoretical and empirical contributions. First, feminist literature discussing one's subjectivity has largely focused on the dialectical existence between men and women, with little room for a trans* perspective. Further, those studies that have acknowledged trans* subjectivity have done so in relation to trans* research sites or communities. This study seeks to change this paradigm and extend current feminist research perspectives and theory to include greater diversity in gender identity, a process

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[2] The use of trans* has replaced the use of the term transgender in discourse as an attempt to thoroughly recognize the diversity of gender identity and presentation that may or may not involve a transitional state.

[3] A term used to describe an individual who considers their gender identity to match their birth gender.

that can be considered as a focal point in trans-feminism (Scott-Dixon 2006). Additionally, this study also seeks to identify the nuanced gender dynamics within small-scale animal production from a trans-feminist and trans-subjective perspective.

Background

Trans*-Subjectivity

Scholars have begun to recognize the unique experiences of trans* persons in a number of contexts, including risk management and elevated suicide rates (Grossman and D'Augelli 2007; Walls, Freedenthal, and Wisneski 2008), substance use (Cochran, Peavy, and Cauce 2007; Bruce, Ramirez-Valles, and Campbell 2008), HIV/AIDS prevalence (Garofalo et al. 2006; Nemoto et al. 2006; Bockting, Miner, and Rosser 2007; Sausa, Keatley, and Operario 2007; Ramirez-Valles et al. 2008; Kosenko 2010), the need for clinical care, counseling, and psychotherapy (Brown and Rounsley 1996; Israel and Tarver 1997; American Psychiatric Association 2000; Meyer et al. 2001; Carroll, Gilroy, and Ryan 2002; Leli and Drescher 2004; Winters 2004; Zucker and Spitzer 2005; Perez, DeBord, and Bieschke 2006; Logie, Bridge, and Bridge 2007; Hines 2007; Lombardi 2007), and relationship dynamics (Pfeffer 2010; Ward 2010). What nearly all of these articles have in common is that they demonstrate how a gender variant identity is regarded as socially problematic. In addition, more recent work has begun to address the dynamics of the transgender experience in daily life, such as in paid work environments (Connell 2010; Whitley 2010). Specifically, I (Whitley 2010) argue that through the recognition of gendered office dynam-

ics, one's trans* status can be used as a strategic tool to propel one's own corporate career. I write,

> As a gender outlaw long accustomed to carving my own path, I learned to communicate in ways that were unavailable and unidentifiable to my non-trans coworkers, catapulting my own trans status from corporate cost to corporate benefit. My female past and male present provided valuable reference points for negotiating interactions with both men and women. (Whitley 2010:32)

This passage showcases how trans* persons can use their gender identity to negotiate and make meaning out of daily experiences, even when those experiences are not directly related to their trans* status. I have also documented that friends and family members of trans* persons may likewise experience unique ways of viewing and assessing gender dynamics in various situations, which alter how gender is constructed and performed in social environments (Whitley 2013).

Despite the significance of this reality, the mundane and everyday experiences of trans* persons are often dismissed by academic discourse in favor of "more provocative" analyses of sex and gender transitions. The current exploration of trans*-subjectivity as it relates to research is my attempt to acknowledge the importance of these everyday moments, where one's past, present, and future gender experiences subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, influence one's experience and understanding of the world.

Gender Dynamics in Organic Animal Production

The literature addressing the dynamics between gender and agriculture production is vast. While I do

not seek to critically engage current theories regarding gender and agriculture production, I do want to present my analysis in relation to a larger body of work. Given that the majority of the participant observation notes analyzed in this study are drawn from observations at an organic farm, I position my observations in relation to the following studies. Hall and Mogyorody (2007:289) suggest that, "gender divisions of labor and decision-making on organic farms are linked in important ways to the labor processes of different types of farms and to the ideological orientations of the farmers within those types." According to this line of thought, alternative systems, such as organic farming, may lead to greater gender equality through the division of labor and possibly decision-making (Kloppenburg 1991; Feldman and Welsh 1995; Meares 1997; Hall 1998; DeLind and Ferguson 1999; Trauger 2004) because they challenge the traditional labor process (Clunies-Ross and Cox 1994; Abaidoo and Dickenson 2002). Feldman and Welsh (1995) suggest that this is the case because alternative farms privilege non-traditional knowledge, effectively increasing the value of female perspectives. Additionally, Peter and colleagues (2000) find that men on alternative farms demonstrate a less "masculinist" view of the dynamic between humans and nature. However, a number of researchers are unconvinced of the perceived differences in gender relations (e.g., Sachs 1996; Meares 1997; Trauger 2004) since much of the research has involved small samples. Hall and Mogyorody (2007) find that it may not be the alternative or traditional approach to farming that produces distinct differences in gender relations, but rather the scale of production. Obviously absent from this discourse is any mention of non-cis-gender individuals or deviations in gender identity and presentation. As

a result, the analysis of trans*-subjectivity is a novel addition to the field, and assessing gender dynamics in small-scale farming provides a rich site for appraising how I use my transgender and/or gender creative positionality to inform my research.

Data and Method

Locations

Two sites were selected for observation: the Swine Teaching and Research Center (STRC) and the Student Organic Farm (SOF). The STRC was completed in 1997, on a university campus that has a long history of swine production. This facility is a full shower-in and shower-out operation with roughly six boars and approximately 200 sows. It has a breeding room, four farrowing rooms (where the sows give birth), four nurseries, and four finishing rooms (where pigs are fattened for "market weight"). Approximately 2,000 pigs are "finished" at the facility each year. The breeding herd is maintained from within; no outside pigs are admitted into the system. Beyond the production infrastructure, the facility also has administrative areas for teaching, research, and management. There are two full-time employees and six to eight student workers each semester.

The SOF was founded in 1999 as the result of student interest in learning sustainable methods of farming no longer taught in the agricultural program. The SOF heads The Organic Farmer Training Program (OFTP) and involves volunteers ranging from students to local community members in its year-round farming activities. In 2009, the SOF negotiated the first transfer of three pigs from the

STRC to the SOF. Farm employees, student volunteers, and faculty from a variety of backgrounds work to monitor and research the development and impact of the pigs on the SOF. The pigs are rotationally grazed on pastures. They are fed a mixture of organic grain and fresh organic produce, along with what they root and graze off the land, and are provided with a hoop-style shelter for nesting and refuge.

These research sites provide stark contrasts in terms of gender dynamics; however, these differences will only be explored to the extent that my own identity as a transgender man interacted with perceived gender norms.

Data

During the spring and summers of 2010 and 2011 and the spring of 2012, I was an active participant in the pastured pig project, meaning that I both participated in the daily care of the pigs and assisted in research activities like monitoring their health and weight. During this time, I did not reveal my transgender status to any of my colleagues or research participants. The opportunity to present myself and be seen as male, and only male, allowed me to document my unique experiences untainted by others' perceptions of my gender identity. Although I cannot be certain that my colleagues did no suspect my transgender status, I find this possibility to be unlikely given that I transitioned well over ten years ago and that I consistently present and "pass" as male. An added dimension of my presentation is situated in the fact that I am legally married to a very feminine woman.

I recorded field notes based on my interactions with the pigs, fellow researchers, staff, and the physical environment. Notes were documented both while engaged at the site and after each visitation. All field notes were hand-coded for instances where my gender identity and perception of self as a transgender man were mentioned. These instances were then separated into key themes. The collection of notes analyzed in this study spans two consecutive years, May 2010 to April 2012.

I chose to focus my analysis on my own field notes for a number of reasons. First, given that the estimated population of trans* persons in the United States is less than one percent (0.3%) (Olyslager and Conway 2007; Gates 2011), generating a random sample of trans* researchers is virtually impossible. Second, most research requires an adherence to objectivity, where the researcher attempts to remove him/her/himself from the research process. However, Harding (2001) calls for increased ownership of one's subjective existence through "strong objectivity." According to Harding (2001:163), strong objectivity places the "agent of knowledge in the same critical, causal plane as the object of her or his inquiry." In adherence to this call, I seek to identify and present my unique subjectivity—trans*-subjectivity—as it relates to one of my research projects. Third, the recognition of one's own subjectivity and how it impacts research serves as a valuable exercise for all researchers regardless of their gender or gender identity.

Findings

Beyond seeking to extend literature and theory on the value of trans* perspectives in work environ-

ments and suggesting that discussions around positionality in feminist research should include greater awareness of gender presentation and identity, this study draws on three themes, each with a relevant example from my own subjective interactions, to illustrate how a trans-feminist perspective could be applied to understanding gender dynamics in field research. The key themes identify the particular instances where my gender identity was in conflict with the structural nature of the observational environment, and include physical space, role expectations, and language.

Physical Space

Because of human intervention, the physical environment often has gendered associations that are embodied in how space is managed and who is allowed to control or manipulate the space. There is a vast literature on the construction of space from a gender perspective (e.g., see: Massey 1994). In animal production, space can be highly regulated, as seen in confined feeding operations, or it may be minimally or alternatively managed. Although most scholars recognize that space may have gendered connotations, how space is occupied and negotiated for non-cis-gendered people provides interesting insights into how gender is constructed and maintained for all individuals.

While I cannot go into detail regarding all of my experiences, perhaps the most telling example was my first visit to the STRC. I decided to take a tour of the facility. I had no idea that my physical body would become a barrier to freely accessing the space. A few days before the tour, a colleague informed me of the

shower-in and shower-out policy. Many confined feeding operations have a shower-in and shower-out policy to limit contaminants that might be brought in from the outside. The policy mandates that individuals visiting the facility must remove all clothing and leave it in an open locker-room at the front of the facility. Once all clothing is removed, the individual must then enter the open showers, scrub off, and proceed out of the shower and to the other end of the locker-room. At this point, the individual retrieves clothes (underwear, socks, and coveralls) from a bin to be worn during the tour. There are only two locker rooms, one for men and one for women. Both are fully open, where space may be shared by any number of individuals at one time. After the tour has ended, the same showering procedure is followed in reverse.

Prior to this study, my research had never involved the removal of clothing. While there is no doubt that all bodies are unique, for trans* persons this uniqueness can be a source of contention, extreme psychological distress, or social vulnerability. As a transgender man, my body is no different, and in this space I had a number of concerns. First, I had never been in a male locker-room. I feared that I would not understand the social norms or expectations. Second, I was concerned that, although I had fully transitioned, my body would betray me, and my past history as female would be discovered. Finally, I worried about my safety. If my past were discovered, how would I be treated? Like many trans* people, I have experienced both verbal and physical harassment.

Leading up to the tour, I discussed my apprehension with a few friends who were not involved in

the project. The women I spoke with mentioned that if they had concerns, they would address these concerns with the STRC manager. In the past, when I had been read as female, even as an androgynous female, this would have been my approach. For example, at my undergraduate university, I requested to have a unisex restroom constructed at the recreation center because I did not feel comfortable in either the male or female locker-room. Ultimately, my request was taken seriously—the university was concerned for my safety—and a unisex restroom was constructed. The key point, however, is that I had made these requests as a woman, requests that I could not have made as a man. In the current case, presenting as male, requesting special consideration was out of the question. The men I spoke with informed me that there was no room for negotiation, that men do not raise such concerns about shared space and that to do so would signal my difference. So, I was left with two challenging options. First, I could raise my concerns and compromise the relationships I worked so hard to construct, or I could remain silent and risk my own physical and mental health.

As with most situations in my life, I decided that I would go through with my scheduled tour despite my apprehensions. I rationalized my decision based on the fact that, should there be a problem, it would not be mine. I adopted a "your ignorance is not my issue" mentality, which I recognize can only be enacted from a place of privilege. As a university sanctioned building, I was protected legally and I had documentation to prove that I am legally recognized as male. So, if I was harassed or questioned, this would be a university issue, an issue that I was

fully aware might require legal action. I entered the STRC male locker-room and conformed to the procedures outlined above. There was no problem. I shared the locker-room with three men. No one noticed, perhaps because no one thought to.

While inside the locker-room, I shifted between feeling like a fraud and feeling a profound sense of accomplishment. It was not just the self-awareness of my transgender status that conjured up these feelings, but also a compilation of my collective subjectivity. I knew that perhaps everything they thought I was, I had never been. Most importantly, I was not a meat eater, nor was I born male. What I learned from this experience and a culmination of others is that the flexibility to be an emotionally engaged being is often stifled in the male world, something that I was not fully aware of before I transitioned. Though my female colleagues could express their discomfort with the shower-in-shower-out policy and bemoan their body issues, for me as a transgender man, as I am sure for other men at the STRC, there was no appropriate space to identify and share our concerns or emotions regarding this practice. As a transgender man, the shower-in-shower-out routine became the focal point of my experience at the STRC, while for others it was a minor detail. While this serves as only one of the many examples of how space was constructed in opposition to emotional disclosure, it is a powerful demonstration of how my trans*-subjectivity serves as an essential component of my research. Additionally, these observations not only lend themselves to a greater understanding of the construction of this specific space, but they also bring into question other aspects of the emotional work of men in this industry. For example, if there

is no room for men to identify and discuss emotions at the STRC, is there room for men to be emotionally engaged with the animals they raise?

Role Expectations

A role is an expectation placed on us by society dictating how we are to act in a given situation. Roles are often gendered. In the above example, if I were a woman, I may have been able to discuss my apprehensions with the manager of the facility, but as a man, there was no place for this type of disclosure because it would be inconsistent with my expected gender role. Similarly, food preferences also have gendered associations, as do the ways in which we are expected and encouraged to interact with animals. While much has been written regarding the relationship between gender and meat consumption (e.g., see: Adams 2010; Merriman 2010; Potts and Parry 2010; Ruby 2012), few, if any, articles address what it means to transition from female-to-male as a non-meat-eater. In this section, I explore my subjectivity as a vegan transgender male and how this unique position impacts my research. Additionally, I provide an example of how others expected me to relate to the pigs based on my gender presentation.

The Gender Dynamics of Meat Consumption

I have been a vegetarian since I was a child, not because my family abhorred eating meat; on the contrary, my father, a Korean War veteran from the South, did not eat a meal without it. I often tell people I was a vegetarian before the majority of people had a word to describe my eating prefer-

ences and well before tofu and Morningstar were widely available. Today, I'm a vegan. As a man, my decision to avoid meat has become a focal point of many conversations. I have often encountered people who assume I made a "bad decision" to transition from female-to-male because I do not eat meat, as if eating meat should define my gender identity or perceived sex. When I started with my work at the SOF and STRC, most of my colleagues assumed that I was a meat eater, after all, why would a man who is a vegan be engaged in raising animals which would eventually be slaughtered for food? The answer to this question is complex. Initially, I engaged in the project to foster dialogue, to support the farm-to-table movement, raise awareness about confined animal feeding operations, to see if shared suffering was possible, and to learn from an insider's perspective what it means to engage in animal production. Being reflexive about my own subjectivity, I recognize that beyond these seemingly practical endeavors, I had a desire to learn about the boundaries and borders of gender in a new environment. I was interested in what I could identify as a vegan transgender male that might not be readily accessible to others who were more centrally located in the community.

What I learned was less about the community and more about myself. When I came to the farm, I did not announce that I was a vegan, but I assumed that if someone asked, I would politely answer, offering only as much detail as was requested. What happened instead was a lie by omission. During a conversation with some of the principal investigators, the discussion turned to food; as we talked about meals and restaurants we enjoyed, someone

made the common assumption that I was a meat eater. I did not correct them. Now, on the one hand, I can justify this by saying that I did not want to isolate them—I was, after all, studying their world and seeking to understand the ways in which they naturally interacted with animals. However, this is not the full story. The other reality was that standing in a group of men in a male-dominated field, I did not want to reveal my food preferences, my animal ethics because as a transgender man, I did not want my gender to be questioned. I know that it is not uncommon for men to avoid emasculating situations, but for me, the fear was that my gender would be questioned in a way that would challenge my own validity as a researcher in this environment. I had an "in" as a man—one that I would not necessarily have had in my female life—and I did not want to jeopardize that.

Gender Dynamics in Human and Animal Relationships

During the summer of 2010, I spent many mornings at the SOF. I would arrive early, well before anyone else, giving me a chance to watch and document pig behavior, to see how they related to me, and to form a more intimate relationship across species. On the day that the pigs were to go to slaughter, I arrived early at the farm as usual. As I approached, they greeted me with excitement, making high-pitched squeals and running wildly around their enclosure. After introductions, I found a space in their enclosure and sat down to meditate. The director, who also arrived early on this particular morning, found me there with the pigs. We hugged as she approached and then we wept. I was heartbroken.

I had engaged in this process, fully aware that the end was drawing near, but that did not make it any easier. When I transitioned from female-to-male, I learned how to control and manage my emotions, how to assess appropriate places for emotional disclosure, and how to present and alter my gender performance depending on the people I interact with. When among women, I often find that I am able to bring forth or channel my feminine side, whereas when interacting with men, my communication style changes. After years of this behavior it has become instinctual; yet as hard as I tried to control my emotions, I wept openly that day.

Close to the time of the pigs' departure, a second faculty member arrived. This particular man had been involved with both the STRC and the SOF. He was taken aback by my emotional transparency. I could tell that seeing me cry made him uneasy as he even remarked to the director that he had never seen a man so attached to a group of farm animals. This comment highlights the gendered expectations surrounding human-animal relationships—women are allowed to be attached while men are not—but it also raises an important question. How can men share in suffering and develop empathetic relationships with animal others if we are not emotionally engaged with them? In the second year, I was astounded to find that my emotional display had altered my relationship with this man, and had altered it for the better. After my display of vulnerability we shared a closer relationship; our conversations were more intimate as he disclosed stories about his life raising animals and his connection, often intimate and emotional, to the animals he raised.

Language

As a transgender man, language has served as a valuable indicator of my arrival into the male world. Early in my transition, I used language cues to determine if I was being perceived as a man or as a woman. By interpreting these cues, and the gender performances of those around me, I could alter my presentation to achieve my desired effect. Although it can be more reflexive for trans* persons, this process is not unique to the trans* community. It is the same procedure that happens for all individuals as we develop our gendered sense of self. In most contexts, language conveys some form of gendered information, to suggest who should be included or excluded, and how this inclusion or exclusion should be implemented. Animal production language is no different.

Having little experience with agricultural animals, my first exposure to this language was with the term "animal husbandry." This term is well accepted in the literature and used at both the STRC and SOF. The word husbandry is derived from the term "housebondrie," which first appeared in 1250 to 1300 and is used to describe those who actively breed and raise livestock. The base of the term, "husband," has obvious masculine gender connotations, where a husband signifies a man who is a provider and manager over another, usually a person or animal. When applied to animal production, this term involves managing the care and breeding of animals. In the formal definition, there is no mention of an emotional component. For me, this term is both gender affirming and problematic.

My sense of affirmation in this term has no basis in its practical use. For me, as a transgender person who has fought so hard to be recognized as male and referred to with male pronouns, the clear masculine nature of the word is comforting, regardless of its meaning. The application of this term on my body by others produces a sense of pride, even if the current use of the term extends to those who do not identify as male. My apprehension of the term is also embedded in the gender connotation, in what it means to use a male term as a symbol of management or control over another being, whether that being is human or animal. I wondered if the function of this term at the SOF was laden with the emotional disconnect that seems to plague the STRC and men in animal production more generally. What I found was that while both the STRC and SOF freely use the term, those at the STRC more readily identify with it, while those at the SOF prefer the use of organic farmer.

More recently, the term midwife has been used on the SOF to classify those of us who engage in the delivery of the piglets. This compound term, originated in the 1300s, has been used to describe a woman who assists another woman in childbirth. My reaction to this term was in direct opposition to my reaction to animal husbandry. While I had initially enjoyed having animal husbandry applied to me by others, I had reservations regarding its practical use. When I first heard midwife applied to my body, it gave me an uneasy feeling. In introducing me to another student, the director commented, "He is going to be one of our midwives this year." I was taken aback. I wondered whether she had found out about my past as female, though intellectually I knew this was not the

case. She was actively blurring the lines of gender at the SOF, giving space to be both male and a midwife. Counter to my intellectual resistance of animal husbandry, the use of midwife as applied to a male-bodied individual has powerful implications. Not only does it seemingly cross the boundaries of gender in language, but also it suggests that men can, and perhaps should, have a deeper relationship with animals. The use of the term implies that the relationship should not be based in power and control, but rather in a caring and nurturing capacity that is facilitated across species.

What was significant about both of these terms was the fact that, as a transgender scholar, I had to be hyper-aware of my own reaction to them and then manage my emotional response. As part of my research, I am interested in the ways that workers in the SOF and STRC use language to develop meaning in their work. Because I am a participant researcher, it was at first easy for me to assume that the other workers would have a positive association with animal husbandry and a negative association with midwife, simply because I had had such visceral reactions to these gendered terms. It took several days of self-reflection to identify my deeply embedded and purely subjective understandings of these terms so that I could investigate and understand how others incorporated and made meaning of them.

Conclusion

The literature on trans* experience is growing daily. Such an expansive field brings new ways for assessing how gender in presentation and identity has tangible impacts on our daily lives. Limited

work has already explored the negotiated process of trans* persons in work environments. This work has found that gender identity and performance are used to negotiate and make meaning out of daily experiences even when those experiences are not directly related to a person's trans* status (Whitley 2010). A distinctly different body of literature has begun to assess the presence of trans* persons in academic settings. Much of this literature is focused on inclusiveness, policy development, and individual educational experiences. With a growing number of trans* persons entering post-baccalaureate academic and research positions, the logical connection between these two branches of research is to assess how trans* researchers use their identities to negotiate field experiences.

Feminist approaches to research and methodology have long encouraged the recognition of one's subjectivity or positionality in the field. While past scholars have addressed both gender and sexual subjectivity from a feminist standpoint, they have not yet written about trans*-subjectivity. More specifically, what it means to be both a trans* individual and a scholar, and how one's trans* status impacts one's research agenda. Individual analyses of subjectivity have largely focused on binaries where man/woman and gay/straight are contrasting positions, seemingly missing a wealth of experiences that reside in the margins of these distinct categories. Clearly absent from this discourse is the mention of non-cis-gender individuals or deviations in gender identity and presentation.

The analysis above begins to fill this gap by providing an individual assessment of trans*-subjectivi-

ty on a small-scale animal production project. The goal of this assessment was threefold. First, I want to encourage gender creative and trans* persons to be mindful of their positionality as a research tool. Second, I want to encourage those who have a unique gender journey to recognize that their experience may create unintentional opportunities or challenges in the field, challenges that are distinct from those of cis-persons. Third, the recognition of these two ideas can create openings for new insights into the ways in which gender is constructed in the field environment.

Through my research at two distinct sites, a confined animal feeding operation (STRC) and an organic farm (SOF), I came face-to-face with the ways in which my transgender identity influences my research process. By examining my identity in relation to space, I was able to better understand the gender dynamics and boundaries present at the STRC and SOF; by investigating the interactions between my gender performance and expected role I was able to understand the root of meaningful relationships with my research subjects; and, by studying the subjective responses to language that have developed because

of my transgender identity, I was able to overcome my own predispositions so that I could better understand how research subjects make meaning of their worlds through language. This analysis is novel in its extension of feminist research methods to trans*-subjectivity; however, the undercurrent of this analysis contends that we all act on research from a specific position. Historically, trans* researchers have often been forced to hide their "positionality." However, as anti-discrimination legislation progresses, new opportunities are opening up for trans* persons across society. While limited research has explored trans* persons in work environments, many issues such as trans*-subjectivity, specifically in research environments, remain undocumented. As with feminist discourse, we have found that those who experience and present gender in ways that are different from the dominant paradigm (male/masculine) have unique insights into the construction and presentation of gender as a social system. Because of this, and based on my own experience in the field, it is likely that a closer assessment of trans*-subjectivity by those who identify as trans* will provide unique insights into various dimensions of research and social life more broadly.

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Storying the Good Life: Selfhood and Morality Through the Biographical Narrative Storyline

Abstract   The connection between personal story and morality has been long enunciated, but remains under-researched. Combining moral and narrative theory, this article approaches this relation by introducing a line of narrative inquiry oriented towards the exploration of how ethical intentions with regard to the good life manifest in and shape the biographical *storyline* and the self narratively assembled. The analysis encompasses a first case-based stage focused on the examination of the main motive of the personal story and its effects upon the organization of both self and narrative, followed by a comparative phase in which storylines and moral motives that work as reference of a set of biographical accounts belonging to different social positions, temporalities, or geographies are contrasted in order to establish linkages, breaks, and transformations in the relation between identity and morality across cases. This line of inquiry is applied into a research about intergenerational changes and continuities in the relation between selfhood and morality, based on life stories conducted with Chilean people of successive generations. In the conclusions, this strategy of narrative analysis is assessed in the light of current development of this field of qualitative social research.

Keywords   Life Stories; Narrative Analysis; Morality; Self; Cultural Change; Generations; Storyline; Moral Motives

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The Personal Narrative as a Moral Quest

Biographical narratives are situated, intentional, and creative practice of meaning-making through which people organize their life experiences in their concrete social context to render them meaningful in a first person account that is communicated in the most complete and detailed possible way. Despite levels of success, objectives, disjunctions, or activities undertaken, rhetorically, one way of recounting these personal accounts is through the figure of the "quest" (e.g., see: MacIntyre 1984; Taylor 1989), which organizes the story implicitly or explicitly, as a journey or trajectory with a goal or a mission: something to learn, to overcome, to endure, to conquer, to achieve, or to transform. I learnt this in practice, amidst the analysis of thirty lengthy biographical stories I gathered through interviews with three generations of Chilean families. Despite acute differences in the cultural and socio-political context of reference, disregarding distinction in family and personal trajectories, in one way or another, this communality was evident: interviewees put their narratives as "stories of transformation" (Gergen 1991), "tales of achievement," and "adversity overcome."

And the reason is well-known; biographical accounts are not merely descriptive exercises, they are foremost ethical practices where the legitimation of life and self is at stake. In Charles Taylor's terms (1989), a sense of "the good," and thus about what kind of life is worth living, or is fulfilling or meaningful gives socially and temporally specific orientation to the narratives of the self. My proposition is that those "quests" I found are expression of the *storyline* of the biographical account. The storyline corresponds to the anchor point of the narrative or the recognizable theme around which the account is composed. This storyline is based upon a moral motive or an *ethical intention*, and therefore upon a certain idea of the good. Put otherwise, I argue that those ideas of transformation, achievement, or adversity overcome; those *storylines* around which the biographical account is organized are precisely pointing towards the moral motives or *ethical intentions* of that life (Ricoeur 1992:172), and thus they provide analytical access to the moral constitution of the self in narrative form. Upon these premises in this article, I introduce a line of narrative inquiry into the moral motives of the self, focusing on the analysis of the organization of the biographical account around different "quests."

In the field of narrative studies, the connection between personal story and morality has been enunciated by many. Labov (1982) has argued that narratives are explanatory theories in which storytellers construct "micro-level morality tales" of the events recalled. Labov's point is that narrative is not only a description but an explanation and, in this sense, it represents "a theory of causality" (Squire 2005). Along the same lines, Day Sclater (2001:5) has claimed that "narratives are evaluative frameworks," and therefore "to tell a personal story is to take up a moral position." This is also the point emphasized by Plummer (2001), when he maintains that personal narratives are told as "moral tales," by Stanley (2008), in her view of personal stories as based on moral and other types of claims, and by Cortazzi (2008:384), when he postulates that, in comparison with other type of data, narratives incorporate an evaluative dimension, since most of them "do not simply report events but rather give a teller's perspective on their meaning, relevance, and importance." Taking the point of view of the narrator rather than that of the story, Riessman (2008) has also described personal stories as discourses where the moral character of the protagonist is sustained, while Ochs and Capps (2001:76) have called attention to the fact that "storytellers naturally wish to position themselves as moral persons."

In spite of these claims, little effort has been made to actually research biographical accounts in moral terms. This has been the focus of my work. Combining moral and narrative theory, I have explored biographical stories as "interpretative practices" (e.g., see: Holstein and Gubrium 2000), where narrators negotiate their understanding of who they are in spaces that are culturally and, particularly, morally situated around questions about the "good."

In the study of the relation of self and morality, I follow the Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor (1985a; 1985b; 1989; 1992). Taylor's work is, above all, a philosophy of articulation among "goods." His central argument is that human beings are self-interpreting subjects who are moved by the love or respect of a (historically variable) notion of the good. This notion operates as a motivational source, "empowering" individuals to act in a certain way, offering standards by which actions, desire, and motivations can be judged, and helping them "to discriminate what is right and wrong, better or worse, higher or lower" (Taylor 1989:4). Morality, in Taylor's account, is then not only a matter of mutual obligations between fellow beings but, crucially, it is what provides the "horizon" allowing each of us to define from place to place and time to time what is good, correct, worthy, and meaningful, or rather what is bad, wrong, superficial, or meaningless. In other terms, "making the best sense of lives requires the use of 'thick' evaluative languages of the good" (Parker 2007:6).

Along with Taylor, philosophers, MacIntyre (1984) and Ricoeur (1992), have also emphasized that narratives are a condition for self-interpretation in these

substantive terms I have been stressing. They argue that the moral experience itself has a narrative structure, or, in other words, that moral sense-making usually takes a narrative form. Arguments of this kind make the life story and other biographical devices (testimonies, auto-biographies, etc.) an appropriate "technology" for gaining access to the moral constitution of the self.

One of the consequences of the cultural turn for the social sciences is the recognition that "the forms in which experience is encoded, accounted for, and represented help constitute that experience" (Andrews et al. 2000:5). Stories are not only *about* who one is but also "sites" for self-constitution (Smith and Sparkes 2008:19). Thus, it is acknowledged that the practice of storying the self comprises two interrelated activities: the *whats* and the *hows* of the meaning-making process (Holstein and Gubrium 2000), that is, what narrators say the self is, and how they narrate it; the narrative's content—the "told"—and the narrative's mode of production, organization, or structure—the "telling" (Riessman 2008).

Rhetorical devices, modalities of self-enunciation, narrative genre, the interviewee's and interviewer's approach to the narrative work and the social situation of the interview are some of the elements through which the self is assembled in a personal narrative. In this article, I focus on one of these elements—the *storyline* underpinning the organization of the personal narrative—with the aim of showing how narrative biographical work and the self being claimed are shaped around situated, historically specific ideas of the good.

The approach I introduce here access the study of the relation between moral self and narrative from the question of *how* that content is organized in narrative work so as to accomplish the task of delivering a moral tale. Thus, it refers to questions such as: What is the moral character? What are the elements around which this exercise has to revolve? What needs to be embraced, defended, or achieved and also what needs to be left aside in this composition? In this way, the approach sheds light on the cultural conventions and resources for the construction of a moral personal account, or in the inverse sense, it examines how available conventions weave into personal biographies.

To exemplify this connection between biographical storyline and moral motives, I present an intergenerational comparative analysis of biographical stories elaborated with two generations of Chileans. This temporal span of two generations is meant to be taken as a case study to illustrate how changes in the moral sources of the self over time impinge on redefinitions of the biographical narrative main storyline and the self being storied. Apart from temporal relationships, intergenerational or not, this line of inquiry can be used in other comparative analysis of biographical narratives, for instance, across social spaces (landscapes of memory, of work, of migration; geographies of sex and sexual exchange; spaces of violence, suffering, resilience, care or dispute) and across social positions (high and low, able and disable, resourceless and resourcefull). In any case, the comparative exercise should allow linkages, breaks, transformations, and other relations between identity and morality to emerge from the analysis.

Methodological Procedures of a Biographical Research on Self and Morality

In this section, I describe the methodological aspects of the investigation from where I draw to elaborate this article. In the research entitled *Doing the Self: Selfhood and Morality in the Biographical Narratives of Three Generations of Chilean Families*, I examined biographical stories to study transformations and continuities in forms of self-interpretation in successive generations of Chilean people. In previous articles, I have developed particular strands of this relation: I have analyzed the shifting relation of self and morality in the intergenerational discourses of sexuality of the women interviewed (Bernasconi 2010), and the process of temporal expansion and retraction of the moral framework of the mature and elderly interviewees through the analytic tool of the "narrative elasticity" (Bernasconi 2011). This article is an attempt to relate the moral constitution of the self in narrative with the overall form in which that discursive practice is organized. In this sense, I expect to contribute to the systematization of analytical procedures to conduct narrative analysis.

For the research *Doing the Self*, I conducted thirty life story interviews among grandparents, parents, and grandchildren of 10 families living in the capital city of Santiago. Interviews were made in two or three sessions, at informants' homes or places of work, and were carried out in Spanish. On average, each case took five and a half hours in total. All interviews were literally transcribed and a copy of a complete transcript was offered to each interviewee as a form

of reciprocity. Therein publications have used transcripts in which all personal names are changed to protect anonymity.

I worked with a life story interview guide that was organized temporally from birth to the present. Largely, the interviewees touched on most of its topics without the need to probe. I wanted to delve deeper into various topics in the study of selfhood. Although many of them were addressed in the life story, their development was subsumed to the main task at hand: the narration of a complete life. Therefore, I designed a semi-structured in-depth interview on different areas of practices and conceptions of the self, such as the body, self-perception and life stages, turning points in life, aspirations and ethics, discourses of selfhood that predominate in their social circuits. Conversations around these issues shed light on different projected selves and their resources, drawing the space and the boundaries of a person's possibilities of being. Some of these questions required preparation and where given in advance, for example, what their obituary would say if they were able to write it, or the selection of a situation in which they had felt humiliated. During evaluative talking, I also asked the interviewees to provide a title for their stories. Interviews ended with a final comparative section on the continuities and breaks in the lives of the three generations under research. Moving from the personal to the interpersonal, this was also a way of giving closure to the whole process.

I followed a selective sampling procedure (Schatzman and Strauss 1973) to choose participants with the intention of collecting individual and family stories with diverse life trajectories and socio-economic backgrounds. In each generational group, there are five men and five women, as well as people who adhere to right wing and left wing political options. I worked with families of Catholic upbringing, the country's main religion. Neither my grandparents nor my parents nor myself belong to any of the generations being researched. This did not preclude discussion of many of the issues of this research with my own family. The choice of cohorts for the research was related to the recent socio-political history of Chile: the middle generation had to build their families amidst a coup d'état and the subsequent military dictatorship, whereas their children were born after the return to democracy. Methodologically, then, I use time as a dimension of change by working with three generations. Based on the seminal work of Mannheim (1952), but also in further contribution (Kertzer 1983; Pilcher 1994; Kohli 1996; Corsten 1999; Edmunds and Turner 2002) with the concept of generation, I refer to a group of people sharing an identity as a result of having been exposed to events that have molded a common interpretative framework for understanding themselves, which they subsequently use to locate themselves within the larger social group to which they belong (society). In sharing a common history, members of a generation share a temporality or a way of being through time.

A Case Study on Changes in the Biographical Storyline and the Moral Motives of the Self: Intergenerational Narratives of Contemporary Chilean People

Due to space restrictions, in what follows, I apply the line of inquiry proposed to the comparative analysis of the two oldest generations of my research, which complete twenty cases. The grandparents cohort was born between 1925 and 1935—herein called the 30s generation. These interviewees grew up in families composed of, on average, seven siblings. They started working during adolescence and continued to work long after retirement age. The group included peasants, lawyers, miners, union-leaders, self-employed housewives, and businesswomen, who are married, widows, and widowers. On average, they married at the age of twenty-five and had six children. The parents cohort was born between 1948 and 1955—herein called the 50s generation. On average, these interviewees married at the age of twenty-two and had 3-4 children. They averaged fourteen years of schooling, twice as many as their parents. This group included teachers, intellectuals, blue-collar workers, businesspeople, employees, and housewives, who are married, divorced, and annulled. Because of the expansion of Chilean economy during the eight decades the study covers, as a whole, living conditions for the grandparents were harsher, and their cultural, social, and economic capitals more limited than those their descendants possess.

The analysis of biographical accounts in terms of narrative motives requires a case-centered approach, which develops through a close examination of each complete story. In this phase, questions are oriented towards the discovery of the central moral concern around which the elements of the personal story are assembled so as to give it a point and make it look "whole, coherent, and understandable" (Riessman 2008:81). That idea of the "good life" orients the quest around which the narrative of life and self revolves. In my experience, the main motive can often be found encapsulated in common day expressions or iterative sentences. As I said, the exercise of entitling the life story can also be indicative of the idea of the good that works as a point of reference. Once such idea of the good is found, the analysis proceeds with the examination of how that motive serves to organize the narrative storyline and to place the self in a moral light.

In the following step, the analysis asks about the effects of this moral motive in the story being constructed and in the kind of self the narrator claims to be. We can ask questions such as: Which parts of the story does the narrator leave aside? Which ones does he or she stress? Which ones does he or she denounce, contest, or ameliorate? Which ones does he or she use to claim his or her identity?

Subsequently, a comparative analysis takes place looking for connections between storylines within and across groups, in my case, among generational groups. As a result of this exercise, emerging storylines can be delineated and similarities and differences between groups conceptualized.

Storylines and Moral Motives in the Biographical Narratives of the 30s Generation

To illustrate the type of inquiry here introduced, in what follows, I present the extensive analysis of two biographical storylines per generation in their relation to morality and as they develop through the practice of narrative construction. These sections are followed by a comparative intergenerational analysis, where the relation between prevailing storylines

and ideas of the good is developed. The analysis of these four stories is sometimes enlarged with the voices of each generation's peers, with the purpose of adding density and complexity to the description. All excerpts in quotation marks are literal extracts from the interviewees' stories. The conclusions assess the narrative approach taken in the context of biographical inquiries.

30s Generation, Guillermo's Story: "A Life of Much Work and Suffering"

76-year-old Guillermo is a thin, humble, illiterate, blue-collar worker, born in the rural outskirts of the Metropolitan Region. Of Catholic faith and center-leftist political ideas, Guillermo has lived on his own in the family home since the death of his wife five years ago, and is regularly visited by his seven adult children and their families. "A life of much work and suffering" is the title he chose for his biography. "Our life—he elaborates—was only about work, suffering, forced work, all that." The use of the possessive adjective "our" signals the collective nature of this quest in a double sense. First, this is the kind of quest of people of his class, the working class of illiterate peasants. Second, the quest is a family endeavor, headed by Guillermo, but demanding the engagement of all its members. In the enterprise of social advancement Guillermo embarked upon, the family ought to act like a "ship" he says, everyone heading towards the same port.

Guillermo threads the events of his life along his working trajectory, as all the grandfathers I interviewed did. In fact, 31 of the 57 pages of his interviews transcript are about work. Back in the Chil-

ean society of the 30s, labor, and particularly, physical labor was the only legitimate resource a poor man had to "become someone different."

Guillermo opens his story with the self-image of a poor 6-year-old boy, living in the countryside, with a working mother, six siblings, and no father, waking up at four six days a week and walking twelve miles to the estate where he served as a peasant laborer. "Wearing no shoes, only flip-flops."

Fragment 1

> 1 **Oriana :** Ok, can you tell me about your life, can we start from the beginning?
> 2 **Guillermo:** Ok.
> 3 **O:** Let's start from your place of birth.
> 4 **G:** I was born in Buin, the year I was born, so we devoted our lives to work in the fields, for instance, plowing, woodcutting, coal-burning, herbs drying.
> 5 **O:** Your dad was a peasant?
> 6 **G:** Yes, so, you know, that was our job, and, you know, we had to walk almost twenty kilometers to get to work, we would leave at four in the morning.

Then Guillermo minutely describes every job he did after moving to Santiago at "the age of sixteen, seventeen": courier to a rich family, building-site worker, fruit picker, factory worker, mine worker, manager of the mine dining-hall, and finally a restaurant owner. He tells how he seized every job he was offered, even if it made "his body bleed" and he "had to sleep on the floor," had no proper contract, was at his employer's mercy, and had no holidays.

The main capital of a manual agricultural or industrial worker is bodily strength (Urresti 2007:283-285), thus men's use of corporeal references to speak of their working endurance. A body able to bear pain and long hours of physical work, such as mine worker Jose's, another interviewer of this generation. He describes a "young body" able to take two shifts in a row down the pit, a "healthy enough" body, which has the job "ingrained in the skin," as if it were "the air that one breathes."

Physical power was necessary in this quest, and moral will power, too. Guillermo's story says that not only hard work but also his respectful, humble, and humanitarian attitudes earned him the respect of his superiors, to the extent that the boss often ended up loving him "as a father does his son." In some of his jobs, this *huacho* (pejorative Chilean expression for a son who lacks parental recognition) found the father who had been absent from his own family, while the love and care of the boss's wife compensated the absence of his caring mother. Characterizing the working milieu, Guillermo brings into the scene family characters and roles. This means that the physically extenuating daily work was conducted amidst strong, supportive, and caring relationships, and not among functional, competitive, or merely formal ones. It also tells that the hitherto socio-economically excluded orphan boy has acquired social membership through labor. At the end of his story, Guillermo reflects:

 Fragment 2

> 1162 **O:** What has your life been about?
> 1163 **G:** About a lot of suffering, a lot of suffering.

> 1164 **O:** Because of work, the economic situation?
> 1165 **G:** Tell me what job I haven't done. I never thought that I would get where I got, never ever.
> 1166 Imagine working in the fields wearing flip-flops, then the pit, then being the owner of the dining-hall, and then I bought the restaurant here [in Santiago].
> 1167 How could I ever imagine all that? All that in just one life.

The success symbols of modern society—income, class, status—signal the attainment of social respect: Guillermo earned a position in the "middle class," he possesses "his own house" in "a good—decent—neighborhood," was "able to afford his children's studies" so that six out of the seven completed secondary school, and is ending his life feeling proud of the "palaces" in which his children live today. After experiencing "what poverty really is," "suffering a great deal," and "mak[ing] many sacrifices," today Guillermo can return to his land of origin, transformed into "a different person," a "superior" man:

 Fragment 3

> 1103 **G:** When one leaves his land, one leaves with the ambition of being someone different, and of coming back to one's land as a superior [being]. If you left wearing shabby trousers, you would want to come back wearing a good suit.

Dress is the sign of respectability that publically speaks of this man's success. Guillermo, however, does not voice out his achievement; he puts a visual image in the place of that text: the shabby kid was transformed into a man in suit. Despite the success, by the time of the interview, Guillermo was 76 and

had a part-time job as a council gardener. Retirement is too boring for this *doer* self:

Fragment 4

1119 **G:** I like every job, I don't like laziness. There they tell me, "You are such a good worker, you start working and never stop."

1120 And you should see how nice I have the grass there.

1121 **O:** You must feel proud, don't you?

1122 **G:** I feel proud and I like being working and have everything clean and tidy.

30s Generation, Ricardo's Story: "I Didn't Transform Anything"

If Guillermo's represents the successful story, grandfather Ricardo's contributes to the description of the storyline of material progress from the viewpoint of failure, of the "sad tale" (Goffman 1972), the account of the "wounded storyteller" (Frank 1995), or, in the terms here employed, the failed "quest." Born in 1925 to a casual relationship between a rich employer (the man) and a poor employee (the woman), Ricardo is a retired white-collar worker, a Christian man of right wing political ideas, married, and father of three children. Throughout his narrative, he overtly expresses what he wanted to achieve in life: economic and social progress; in his words, "being somebody else," "changing economic status," "climbing steps socially and economically," and "becoming rich." And he seems to have the resources for this quest. As he recounts, even his school's headmaster could anticipate Ricardo's bright future:

Fragment 5

1126 **Ricardo:** He [school headmaster] used to tell to the other students more than to me: "This lad has a good head, he'll become rich, he'll have everything, and he'll come back driving his own car."

Accordingly, Ricardo uses his narrative to show that he did everything the right way to meet that goal. In the past eighty years, he has led a morally worthy life and trusted in the opportunity of advancement that the social structure promised: "If you don't work, you won't progress." Despite not having parents and suffering emotional and economic deprivation, he completed school, got a technical degree, and worked hard and with honesty since the age of eleven, always acting with the right means ("good weapons")—unlike the rest "who wanted to rob and not to work."

However, life did not turn out as promised, and a deep sense of unfairness fuels Ricardo's narrative. He was not allowed to reach the place he thought he deserved. The series of "betrayals" that prevented him from achieving his goal gives this narrative its structure. In storying the self, he articulates his defense, explaining the reasons of this failed quest. For a start, he was betrayed by both of his parents. Having been born from a casual relationship, he was denied a family, and grew up like a *huacho*: "I had nobody to count on." The mother never took care of him, and the father only sent him money during his childhood.

Fragment 6

787 **R:** My dream was to become a lawyer, but I got stuck there [in the South, where we was sent to be

taken care of] had my father wanted to help me ... I could have gone on studying … the others had [the resources] for studying and I had nobody.

Then he was betrayed by his father's relatives who denied him in the more elementary way, "they changed my surname." Being 15 years old, through a copy of his birth certificate he needed for a school application, Ricardo realized that he was legally registered under another surname and that the place and date of birth he always took as his were wrong. For Ricardo, the main consequence of this change of identity was that he could no longer show his life achievements. "It seemed as if I was dead, I said, 'To whom can I show my sport trophies, my diplomas,' they had another name." Out of anger, "I set them on fire." This scene shows that rather than to a sense of self-accountability or self-reward, his sense of identity is tied to external recognition, one for which he no longer has the proper proof.

Next, he was deceived by his step-grandmother, who kept for herself the money Ricardo's father sent for his care:

Fragment 7

64 **R:** Everybody said: "Look, that one has a millionaire father, but goes around like a shabby kid." I didn't even had shoes, I went around in bare feet.

65 With the amount of money he sent I could have had the life of a king. The lady [step-grandmother] even got a house with the money.

Ricardo was a "king" in earnest not only because he held the ideal of becoming rich and powerful since

an early age but also because his father was a "millionaire." However, the heir spent childhood looking like a "shabby," marginal kid.

Once married, he was betrayed by his wife who "wasted" his salary helping everyone in need. To Ricardo's mind, as much as to his generational peers', wife and kids should be part of the economic enterprise. Ricardo blames part of his failure on his wife. She "squandered" what he earned; she was not the "partner to succeeding."

Then, in the recollections of his working trajectory, Ricardo tells how a number of employers made profit out of his working achievement without giving him any benefit. The final strike was given by the public institution in which he worked for two decades. Ricardo was rated as an "excellent" employee year after year and "had not a single stain" in his career in the institution, "despite those who attempted at making me falling." But, during the military dictatorship, the institution forced him to retire with a miserable pension on the wrong grounds that he was an infiltrated communist in the public apparatus. Ricardo reflects: "I have never had a good pay, I found it very unfair; I've done so many sacrifices to be repaid this way."

There he was when we met, juggling to make a living out of an "unfair" pension, living in his in-laws' house, counting only with his bedroom for a personal space. He was physically and emotionally ill, after an ulcer that carried with it half of his stomach, and after a psychiatric treatment for alcoholism and depression. And he also gave in morally. He tells how, when he was about to leave

his job in the public sector, he took profit of the position to bribe.

Today he is unable to work, and he looks and feels deteriorated. A skinny body and a thin voice stream. Moreover, Ricardo does not get along with the wife or with her family, and at this point in time, "there are no friends."

Ricardo could not find out a title for his life story. Not because there were no ideas, but because—he explains—"I didn't transform anything." There was not a successful quest to name. Ricardo tells the story of a defeat, but he is not the one to blame: "I made many sacrifices; I taught and helped so many people." The system failed. It "did not pay" as deserved. He has been wronged by society. Instead of glory, he got what he calls the "Chile's pay": "betrayals," "deceit," "robbery," "bribes," "treacheries," in a world of "dirty" people ("pigs") and "bent paths." Although he did not choose it, I think this is the title that summarizes his narrative in his own terms; a story about the "unfair pay of Chile."

The 30s Generation Moral Quest: The "Struggle to Make Something of Oneself" Through Material Progress

As Guillermo's and Ricardo's accounts illustrate, storying the self through a social narrative of material progress emerges as a common structural feature of the biographical tales I collected among this generation. The idea of "becoming another person" is a central narrative drive in this cohort. This "transformation" of the self does not depend on an inner search nor is it about overcoming emotional

deprivation, despite the lack of individual attention, affection, and emotional support evident in many of their accounts.

This generation's quest aims to change initial living conditions through material progress and social advancement so as to give their families "a different life." This goal underpins the idea of *surgir*—literally, "to arise"—which is at the base of these stories. S*urgir* refers to the struggle to get ahead, to make something of oneself, the will to improve. For those interviewees belonging to the working and lower-middle classes, *surgir* basically means to move up a social class—"looking for greater well-being," "a change of life," "carrying on building and building," "coming to have a lot," "climbing higher," "changing economic status," "living better," "going further than your forebears," or becoming a "superior" person are all connotations of this idea that they use.

Among those with a lower socio-economic background, the idea of self-improvement through social mobility also conveys a civilizing component. For example, when explaining the importance of giving his kids all the opportunities to get a good and complete education, 85-year-old grandfather José explains:

Fragment 8

> 32 **José:** We started with that idea that our children wouldn't be like little animals running around adrift like slum dogs.
> 33 We gave them a Christian education to become professionals.

Beyond class differences, the moral culture needed to make something of oneself depends on "hard work," "sacrifice," "suffering," "major efforts," "will," "seriousness," "responsibility," "perseverance," and fair rewards. These are the values and virtues that strengthen the moral basis of the self.

The notion of social advancement present in these narratives is grounded in an idea of history as a linear progression and in a sense of confidence regarding the possibilities society offers for achieving a satisfactory standard of living. Sometimes hyper-realistically, members of this generation describe their capacity to overcome hardship without anybody's help. The heroic tone imprinted upon their narratives helps to represent this idea of the good, while also prepares the story to provoke feelings of admiration or imitation. When in 1939 grandmother Margarita married Alberto, they were "poor as rats" and had to "start from scratch." Asking no one for help, "owning not so much as a pencil," they "came to have a lot."

A "culture of endurance" underlies this generation's moral economy (Urresti 2007)—having "a bruised life," "a life full of blows," "a long-suffering life," or "a life of struggle." This is the good life, "as it prepares you for everything." Life is not something enjoyable, but a "tough" reality to surmount. "Happiness" and "satisfaction" depend upon "knowing how to act in life," that is, upon knowing how "to accomplish one's duties."

I now turn to the analysis of the storylines and moral motives of the 50s generation, through the cases of Elena and Miguel.

50s Generation, Elena's Storyline: Working Over Emotionally Threatening Events, a Healing Process

53-year-old Elena is the elderly of seven siblings in an upper-middle class family. She is a Catholic woman with right wing political ideas, a technical education, her own business to attend, a married life in crisis, and three professional children who have been the center of her life.

The working trajectory was the connector of Guillermo's and Ricardo's stories. Elena has worked since she was young, and in a number of occasions, she has been the main provider for her immediate family. Yet, unlike the grandfathers, she articulates her story through psychological "traumas"; emotionally threatening events that had long-lasting effects on her psychical make-up. Through these traumas, Elena establishes temporal links between adolescence, youth, and maturity, and constructs the portrayal of her family and of herself.

Elena's account starts with "the first big blow of my life"—an unexpected change of school due to the family's straightened circumstances. The second school enjoyed a lower status, but the trauma was not socio-economic:

Fragment 9

> 12 **Elena:** After twelve years I was suddenly in another school. It was one of those things that have marked my life, from one moment to the next seeing yourself in another environment, with other classmates. I knew nobody.

Elena presents the change of school as an emotionally stressful event that abruptly transformed her everyday environment and the landscape of her relationships; it threatened her familiar world and represented the "first" moment in life where she felt displaced, helpless, confused, and insecure.

Elena discloses a second trauma in response to a general question about her family memories. As the oldest child, the teenage Elena had to care for her seven siblings and the home while her parents were at work. Whereas the previous generation takes this as the most "natural" and unquestioned of duties, Elena considers that such a "burden" should not be an adolescent's responsibility. In her case, it caused a "trauma" that disrupted the relationship with her mother (see: lines 82-85) and siblings (see: line 81) and her own identity:

Fragment 10

74 **E:** My family life was chaos, I mean, um, chaos in the sense that I think that, this part is really difficult for me [starts crying].

75 The thing is that it was a huge burden for me, you see, um, I dislike it because it has brought consequences to my adult life.

76 My parents worked, I'm the eldest of eight.

77 So, in a way, I was the mother of my siblings.

78 One of the things I have worked upon in life is that period of my life when [I had to] assume the responsibility for that household

79 [a responsibility] I shouldn't have had to assume.

80 It meant I didn't have a youth.

81 It made the relationship with my siblings non-existent.

82 It's been hard to get rid of this baggage and not to keep reproaching my mother as I did at one point.

83 I used to think she worked to evade the mess the eight of us made.

84 So I had to bear the mess.

85 And that shit fucked me up, it really fucked me up a lot. It marked me very much, until this very day.

Over the years, Elena has worked upon this event of her biography in search of "personal growth." She has worked through her negative emotions and the relationship with her mother and siblings. She has also elaborated an interpretation with which to confront her pain, and is deeply aware of the possible influences of this trauma upon her own maternal role:

Fragment 11

114 **E:** The anger built up and built up, and it began to take over me,

115 and I began to take it away through therapies, personal therapies of personal growth.

116 I've got rid of this baggage and I've tried to understand why it happened.

She has embarked on what other members of the 50s generation call a "healing process," trying to be at peace with her story, and thus with herself. Trying also to discover the positive side of this stressful experience. This is the case of the following characterization of her family's spirit:

Fragment 12

126 **E:** We are the children of rigor; we are all hard workers,

127 we don't mind starting from scratch or breaking our backs,

128 we are hard workers, we can survive any storm,

129 we have such a strength, such capacity to move on.

130 I think we learned that from what we had to live.

131 Now, I'm grateful of what I am and of what my parents gave to me.

132 They gave what they could ... it could have been worse.

In continuity with narratives of the 30s generation, Elena refers to the culture of endurance as the capacity of standing any adversity. But, instead of holding a physical connotation—how a good man "stands" long hours of painstaking work—she links the expression to a strength of spirit, illustrating the interiorization of the idea of endurance.

Finally, Elena recounts the trauma of her marital separation. Three years ago, Marcelo, her husband, lost his job. He moved to the South to start a new business. Once there, Marcelo began to neglect his family, and Elena had to make all the effort to keep their relationship going. Left alone in Santiago, in charge of the home and their three children, Elena felt overwhelmed and disheartened. After some months, she decided to split up with him. But, during these years, they have come together and separated a number of times. The future looks uncertain. Elena no longer knows what she needs him for. In his absence, she became the "man" of the house, providing for the children both economically and emotionally. She misses his company, but she is also enjoying living a life of her own.

Constructing her story from trauma to trauma, Elena presents her identity as the result of disrup-

tive events and of all the personal traits they have imprinted on her: being courageous and never disheartened, having strength of spirit, becoming "a man," and taking the lead if necessary. Most of these traumas are caused within the context of intimate relationships (family of origin or of procreation).

Elena entitled her story as "A life that has not been easy nor boring"; learning about one's life and thus about oneself is a basic condition for structuring a sense of inner integration. In her case, the biographical narrative articulates a sense of psychological continuity and helps to cope with life.

50s Generation, Miguel's Storyline: "Why So Lonely?"

Miguel, a 56-year-old blue-collar worker of kind manners, easy smile, and sincere talk, is another interviewee of the 50s generation. A feeling of loneliness pervades this man's account. At the end of our five-hour interviews, he explicitly comes up to this conclusion, choosing to entitle his story "Why so lonely?"

Miguel opens his narrative with the image of a nomadic childhood, just like "gypsies": many changes of residence and of school, and the continual transformation of his immediate environment due to his father's precarious working situation. He blames to this instability the little memories he is able to retrieve from these early years. Neither could he reconstruct his infancy "borrowing" memories from his main carers. His parents were "weird, to say the least," they did not used to talk to him. Miguel portrays himself as a reserved boy, most of the time

playing alone. To these he adds the figure of an alcoholic father who beat up and quarreled with his mother. "I listened, but I did not interfere in these quarrels," he tells. "Maybe because of these early experiences—he continues—I got separated from my wife." Seeing his parents arguing, he developed aversion towards conflict and never learned how to negotiate disagreements. In fact, as an adult, he came to beat his wife once. He tells that after seeing himself enacting the conduct that horrified him in childhood, he chose to get separated.

In his recollections of adolescence and adulthood, Miguel connects the feeling of loneliness to the lack of confidence his father and then his wife showed in him. He could not develop rewarding relationships because they did not "believe" in him. Going to school, one rainy day he fell out of the bus, and ended up all wet and full of mud. So instead of going to school, he headed back home. The father did not believe his story and thought he had made it up just because Miguel did not like studying (the father, by way of contrast, was an excellent student, as I was notified by the three interviewees of this family). His father's distrust profoundly "marked" Miguel. After the episode, he made the decision to abandon the school and began a period of "rebelliousness." He was 12 years old.

Miguel identifies his separation in the early 90s as the next, and probably the most profound, landmark in his life. This is his deepest "regret." He never lost touch with his three kids, and has spent every Saturday with them since. But, until this day, he cannot be "at peace" because he has not been at home on a daily basis. He even blames the misbehavior of his

youngest son on his absence. Unlike Ricardo, it is not in Miguel's interest to start distributing guilt, blame, or responsibilities. Differences apart, he has never spoken ill about his wife. But, through his version of the story, he implicitly signals his wife's mistrust as the main factor that drove them apart. After twelve years of marriage, she started saying, "that I was lazy, that we would never have our own house, that I couldn't save a penny, and that I was seeing another woman." Miguel used to spend every Saturday with his football team, having drinks and getting drunk. But, "I also worked hard," he says in his defense. And, "I never missed my responsibilities" and "I had never asked anybody's help." But, "if the other person is telling you all the time that you are lazy, at the end of the day, it gets tiring." At a point he identifies this lack of trust as a reason for looking for another woman's company. He feels humiliated by the lack of confidence of his wife. She undermined his sense of self. Ultimately, what Miguel has been claiming throughout his narrative is recognition. He needs to feel loved so he can restore his sense of self and put an end to a story of loneliness.

Comparative Intergenerational Analysis: From the Quest of Material Progress to the Quest of Personal Growth

Whereas narratives of the 30s generation constitute the moral domain by telling realistic stories of traversing hardships, those of the 50s generation recount personal narratives about facing turning points and overcoming "traumas" and "baggage." They draw on a sense of psychological interiority and on a "therapeutic relation to the self" (Rose 1999:xx). This is their moral voice. At the core of this

generation's narratives there is a quest for "personal growth." A state of health, solace, and a meaningful and fulfilling life are sought not through the transformation of material circumstances, but through learning to come to terms with one's story and gaining self-reflexivity and self-understanding.

If the 30s generation's quests revolve around economic resources—work, property, goods—the 50s generation assemble their narratives with personal relationships, ties, and bonds. When the moral sources of the self rely on external figures, the public realm is a central space of narrative production. Much of the accounts of the 30s generation concern public life: their working trajectory and their community life. The 50s generation, by contrast, set large sections of their narratives within the intimate space of the family.

Another difference is that unlike their children's generation, narrators of the 30s generation do not dwell on the effects that emotional wounds can have on their sense of self. When they got to a point in their stories where a sensitive issue was to be disclosed, typically they said very little. Thirty years ago, retired blue-collar worker, Anselmo, lost his youngest son in a car accident. He recounts the event, tells of his deep sorrow, and recalls how he sought solitude to cry out his grief. But, sorrows, Anselmo concludes, "have to be faced and then shouldered, and you have to get on with life." He does not dwell on the consequences of this loss for his sense of self. But, the fact that sufferings are not thematized does not mean they are forgotten. Every morning since that car accident, Anselmo has commended himself into his son's hands.

Those interviewees born in the 30s frame the good life as one of sacrifice and suffering, one gained in the "struggle" to "get ahead" and "make something of oneself," basically, through the betterment of living conditions. The storylines of 50s generation interviewees divert from issues of ordinary life, work, and production. In this case, narrative work is oriented towards the problematization of the relationship of self upon self—these interviewees place at center stage the capacity to come to terms with the personal story and to integrate the events of life into a meaningful and comprehensible account. A sign of this generational shift in the underlying motif of the biographical account is the replacement of the idea of "improvement" for that of "growth." A transit from social stories of material progress to inner narratives of personal growth, and from descriptive and over-realistic accounts to more impressionistic and experimental narrative styles accompanies this shift.

In this process, the moral culture of endurance—based on "self-sacrifice," "suffering," and self-postponement—gives way to a moral culture based on self-examination, self-knowledge, and self-expressiveness. These transformations, I want to propose, are indicative of what Charles Taylor (1989) calls the emergence of the question of the meaning of life as an "inner search." When the notion of the good is externally defined, life is not interpretable or questionable, nor is it subject to reflexive analysis or evaluative claims. Narrators of the 30s generation do not frame their stories as a search for a sense of being. In contrast, their children's narratives express the need to discover their fundamental orientations in life through inner exploration. A question that can

only be answered once moral authority has been transferred to the interiority of the self. Taylor defines interiorization as the process of relocation of the authoritative power in moral issues from a moral ontology that gives predominance to the voice of others to one that gives prevalence to the person's voice. In the cases here examined, this transit does not mean that the members of the 30s generation lack a sense of interiority. What is new is the status granted by their descendants to that "interiority" as the primordial moral locus of the self.

To develop this sense of inwardness, being in touch with one's feelings and emotions comes to be something people have to attain to be true and full human beings (Taylor 1989). In the narratives of the 30s generation, being a moral agent has little to do with their inner feelings and emotions, whilst their descendants afford these a key role in the moral constitution of the self.

Conclusions: The Proposed Approach in Perspective

The connection between personal story and morality has been long enunciated, but remains under-researched. Combining moral and narrative theory, I have tried to contribute to filling this gap, developing an analytical strategy for the examination of the relation between biographical narratives and ideas of the good. In particular, I have argued and illustrated how elements of the organization of the biographical story can be of analytical use for the study of the moral constitution of the self in narrative form—specifically, how different storylines go along with situated ideas of the good. This proposal is built under

the premise that biographical accounts require the use of "thick" language of the good or "thick ethical concepts" (Taylor's terminology).

To this end, I have offered a comparative analysis of the main motive underpinning the life stories of two generations of Chilean people. This set the basis for examining changes in the moral culture of this society over the past eight decades, especially regarding transformations of the rhetoric of the good life. This line of inquiry into the moral motives organizing the storyline of the personal narrative sheds light on the moral basis of the self being narratively enacted, allowing the study of shifting, historically situated, culturally embedded, although dynamically narrated selves. In particular, in the empirical exercise developed, the category of the generation served as a gateway to the cultural repertoires of the self around which to establish the experiences of both the *contemporary* and the *predecessors* (Shütz 1967) over time.

A search for storylines and central moral motives may run the risk of promoting narrative over-coherence, over-consistency, and unitary visions of the self. This is probably a risk any formal account oriented towards the discovery of common trends among groups of narratives may face. Two preventions may help to reduce this risk. On the one hand, to talk about narrative composition, I purposefully use the word organization rather than that of structure. Although within a set of limited cultural resources this choice is meant to provide analytical space of authorship to the narrator, it also takes distance from any claim for a kind of teleological project inevitably lying behind each narrative. Moreover, I have stressed that the overall intention of the analytical exercise

here proposed is to show how moral conventions work as points of reference for the composition of personal narratives. On the other hand, it is my view that dangers of monolithic, single, unitary versions of narrated selves are to be tackled, to a large extent, in the writing process, giving space for deviations, contradictions, and loose ends. Finally, and beyond the scope of the analytical exercise offered here, it is important to stress that the articulation of personal narratives around ideas of the good, as proposed following Taylor, allows the necessary analytical space to examine tensions and compromises among different goods, as well as overtly or unconscious practices of repression of moral feelings as a consequence of the value narrators pose in one of these goods. Taylor's idea of "ethical articulation" and the notion of "repertoire of moral motives" provide the basis for such analysis.

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"Physically We Are Apart, Mentally We Are Not." Creating a Shared Space and a Sense of Belonging in Long-Distance Relationships

Abstract   As couples tend to be referred to as "being together," long-distance partners, who spend most of their time apart and in different spaces, might face a challenge delineating and validating their relationship. Through in-depth interviews with 20 couples in a long-distance relationship, this study explores how long-distance partners linguistically and symbolically mark the boundaries of their relationship, and also transcend any real or perceived gaps between distance and closeness in the process. While they rarely shared a physical space, my participants created joint socio-mental spaces, which enhanced their sense of belonging and helped to expand definitions of intimacy and space.

Keywords   Long-Distance Relationships; Boundary Placement; Boundary Transcendence; Space; Grounded Theory Methods; Symbolic Interactionism

Marking the boundaries of being a couple and sharing a home or other space are essential ways of symbolically creating and maintaining a sense of belonging and intimacy between romantic partners. When couples are in a long-distance relationship, especially if they have met online and not yet in person, and where they rarely share a physical space or a home, it is intriguing to examine how they still establish boundaries of being a couple and a sense of shared space and belonging. Through in-depth interviews, this study explores how 20 heterosexual couples in a long-distance relationship (40 individuals total) accomplish such goals.

Couples in long-distance relationships often deviate from spatial and socio-temporal norms, that is, social expectations regarding the use of space and time (Zerubavel 1981). First, for parts of the relationship they occupy different spaces, which violates preconceived notions about couples in romantic relationships where spatial closeness is assumed. Couples are often defined by "being together" (both in a temporal and spatial sense), and long-distance couples contradict this definition by spending at least some of their time apart and in separate spaces. This situation provides an intriguing opportunity to study how people create a sense of togetherness, transcend perceived boundaries between being together and apart, close and far away, and mark their own space, which, in the case of long-distance partners, might be a space that only exists in their cognitive realm (or in cyberspace).

In defining themselves as a couple, long-distance partners draw a boundary that separates them as a couple from the rest of the world. As Zerubavel (1991:2) put it, "[t]o define something is to mark its boundaries, to surround it with a mental fence that separates it from everything else." Geographically close couples mark their own boundaries and create their own reality (Berger and Kellner 1964; Vaughan 1986; Richardson 1988); however, this boundary work is even more strenuous for long-distance partners because their relationship is less socially legitimated. Just the phrase "long-distance relationship" socially marks the relationship and differentiates it from "regular" relationships that are assumed to be geographically close. The social marking of a category exaggerates the contrast between the marked and unmarked category (thus creating a boundary between them), naturalizes the unmarked, and paints a marked category as distinct and potentially more problematic than the unmarked (Brekhus 1996). I examined what language and symbols were used to mark the boundaries of togetherness for long-distance couples.

Social constructionism and symbolic interactionism have served as the major theoretical backgrounds for this study. I have relied on social constructionism in exploring how long-distance couples created their own reality, their own definition of couplehood and shared space (Berger and Kellner 1964; Berger and Luckmann 1966). As the social construction of reality tends to occur through the use of language (Berger and Kellner 1964; Berger and Luckmann 1966; Vaughan 1986), the examination of the language and words long-distance couples used in their accounts shed light on how they constructed meaning.

A symbolic interactionist approach has also played an essential role in this study. As Blumer (1969) contended, symbolic interactionism rests on three main premises: humans act towards things based on the meanings those things have for them; meanings are created through social interaction; and meanings are understood and transformed through an interpretative process. I explored what a relationship, especially a long-distance relationship (LDR), meant for long-distance couples. Also, I endeavored to learn how long-distance couples created these meanings and definitions *together, through interacting* with each other. Finally, my goal was to discover, through in-depth interviewing and focusing on language use, how long-distance couples interpreted and negotiated their meanings of a geographically long-distance versus close-distance relationship, as well as belonging and a shared space.

Data and Methods

This study included a non-random sample of 20 heterosexual couples in a long-distance romantic relationship, a total of 40 respondents. By a long-distance

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romantic relationship I mean a romantic involvement where the partners maintain separate residences, live at least 100 miles apart, and meet face-to-face no more than once every week. Some studies define LDRs by physical distance only (Lyndon, Pierce, and O'Regan 1997; Knox et al. 2002; Johnson et al. 2007; 2008), but I decided against that because couples with an abundance of resources and free time are likely to be able to meet more often even if they are far away, while couples with more limited resources might see each other less frequently even if the distance between them is not vast. My definition approximates those most frequently used in LDR research, where LDRs are described as relationships where it is difficult or even impossible for the partners to see each other on a daily or even weekly basis (Gerstel and Gross 1984; Guldner and Swensen 1995; Guldner 1996; Dainton and Aylor 2001; Maguire 2007; Stafford and Merolla 2007; Hill et al. 2009; Maguire and Kinney 2010), but takes it one step further by focusing both on frequency of contact and distance.

The goals of this study determined my sampling strategy. Accordingly, I conducted purposive, selective sampling. Purposive (selective) sampling means that participants or cases are selected non-randomly, based on some criteria that are determined in advance, before the data collection starts (Malterud 2001; Guest, Bunce, and Johnson 2006; Draucker et al. 2007). Within selective sampling, I mostly relied on criterion sampling, which stands for selecting cases based on certain predetermined criteria that are key in my study (Draucker et al. 2007). The major advantage of using a selective sampling strategy was that I could ensure that all the selected cases match the criteria I was

looking for (marital status, country of residence, nationality, past or present LDR).

Driven by theoretical considerations, I purposely divided the sample by marital status, country of residence, nationality, and past versus current LDR status. I wanted to explore how these factors might influence how couples create and negotiate a sense of belonging and space. This resulted in four subcategories: five married couples, where both partners lived in the United States and were Americans; five couples who had had an LDR with each other in the past, but had closed the distance, and were now married to one another; five unmarried couples in a current LDR, where both partners lived in the United States and were Americans; five unmarried couples where one partner lived in the United States and the other lived in another country, and each was a different nationality.

As I was interviewing people in LDRs, some respondents lived far away, even in a different country, and limited financial resources did not allow me to interview everyone face-to-face. In addition, time constraints prevented me from waiting until both respondents were in the same town to be able to interview them both in person. Therefore, I interviewed some respondents through Skype, and others by telephone, depending on whether a respondent had a Skype account or simply preferred the phone. The interviews were conducted between September 2011 and February 2012. Each partner in a couple was interviewed separately.

In my analysis, I used grounded theory methods and relied on its three stages: open, axial, and se-

lective coding. I developed concepts early on during open coding and employed a concept-indicator model (Glaser 1978; Strauss 1987; LaRossa 2005). By an indicator I mean a piece of text (a letter, a word, a sentence, a paragraph, etc.) deemed significant in the analysis, and by a concept I mean a label that I associate with one or more indicators (Glaser 1978; Strauss 1987; LaRossa 2005). My goal was to begin employing constant comparisons to the text early; that is, when I was coding an indicator for a concept, I was comparing that particular indicator with other indicators that I had already coded the same way (Glaser 1978; Strauss 1987; LaRossa 2005). After open coding, the next stage was axial coding. Axial coding stands for developing hypotheses about the relationships between variables (Strauss 1987; LaRossa 2005). Coding for processes and coding for strategies are also parts of axial coding (LaRossa 2005). Therefore, I paid attention to these in my analysis.

Finally, after open and axial coding, selective coding is the final phase of a grounded theory analysis. Selective coding involves the selection of a core variable, which is a variable that is theoretically saturated (probably the most saturated of all variables in a study), has the most connections to other variables, and is central to the main story (Glaser 1978; Strauss 1987; LaRossa 2005). The core variable in this study was the "extent of boundary transcendence." It was highly saturated, and it appeared the most frequently in the data. Boundary transcendence stands for bridging the gap between two separate realms or categories and integrating them instead of separating them (Nippert-Eng 1996). The dimensions of this variable were "rigid boundary placement" (drawing a sharp line between two catego-

ries), "some boundary placement," "some boundary transcendence," and a "high level of boundary transcendence."

Results

Defining and Marking the Boundaries of Togetherness

The beginning and end of relationships may be somewhat blurry, involving a gradual transition, or there might be a sharp distinction between being in a relationship versus not. First, I examine how my participants drew a line between being single and being a member of a couple, which can illuminate how couples are initially formed, and what separates them from singles. It was rare among my respondents to describe the transition into couplehood as something fluid and almost imperceptible, but this was not completely absent from my data. For example, Tim could not pinpoint a date or event when he and his now-wife became a couple. As he put it, "It's not like black and white, it's more like gradual. You keep on meeting, then one thing leads to another." Interestingly, Tim's wife, Julianna, linked the beginning of their relationship more to a date and event than Tim did. As she explained it,

> The first date was more like we didn't talk about it, but we held hands and kissed … But, we didn't talk like, "OK, now we're a couple." The second date was when we were like, "OK, maybe we're more than just friends."

Her comment underscores the importance of two people *deciding and agreeing* that they are establishing a couple and becoming a "we."

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Unlike Tim, and similar to Julianna, nearly all of my participants drew a boundary between being in a relationship versus not, and this was negotiated by the partners, and very frequently temporally signified, as well. Most of them identified a date when they became a couple. As Ben shared with me, "On [a specific date] I asked her, I said, 'Would you like to be my girlfriend?'" His girlfriend, Sarah, had a similar recollection: "He asked me to be his girlfriend … We said 'I love you' to each other on [a specific date]. We didn't officially become a quote-unquote couple, we didn't officially give it a name until [two weeks later]." Lindsey and her boyfriend, Daniel, did not view themselves as a couple right away after they had met online, either, but a few weeks later they began to do so. As Lindsey described it, "[On a specific date] we actually officially announced we're a couple, and we really want to be together." The couples now considered these dates their anniversaries.

The accounts above illustrate that there is often a rigid boundary between singlehood and couplehood, and partners construct this boundary *together* by boundary placement. Boundary placement "visibly draws the line between [physical and mental] realms" (Nippert-Eng 1996:8). Placing boundaries *together* indicates that the construction of boundaries for couples that separate them from the rest of the world is also about creating solidarity, strengthening ties, and social cohesion between the partners in their formation of a dyadic group.

By marking the boundaries of couplehood together, long-distance partners also transcend any perceived boundaries between closeness and distance. At the same time, this is not necessarily a very private

moment. Lindsey referred to announcing it to the world that they were a couple. As Vaughan (1986:40) elucidated, "When we couple, we act in ways that publicly link us with the other person." This is what Lindsey and her partner, as well as others among my participants, were doing. Marking the beginning of a relationship and its separation from not being in a relationship can be ritualized (Zerubavel 1979; Vaughan 1986; Richardson 1988), and this was manifested in my interviewees privately discussing and publicly announcing their belonging to each other. The "mental fences" around a new relationship were often also crafted by words that my participants, and most people in society in general, attribute significant meanings to, such as "couple," "boyfriend," and "girlfriend."

Lindsey and Daniel, as well as Ben and Sarah, did not start considering themselves a couple from their first date or the first day they met; they did so a few weeks later. In some cases, the moment of becoming a couple came later. Heather and her partner had casually dated in an LDR for years before they decided to become a couple. As she explained it, "On the anniversary we met he asked me to be his girlfriend." Similar to Heather and her boyfriend, in most cases, when the relationship was not viewed as official right away or shortly after the first meeting or date, the men initiated marking the boundaries of the relationship by making it official. Allison and her boyfriend were an exception. They had casually dated for about a year before Allison prompted a change to set up the boundaries of their relationship. She asserted, "I told him 'You gotta decide if you're gonna stay here or not. If you're gonna go, that's cool, but you gotta go now.' So from that point on we've sort of been on."

My respondents were not only using monogamy to draw a rigid boundary around their relationship, but they were also firm on defining that they had a relationship, even if they had never met face-to-face. Lucy, for instance, had not met Keith in person when I interviewed her. Still, she had no problem mapping out the boundaries of their romantic relationship. When she referred to dating Keith and being in a relationship, I asked her how it was different from a close friendship. She replied,

> Different from a close friendship because I have friends that are male, and I just wouldn't talk to them the way I talk to him, you know, the little "I love yous," or "wish you were here," and things like that.

For her, emotional intimacy, their mutual understanding that they had a romantic relationship, and their romantically charged language use separated it from a friendship. Her partner, Keith, felt the same way: "We just mutually started to, you know, have mutual feelings for each other. That's when we became a couple … I guess you just have deeper feelings for that person than in a friendship." Chloe had not met her partner, Bryce, either, but still asserted, "We're a couple. We haven't met yet, but we're completely for each other." By confirming that they were in a relationship, Lucy and Chloe engaged in boundary placement, drawing a line between two realms considered separate (Nippert-Eng 1996), and also transcended boundaries by establishing and maintaining a relationship without any face-to-face interaction, thus challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about the necessity of face-to-face encounters in creating intimacy (Stafford 2005).

Emotional commitment was one of the major factors in charting the boundaries of a relationship. Emotional and mental bonds and a decision to be together solidified couplehood for my respondents. As Lindsey put it, "You can be together even if it's, if he's 9,000 miles away because it's this emotional bond you carry." Allison agreed, "I still define us being together even though we're not in the same city. So for me not being together in this relationship was when the emotional commitment was not there." For her, emotional closeness and commitment determined that they were in a relationship. Felix, Heather's partner, conceded, "There's the mental being together … that you have someone you love, and there is passion, and all of that comes from that one person." Hank mentioned the mental aspect of being together, as well, "Physically we're apart, mentally we're not." He seemed to place a boundary between physical togetherness and being apart, but cognitively transcended any boundaries between emotional closeness and distance. In his study of online relationships, Ben-Ze'ev (2004:53) called the phenomenon of being physically distant but emotionally close "detached attachment." Detached attachment characterizes all committed long-distance couples, not only the ones who maintain a relationship online.

Physical proximity did not increase my respondents' sense of being part of a couple. When I asked Daniel, for example, whether his definition of him and Lindsey as a couple varied when in the same space versus apart, he insisted: "It doesn't matter. We are a couple, no matter what." Roy concurred, "The definition of being a couple doesn't really change being together or apart." These examples

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suggest that distance and closeness are not necessarily opposites, or at least that the boundaries between them can be permeable in LDRs.

Language use can also contribute to blurring boundaries between perceived or real togetherness and distance, as well as between geographically long-distance and close-distance relationships. Some of my respondents resisted defining their relationships as LDRs because they did not want to view them as different from any other relationship, or feel that closeness might be compromised in an LDR. As Gabriel put it, "I don't even wanna call it an LDR, but it is. Every time I hear about someone who is in an LDR, I'm like, 'Get a life,' you know. I don't wanna think I'm in it." Gabriel might have preferred not to use the term LDR for his relationship because he attached negative connotations to the term, and he did not want his relationship to be seen as inferior to any other relationship. His girlfriend, Jamie, was reluctant to label their relationship an LDR, as well: "I guess it would be considered long-distance, but it doesn't really feel like long distance." Jamie and Gabriel lived on two different continents. Therefore, Jamie was right; from the outside, their relationship would have been considered an LDR.

Leah avoided using the term LDR, as well. As she explained it,

I think my definition of LDR is kind of like really long, and you don't see each other frequently, and there's at least a body of water separating you. What we have now, that we can see each other more often … To me that doesn't even qualify as long distance.

Her frame of reference influenced her definition of an LDR, as well; before marriage she and her now-husband had had a greater distance between them than they did when I interviewed them. As Zerubavel (1991:2) elucidated, "[t]o define something is to mark its boundaries, to surround it with a mental fence that separates it from everything else." Using the term LDR for a relationship might separate it from other relationships and inflate the differences between the two. When we mark a category, we not only differentiate it from other categories, we also make it seem less natural or potentially more problematic than an unmarked category (Brekhus 1996). This might be a reason for evading the term LDR.

When Sandy marked her LDR, for example, she used the term "non-traditional relationship." As she described it, "This is a non-traditional relationship already, so we have to figure out what's our thing, as we say, what's our deal." She was engaging in splitting, that is, emphasizing intergroup differences between long-distance and close-distance relationships (Zerubavel 1991; 1996). Her comment also highlights the agency couples have in creating their own reality and relationship (Berger and Kellner 1964; Vaughan 1986; Richardson 1988).

When pointing out any potential differences between long-distance and close-distance relationships, my participants were more likely to mark non-LDRs than LDRs. Some of the terms they used were value-neutral, such as "close-distance" and "same-city" relationships. These terms can be considered retronyms, that is, new names for concepts to differentiate their original form from newer versions. Before LDRs, or outside of the LDR communi-

ty, relationships have just been called relationships, assuming that most of them were geographically close. However, the emergence and proliferation of LDRs have led to creating retronyms for proximal relationships to distinguish them from LDRs. Some of the couples I interviewed used less value-neutral terms for differentiation, such as "normal" or "regular" relationships for geographically close relationships. Such terms inadvertently reinforce the social legitimacy of relationships that are non-LDRs and potentially undermine the value of LDRs and make them appear "abnormal" or "irregular." My respondents never used such terms to describe their own relationship; however, the implication of describing non-LDRs as "normal" or "regular" might be that LDRs are not.

I also found that when my participants differentiated between "normal" relationships and LDRs, they often endeavored to highlight the advantages of LDRs, or why they might be even superior to non-LDRs. For instance, Vanessa contended, "In many ways it's way better than a normal relationship because we don't see each other that much, but when we do, there's something to share. So it's different from a normal relationship. You appreciate the time more." Steven, a man in another couple, agreed,

If you are in a normal relationship in the same town, maybe you're wondering how committed somebody is. We never had those doubts … You get to know each other on a level that might not happen in a normal relationship.

These justifications seemed to be necessary—as implications of LDRs deviating from the norm de-

creased the status of LDRs, justifications of them as higher quality in some way than other relationships elevated their status.

Relationships are not only defined and created by couples themselves, they are also reinforced or challenged by others (Berger and Kellner 1964; Vaughan 1986). Family members and friends are especially influential in marking the boundaries of couplehood. Receiving support from family and friends (or society in general) tends to solidify the boundaries of relationships, whereas questioning the relationship can lead to a couple having to work harder for social legitimacy. Many of my respondents got positive feedback from family and friends, and they recognized the importance of such support. As Daniel described it, "My family is actually supporting us quite nicely … I really don't think it would be doable if it wasn't at least one set of parents supporting." Zachary had his parents' support, as well: "My family absolutely adores Vanessa. They even said if we break up, they would disown me." Nina had her family behind their relationship, too: "I had a very, very strong support from my father and my sister … That makes a big difference. You have to have some support." Having parents' blessing was even more important for those of my respondents who were young and were close to their parents.

While many friends were supportive of LDRs, some were not. Paige's comment embodied such an example:

A very close friend had a very hard time dealing with it 'cause she was like, "You can't marry this guy until I meet him." She felt like as a best friend she deserves to get her opinion out there … I think they just

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thought I was crazy for falling in love with someone over the Internet and going 9,000 miles to see him.

Emilia's sanity was also questioned when she first visited her boyfriend after having met him online:

Everyone said that he would kidnap me, sell me, I would never get home, and how could I be such a fool to trust him, how could I come to stay with a stranger in a foreign country. Most of my friends were against it … So dealing with people's reactions wasn't easy. If everyone says you're crazy, you either believe it, or you insist that you are right. I insisted that everyone else was wrong, and I was right.

Emilia's use of the word "insist" twice indicates that she had to work hard to assuage everyone's doubts and legitimate her relationship, which was the case with all of those respondents who experienced others challenging their LDR.

Sometimes the whole existence of a relationship was questioned. As Sandy shared with me: "I have a friend who says grown-ups don't have open LDRs. He's like, 'You're not in a relationship.'" Lindsey encountered a lot of resistance, as well: "A lot of people rejected it, my family rejected it a whole lot. They didn't like the idea at all. They think I should see somebody real. Real." Her parents' use of the word "real" suggests that they did not recognize her relationship as legitimate. This happened to a much greater extent to those of my participants who were young, had an online relationship, and/or their partner was in another country, which suggests that these boundaries are seen as especially rigid.

Creating a Shared Space

Long-distance couples occupy different spaces most of the time, which can reinforce a sense of segmented lives and separateness. All of the couples I interviewed had two separate residences at the time of their LDR. Only four couples had shared a living space before their LDR. Separate living spaces demarcated the line between individual lives and lives together. Several of my respondents mentioned this issue. For example, Todd and April both did. As Todd described it, "I feel like both of us had individual spaces. When I came to [her town], I felt very much like her apartment was her apartment. And the same with my place." April reverberated the same thought: "Back then, when we were living apart, I felt like my apartment was definitely my apartment. It wasn't a shared space. And the same with where he lived."

Steven shared Todd and April's approach:

Sheila had an apartment in [her town]. I guess that was like always her space. I don't know if we had a joint space. I ended up eventually in a one-bedroom apartment. I'm sure she never felt that was her space … She had no space to put her stuff.

Steven raised another common issue: not only a sense of feeling that the other person's space was her or his space alone, but also that the visiting person sometimes literally had no room at her or his partner's place. Marissa and Hank used to share a house years ago, but since she had moved, her space in the old house ceased to exist. As Marissa put it,

I know I have no space left in that house. So the first thing I will have to do when I get back is reclaim my space … I'm gonna have the two spare bedrooms, and those will be mine, and you need to get your butt out of here, big boy.

Hank was aware of occupying Marissa's former space in the house, as well, and also that he would need to work on that before she got back:

She'll eventually come back, and I'll have to move some stuff and clean up some stuff. When you live apart for so long, and you have your own house, the empty spaces kind of get filled up … I got an office in our house, and when I took some stuff out of the office last time she was here, she was very adamant about me putting it back in the office. She took the box, and put it back in the office. She didn't want it to spread out to other parts of the house. She would be extremely pissed with me 'cause I used an extra room for office, which I will need to clean up before she gets back.

While visiting partners sometimes felt they had no room at their significant other's place, participants whose partners visited occasionally felt that their space was intruded upon. Marissa offered an example for this, too: "My house is very tiny here, it's all I need. And he walks in and fills it. He fills the house." After having lived together with Gary for a while, Allison reclaimed her individual space when she moved: "I like it here because he's a mini hoarder, a packrat. So now I have my space back to myself. That makes me happy that there's not crap everywhere." Allison and Marissa endeavored to place such a sharp boundary between their space

and their partner's that they were dreading contamination of their independence and newly gained space and separate sense of self (Zerubavel 1991). Moving Hank's box back to his office can be seen as a mental "rite of separation" (Zerubavel 1991) delineating the line between shared and individual spaces, between "we" and "I." Marissa was so protective of her space that she wanted to preserve it even after moving back home. As she half-jokingly asserted, "I tease him, you know, when I move back to [his town], you're gonna need to get me a house two blocks away."

None of my interviewees felt that they had a permanent shared *physical* space during their LDR. However, this does not mean that all of them reported the lack of a joint space. This finding deviates from most previous LDR research, where not having a shared house or some other shared physical space was a common complaint (Gerstel and Gross 1984; Winfield 1985; Sahlstein 2004). Several of my respondents contended that they had a space together. Even if in many cases it was not an actual space but rather a non-physical space they created, they still saw it as their own. For some, a joint space was realized through cyberspace. Ben and Sarah were one example. As Ben described it, "I feel like our space is on Skype … Our space is through whatever Skype uses to connect us, through the Internet." Being on the phone or texting were mentioned as shared space, as well, which underscores the role of modern communication technology in crafting spaces.

Cognitive spaces were also listed as forms of shared space. As Felix explained it, "We have a mental space." Chloe, Bryce's partner, contended, "I feel

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like we have our own little imaginary space." Jamie shared a cognitive space with Gabriel, as well. As she elucidated,

> It would be a space in my mind where we're on a page together, and we know that eventually we can move to or see each other. It's just a page in my mind where he would be on the same level as me.

Creating a cognitive shared space or one in cyberspace can be considered acts of boundary transcendence.

Socio-mental spaces, which are created cognitively by at least two individuals in unison, are frequently viewed as purely imaginary, but they can be just as real as physical spaces for the people that "visit" them (Chayko 2002; 2008). Thus, sharing a cognitive, or socio-mental space can be considered not only an act of boundary transcendence between the physical and mental, but also a way to erase the boundary between the two.

Transgressing actual or socially constructed boundaries so seamlessly is "a hallmark of creativity" (Zerubavel 1991:117). Time was also employed to annihilate the boundary between spatial togetherness and separateness, which underscores Nippert-Eng's (1996) point that time is often used to enact intangible mental boundaries that we draw between categories. Gary, for example, demonstrated this practice: "When I think of space together, I think of our time together. That's the way I look at it or envision it." Keith defined space through time, as well: "We have our own space as a couple, we set aside something, like we have times when we get to talk, or chat, and that's pretty much our time."

Some respondents emphasized it even more that space together did not involve a specific location, only time spent together. Anthony was one of them:

> I'd say our own space comes with, really, our own time together, wherever that may be … It's very dynamic, not a fixed location. It's a time period when we both have exclusively each other's time. I define that as our space.

A woman in another couple, Julianna, expressed a similar sentiment: "Whenever we're together, that's our space together. That's the time we spend together. We don't need a location … It doesn't matter where we are as long as we are together." Space together was associated with or even considered tantamount to time together.

Conclusions

As long-distance couples define their relationship in interaction with each other and symbolically and linguistically draw a mental fence around it, they reinforce what a relationship means for them. They engage in boundary placement, separating singlehood and couplehood, and sometimes also putting a line between long-distance and close-distance relationships. However, they also transcend any real or perceived boundaries between distance and closeness by establishing and stressing their couplehood despite physical distances or even never having met. They can reinterpret, redefine, and extend the meanings of a relationship, intimacy, togetherness, and belonging.

Some of the couples faced legitimacy struggles concerning their LDR when their own definition of

the relationship clashed with the opinions of family and friends who questioned their relationship. While such a situation usually created some tension, the critiques could not make my interviewees doubt their own definition of the relationship. Instead, they did their best to expand the definitions of those disapproving of what a valid, intimate, and "normal" relationship was.

Relationships tend to be placed in a temporal and spatial context—couples are frequently defined as people who are "together." Long-distance partners stretch such temporal and spatial limitations and demonstrate how togetherness and belonging can be achieved in novel, creative ways and in possibly unconventional spaces. As cyberspace and cognitive, socio-mental spaces are arguably less structured and more infinite than most physical spaces, people in these spaces might have even more agency to shape these spaces and more opportunities for limitless social interactions than they do in physical spaces. Behavioral norms might not be as rigid in cyberspace and socio-mental spaces (at least not yet) as they are in most physical spaces. Therefore, such spaces might provide more freedom and individualism for their inhabitants than

physical spaces in general. At the same time, they can help bridge any real or perceived gaps between distance and closeness and generate a feeling of togetherness and belonging despite physical distances. With the creation of such spaces through modern communication technologies, long-distance couples of today possibly have better tools than long-distance partners of the past to assuage feelings of separateness. Long-distance couples that connect in cognitive, socio-mental spaces can also provide guidelines for redefining what space is, what its significance might be, and how it can be shaped and utilized.

My participants also often equaled their space together with time together. This suggests that time is still mostly omnipresent in our lives, but space has become more elusive, less relevant, and more open to redefinition and reshaping. Future studies could use the example of LDRs, but go beyond them and apply the results of this study to other situations and other types of social interactions to explore how intimacy (or the opposite, emotional distance) can be created or redefined by expanding its meanings and freeing it from any potential limitations of socio-temporal and spatial conventions.

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Doing Poor in AmeriCorps: How National Service Members Deal With Living Below the Poverty Line

Abstract   Many young AmeriCorps members enter a post-college lifestyle of food stamps, social services, and living below the poverty line. Using Simmel's (1965) concept of poverty as a social category one is put into, and West and Fenstermaker's (1995) concept of class as something one "does," this paper looks at the AmeriCorps program, to examine how members "do poor." In 22 in-depth interviews with a diverse sample of AmeriCorps members, I detail a member's "typical" experience with poverty: first, encountering themselves in poverty, then working to disassociate themselves from having a "poor" identity, and, finally, still maintaining the positive experiences associated with their service.

Keywords   AmeriCorps; Poverty; Qualitative Methods; Identity Work; Social Class

Being "poor" is simultaneously a governmental label, a possible self-identification, and a deeply stigmatized trait. Whatever the concept means to an individual, the stigma that comes along with the label most likely means individuals would prefer not to see themselves in such a light. With this understanding, the question is raised: How do individuals who are labeled "poor" by governmental institutions self-identify, especially for individuals not previously so labeled? Specifically, while individuals "are" in poverty, how are they "doing poor"? The AmeriCorps program is an under-researched and illuminating organization to study this concept.

Established in 1994, AmeriCorps was originally touted as President Clinton's domestic Peace Corps (Segal 1994), and annually retains 75,000 members to engage in nationwide community service. The AmeriCorps program provides a living stipend and education award for its members (AmeriCorps 2012a), but the stipend members receive is low enough to put them below the poverty line, making members eligible for social services like food stamps.

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For many AmeriCorps members, this marks their first time living with such little money, away from college, and working to forge a life for themselves. So, what happens when working for the betterment of impoverished populations makes you, technically, poor?

What is the "typical" experience of an AmeriCorps member earning low wages, and how do such members relate to the people that they serve, who are often recipients of those same social services? In twenty-two interviews with a diverse sample of AmeriCorps members, I ask the following: Do members think of themselves as "poor" people? If not, how do they separate themselves from that identity? Lastly, how does the way members interpret their own poverty affect the way they think about the population they serve?

Defining Poverty

To begin, it is necessary to define poverty sociologically. Poverty is measured quantitatively in a number of ways, by using income, wealth, or proportion of one's funds going to life necessities. Scholars argue over the best measurement practices, for example, the relative importance of early childhood poverty versus current experiences with poverty versus defining it as a lack of resources (Hoy, Thompson, and Zheng 2010). While these assessments provide hard numbers, how do sociologists analyze poverty when "one man's poverty is another's wealth" (Coser 1965:141)? Because of the various ways individuals can interpret their social position, a more qualitative understanding of what poverty means to the individual is necessary.

In that regard, poverty will be conceptualized in this piece in two mutually reinforcing ways. First, poverty can be defined as a social category that emerges through societal definition (Coser 1965). According to Simmel (1965:140), "[t]he poor person, sociologically speaking, is the individual who receives assistance because of this lack of means," which means poverty is something *done* unto individuals. Furthermore, poverty is only accomplished if "others—individuals, associations, communities—attempt to correct this condition" (Simmel 1965:140), meaning that society places individuals into that category. Here, poverty must be understood as something society constructs, and, to some extent, the individual accepts as a defining characteristic. In this definition, poverty is a social category people are put into by society at large that "cannot be understood sociologically in terms of low income or deprivation but rather in terms of the social response to such deprivations" (Coser 1965:142).

However, others argue that poverty can be viewed as something that an individual actively *does*. In this regard, individuals "do difference" (West and Zimmerman 2009) by interacting in meaningful ways with the signs and symbols of a particular category. For example, people can "do race" differently: by focusing on different aspects of their identity in different circumstances, reinforcing and challenging various conceptions as they see fit. However, this active method of being part of a social group implies that individuals are continuously held accountable by society for the way they act in relationship to any number of social categories to which they belong (West and Fenstermaker 1995). Social class, then, is something

accomplished, not just one's societal category. Also, "depending on how race, gender, and class are accomplished, what looks to be the same activity may have different meanings for those engaged in it" (West and Fenstermaker 1995:32). Therefore, individuals' interpretations of their situations affect what poverty means to them.

Finally, there are certain objective characteristics or monetary indicators that might be assigned to one's social category or class. For example:

> It is possible to sort members of society in relation to these indicators, and it is the job of many public agencies (e.g., those administering aid to families with dependent children, health benefits, food stamps, legal aid, and disability benefits) to do such sorting … whatever the criteria employed by these agencies (and these clearly change over time and place), they can be clearly distinguished from the accountability of persons to class categories. (West and Fenstermaker 1995:28)

In this context, our society has clear-cut demarcations of what poverty looks like. However, the attributes that we assign to individuals in poverty must be accepted by the individual in the first place, by accepting food stamps or housing benefits, for example, for society to consider that individual in need and therefore "needy" or "poor." Individuals might have limited economic resources and be considered "poor" by the general public (not to mention by governmental assistance programs), yet choose not to identify themselves as poor. By "doing poor" in a way that deemphasizes their relative poverty, individuals can try their best to disengage with such a label.

Previous Social Class Background and Interactions With Poverty

A major aspect of one's life that affects how one interacts with institutional poverty is through one's past class background. Empirical research shows individuals in similar objective circumstances, like waiting in line at a grocery store, enact class identities in different ways, dependent on their past class backgrounds. For example, an individual who has used food stamps in the past might be more likely to perceive a sense of judgment on behalf of the cashier in general, rather than an individual who has never used food stamps (Mickelson and Williams 2008; Reutter et al. 2009; Morris 2012). Simply put, past experiences with a certain social class color the way individuals view the world, even if they are objectively part of another social class at the time of the experience. With this understanding, I refer to the class one was raised in as one's previous social class background.

One of the most common ways that having a previous class background of poverty influences individuals is that they are more apt to feel judged or disparaged by others. Researchers show that having a low socio-economic status comes with certain stigmas, like being thought of as lazy or irresponsible (Reutter et al. 2009). Stigmas are visible signs, or attributes, that discredit people who have them and make them seem less desirable by others in most social situations (Goffman 1963). Goffman (1963:3) defines stigma as "an attribute that makes [a person] different from others in the category of persons available for him [or her] to be, and of a less desirable kind—in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak."

The negative effects of stigma are psychological additions and hardships to any tangible difficulties individuals must face, and can lead to depression and a sense of low self-worth (Mickelson and Williams 2008). For stigmatized individuals, "[p]ersonal feelings of shame and their actual experiences with societal stigma and discrimination are intertwined" (Mickelson and Williams 2008:926), which means there is a certain amount of reflexivity in understanding one's social position before one internalizes a stigmatized identity. Furthermore, that internalized negativity can manifest itself in later experiences that might otherwise not be viewed in a negative light by people who have not experienced such stigma (e.g., the supermarket example above).

To be seen as normal or acceptable, the stigmatized individual practices stigma management, which is the use of different tools to conceal or minimize the stigmatizing sign, otherwise known as managing the impression of themselves they give to others. Because individuals who live below the poverty line are more likely to face unequal hardships both physically and mentally, the ways that lower class individuals protect themselves from the stigma of being poor are multiple. For example, when pressed about issues relating to social class, working class individuals can be "ambivalent, defensive, or reluctant," which might be a way to enact "protection and resistance, as class and class identification are emotive issues that may make people feel uncomfortable" (Faber 2012:186). Other times, individuals might self-differentiate, saying one "type" of poor person is inherently worse than the other "type"— often the type to which the respondent self-identifies (Morris 2012).

This interaction with objective poverty is different for people with previous social class backgrounds in the middle or upper class. For these individuals, any experience they may have later in life with poverty is sometimes looked at as a bizarre circumstance, and not as a manifestation of life choices or an innate moral flaw. Essentially, the social class that an individual grew up in colors and skews one's perception of current social class in impactful ways. One useful way to examine this is in the case of Hurricane Katrina, where one's pre-storm upbringing and status afforded individuals more opportunities to use internal resources in a time of a natural disaster that, seemingly, equalized all individuals (Jackson and Dellinger 2011). During Hurricane Katrina, middle class individuals dealing with the bureaucracy and miscommunication in lines for social services and FEMA may feel a sense of anger and frustration (Haney 2011) that people raised in lower class backgrounds are already used to dealing with because of previous experiences with sluggish social services. In these circumstances, one's privileged status might make the stigma one might experience in asking for social services less internalized (Rosenblum and Travis 2008). Individuals with different past experiences with poverty might experience the same objective situation much differently. On the other hand, using social services might lead individuals not used to this action to perceive a sense of "middle class guilt and socio-economic stigma" (Barber 2011:86). Here, individuals with previous middle class backgrounds must grapple with a sense of unease for using a community service that they might have never thought they would need to use. In sum, one's previous experience with privilege or poverty changes one's perceptions of the world, even when,

for whatever reason, all things are held equal for individuals in a particular experience.

The AmeriCorps Program

A particularly salient place to examine the interplay of one's past social class and one's current social class, and ways an individual might "do poor," is the AmeriCorps program. The AmeriCorps program is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, and is actually made up of three subsections: AmeriCorps*State and National, where members primarily work for local and state organizations as hands-on volunteers; AmeriCorps*VISTA, where members are more involved with administrative procedures and management of their volunteer site; and AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), the national disaster mobilization team (AmeriCorps NCCC n.d.). Today, AmeriCorps provides 75,000 service opportunities per year for people over the age of seventeen to tutor and mentor youth, improve health services, clean parks and streams, respond to disasters, and build organizational capacities, among other services (AmeriCorps 2012b).

Eighty-five percent of AmeriCorps members come from working or middle class backgrounds, 7% come from upper class backgrounds, and 8% come from lower class backgrounds; 41% of the members are White, 25% African-American, and 24% Hispanic American, with American Indian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multi-racial making up the other 10%; women make up 70% of the population (Marshall and Magee 2005). With the increase in

a retired population in recent years, the coming-of-age of the millennial generation, and with a decrease in the amount of paid jobs available to many individuals, "it is clear that large areas of social life will rely heavily on voluntary work, given the unlikelihood of substantially enhanced funding for those activities to be undertaken by paid labor" (Blyton and Jenkins 2007:234). Thus, the AmeriCorps program provides a rich area of study that might grow even larger in the years to come (Frumkin and Jastrzab 2010).

AmeriCorps is also a unique organization because it provides a stipend for members. A stipend is "some level of financial remuneration paid to an individual for performing volunteer service. The service is voluntary, and the remuneration is designed not to be equivalent to market wages" (McBride et al. 2011:850). Ideally, such pay is designed to allow those who may not have the economic ability to volunteer a way to afford to do so. However, for full-time employment, the stipend is not very much money. In 2012, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) estimated poverty guideline for an individual in all States except Hawaii and Alaska was $11,170. According to governmental definitions, those who earn below the line live in poverty, those who earn above do not (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2012). This guideline, or a percentage thereof like 125% or 200%, is used by federal agencies around the country like HHS and the Department of Labor to determine eligibility for federal assistance programs like food stamps or Family Planning Services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2012). AmeriCorps members earn approximately $9,500 to $10,900 annually, depending on the cost of living of their service area (AmeriCorps 2012c), making them

eligible for financial assistance like food stamps and institutionally labeling them as people in poverty. Therefore, AmeriCorps is in a unique position of remunerating its volunteers, while still paying them a low level of income, where we can see the interplay of raised class, current class, and "doing poor."

Some previous research has examined the ways that members of service groups engage and think of those that they serve. Due to daily struggles and conflicting views of what members of service organizations *think* they should be doing and what is actually required of them (e.g., thinking they should be making sweeping changes in the lives of those they serve, but, in reality, being required to perform mundane or rudimentary tasks), members in the social work industry can experience strain (Best 2008). One other area of strain for those who work in the service industry is in engaging with populations they serve who live qualitatively different lives. For instance, longitudinal research shows AmeriCorps members who live with the population they serve have a short-term negative appreciation for ethnic and cultural diversity, though this does subside over time (Frumkin et al. 2009). Further, recent research on international volunteering shows potentially problematic understandings of individuals' perceptions of the populations they serve. Carano (2013) argues that individuals in the social work industry have various levels of understanding of the population that they serve, with the most basic level being thinking of those they are aiding in basic, stereotyped ways. Volunteer tourists, those who enter in a foreign country to help for a short period of time, often conceptualize poverty in a way that romanticiz-

es the plight of those they serve, and do little to challenge their own conceptions of consumerism (Crossley 2012).

Research Questions

Often, post-college, middle/upper class individuals are making such little money that they are below the poverty line, turning to social services that they never experienced before, while serving those who have used those services for larger portions of their lives. Do AmeriCorps members think of themselves as poor, internalizing the stigma that that self-identification entails? If so, in what ways do their identities change? If not, what steps do members take to manage this challenge to their identities and maintain a sense of self removed from the idea of a "poor" identity? Finally, how does the way AmeriCorps members think of themselves affect how they think of those they serve?

Methods

To answer these questions, I conducted twenty-two in-depth interviews with AmeriCorps members from different AmeriCorps sites across the country, gaining access to participants through existing contacts with AmeriCorps members in two large cities in Washington State and using snowball sampling of local members for smaller communities in Illinois. The purpose of this strategy was to reach a variety of respondents in terms of raised class, gender, and race. Interviews lasted from 33 to 95 minutes, with an average of 66 minutes, and were conducted wherever was most convenient for the respondent. Interviews were conducted for members of AmeriCorps

who had served between the years of 2009 and 2012 at these sites.

My methods were guided by my own relationship with AmeriCorps, having been a member for two years in Washington. My past experience as an AmeriCorps member made communicating with respondents easier because I was able to reference various acronyms, events, and job descriptions. Furthermore, my previous experience with the program allowed me to come up with interview questions that were well understood by this sample. While my previous role might have made me focus on asking certain research questions based on my AmeriCorps experience, which could limit the amount of interviewee input, I attempted to counter overly influencing the questionnaire with my personal experience through a rigorous process of interview guide construction. I went through several drafts of questions, then work-shopped my interview guide with colleagues, having fellow sociologists look over the interview guide and provide me with feedback on question wording. Furthermore, I adopted an interview approach that allowed subjects to guide conversations. Therefore, I feel confident that my respondents were able to offer their own perceptions of AmeriCorps, as much as possible using a questionnaire I devised.

The sample consisted of 12 women and 10 men: eight White women and six White men, two Latino women and two Latina men, two Asian/Pacific Islander men and one Asian/Pacific Islander woman, and one African-American woman, for a total of twenty-two respondents. Problematically for understanding variations in race, the sites I used had low

rates of African-American members, with the one African-American woman I interviewed representing one-third of the African-American population at the sites for the years studied. Eight respondents said they were raised lower class, nine respondents said they were raised middle class, and five respondents said they were raised upper or upper/middle class. While this is not a representative sample of the AmeriCorps population, especially because of the higher percentage of people from low income backgrounds and the lack of African-American input, this sample has diversity enough to speak to many interpretations of the AmeriCorps experience.

After the interviews, I transcribed the results using NVivo 9 software and line-coded each interview for emerging themes, which included "reasons for joining," "ideas of 'service,'" and "thoughts on efficacy of AmeriCorps" in addition to relevant themes that I had gleaned from the literature, such as "stigma" and "enacting an identity." I then put these themes into mutually exclusive categories and analyzed the themes that emerged in the open coding of the interviews and the pre-determined codes from the literature. Finding a substantial amount of information in the codes about interactions with poverty and identifying as someone in poverty, I then re-examined my transcripts for any potential reinforcements or contradictions to themes I had established.

One limitation of this study is that cross-sectional qualitative interviewing is effective at understanding the stories or thoughts that individuals think are most salient to them, but might fail to see some of the more implicit and subtle ways that members *learn* how they came to their conclusions about

themselves. Further, having people attempt to answer questions about events that have happened in the past is somewhat contentious because it relies on selective memories of individuals (Rubin and Rubin 2012). To counter these problems, I attempted to make the interviews as open and free-flowing as possible, to allow for individuals to input their own stories of coming-to-terms with identity or to provide key details that might be missed using more structured survey methods.

Findings

Though there was substantial variation in each respondent's relationship with poverty, a relatively "typical" experience emerged in the interviewees' reports. This experience involved the member first encountering the signs and symbols of poverty through public assistance, meaning most members had no prior experience with poverty before the program, having previous social class backgrounds where assistance was not needed. Following that, members reported not internalizing these symbols into their identities through the use of joking, or by appealing to their resources beyond pay. Finally, members reported reaping benefits from their experience in AmeriCorps by "bonding" with those they served, and claiming their experience in poverty will strengthen their money skills later in life.

Encountering "Poor"

For thirteen out of twenty-two respondents, their first encounters with institutionalized poverty were the waiting room at their local Department of Health Services (DHS) to get their food stamps card,

and actually using the card at the grocery store. Five respondents had previously used public assistance and food stamps in the past, and four members never used public assistance during the AmeriCorps program, despite their eligibility or because they were married to someone who earned enough to disable them from using such resources. The DHS office and the grocery store are two major locations where individuals present an image of being in poverty to the outside world, publicly acknowledging that they represent themselves as members of the social category of "poor."

The Waiting Room

Sixteen respondents reported that entering the waiting room of the DHS was a major boundary to cross (all respondents who had not used public assistance, and three respondents who had previously used public assistance), and many indicated a sense of feeling removed or separated from others in the waiting room. Oftentimes, they reported distress at being in the position of needing to apply. For instance, Tony, a Japanese/White 22-year-old stated:

> It's kind of funny because I was fresh out of college and in AmeriCorps and I was waiting in line and it was one of those new situations … I'm around all these people and I feel like I don't belong there because I grew up middle class and here are all of these lower class individuals around me, and I felt kind of out of my element, and it was kind of weird.

Tony speaks to the sense of discomfort at being in this environment and explicitly suggests that his middle class background had sheltered him from

entrée into the world of social services, as reported by Haney (2011). Other respondents echoed his statement, saying how they did not "feel like" the other people in the waiting room for some intangible reason. Betty, a White 21-year-old, mirrored this sentiment by saying:

> I don't want to be rude, but I felt like when I was there [the DHS office], that's where dreams go to die. Like it was something from a movie. It was dimly lit, like fluorescent lights that kept flickering. There were people there with, like, eighteen kids running around, screaming, like dirty, and when I was sitting there, I felt like I didn't belong.

Here, Betty differentiates herself from others in the waiting room, and uses language that better fits a depressing movie rather than a social services office, implying a sense of unreality and non-acceptance of her position in this situation. Betty, seeing herself as intrinsically different from others in that room, corroborates the finding of Morris (2012) in that she forms boundaries between her and others in the same situation.

Betty's experience mirrored that of Ariel, a White 22-year-old who had a previous middle class background, who reported that the experience was "bizarre." While asking for food stamps was new, Ariel acknowledged that she had been in the position to ask for financial services before: student loans. However, she felt no dissonance entering the student loan offices and asking for a student loan in a "cushy" student loan office, because it was in line with the system that she was raised in. This points to the idea that there may not be something intrinsi-

cally stigmatizing about asking for aid, if only such aid is not labeled as aid specifically for "low income" individuals. This is similar to the sense of unreality and middle class guilt expressed in accounts on using social services in Hurricane Katrina (Barber 2011). Ariel, like residents of post-Katrina New Orleans, suggests that asking for aid is acceptable only under specific circumstances, like bettering one's education or in cases of disaster. Asking for help beyond those specific circumstances, help earmarked for people in poverty and thus indicative of a moral failing, leads to a sense of unease and dissonance. Using a service, then, is seen as acceptable as long as it is a service *for* that particular "type" of person.

On the other hand, three individuals felt removed from those in the waiting room *because* of their previous experiences with social services, and the idea that they felt they had moved beyond that stage in their lives. Daniel, a 24-year-old Latino who had been raised in three foster homes after turning ten, put off applying for months, primarily:

> Because of my biological mother, she was not exactly a role model for me and for my entire life we've been on some form of welfare, especially in regard to food, some sort of food assistance. So, I just thought I could not bring myself to do it for a long time, so that was a source of frustration.

Daniel uses his own background and recalls his impression of the stigma he originally perceived by being raised on public assistance, which contrasts the background of Ariel, but which also shows that the identity of a "food stamps user" is not desirable by the individual applying. In this way, Daniel points

to his previous background experience with social service coloring his current state of mind about using such services (Mickleson and Williams 2008). Furthering this point, Shanice, an African-American female raised with public assistance who joined AmeriCorps directly after college, stated, "with this degree, I'm like, 'Why do I feel like I'm backtracking?' Like, why do I need food stamps?" In sum, for individuals raised without public assistance, and for some who were raised on assistance, the waiting room provides a potent challenge to one's sense of identity, either as middle class or as a sense of being an individual moving beyond needing assistance.

This challenge to one's sense of self is further complicated by the introduction of race into one's use of social services. While there is a perceived understanding that being a food stamps user is undesirable, Hannah, a Latina, spoke to her perception of being stereotyped:

> I was just so convinced it was the worst thing you could do [using food stamps] and this might, I don't know, I think people look down on you when you have to ask for that help, and, you know, and then there's the added thing, so, you know, I'm a minority, too, so it's like, what are they thinking? [Pause. Eyes well up with tears.] Excuse me ... so, yeah, it was really difficult to apply.

These recollections of the experience in the waiting room, and individuals' internalizations of these experiences, present an image of AmeriCorps members as entering a foreign world, where one's sense of identity is challenged by their situational reality as someone applying for food stamps. Hannah's

emotional response to talking about applying for food stamps reveals the difficulty of the stigma, and indicates the added complication of being a minority applying for services. Unlike her White counterparts, Hannah has the additional psychological cost of "doing race" (West and Fenstermaker 1995), and doing so negatively (by using social services).

On the other hand, two members interviewed expressed no shame or perceived stigma in the application process, and all had previously used public assistance in the past. For example, Jeremy, a Pacific Islander, said, "I was like, 'whatever.' I was like, 'I need this and so I'm going to get it.' That was it." This is an interesting departure from Daniel's and Shanice's accounts where they expressed distaste in relation to their previous experiences with the card, signifying that other factors play a role in determining one's level of perceived stigma than solely having used the card in the past or not. Jeremy later pointed to knowing family members who had used food stamps in the past moving away from the service, indicating both his experience with seeing food stamps as just a stepping stone and the family support and lack of stigma he perceived coming from them.

Four other respondents, all White, reported family circumstances making the card unnecessary, like Diane, who did not apply for stamps because her "husband works. He has a job that would be above the limit," and who reported that she would not have applied anyway because they were still "well enough off" to not need assistance. These subjects, however, reported being able to *not* apply for food stamps was a benefit, implying that applying was negative and undesirable.

The Grocery Store

Of the eighteen respondents who had applied and received food stamps, all spoke to some sort of discomfort using the food stamps card. Many times interviewees expressed concern that others would view them negatively for having the card. Tina said, "I think I did feel a little bit [pause] self-conscious about it. Like maybe people would think different-ly … that they would think lowly of me." Grace, a 24-year-old White female, furthered this idea when she stated she felt, "[a] little awkward … be-cause that's never something that I've had to deal with before and I don't think of myself as someone underprivileged enough to be, have the right to food stamps." Here, Grace not only represents the fear she had using the card, but also the fact that she did not consider herself somebody "underprivileged enough" to have it, signifying there is an image of who *really* needs food stamps in Grace's perception, and Grace is not that person.

Respondents also reported trying to not let strang-ers, friends, or family know they that they had food stamps. For example, Tony said he would just say "EBT" to the cashier to "be a little more discrete" about how he was paying for his groceries to strang-ers in the line. Natalie, a 24-year-old Latina, reported, "[s]o, when I first got it, I didn't really tell anybody that I got it because I didn't want to hear any com-ments." Also, Chuck, a 23-year-old White male, said, "my girlfriend still, I don't think she even knows that I'm on food stamps. So, it's just, I don't advertise it."

Why hide this card? Respondents reported experi-encing a sense of shame in using the card, especially at the beginning of the term of service. Jeremy, who had previously reported feeling no stigma in *applying* for the card, described his experience using the card:

> Yeah, at the beginning when I gave my card to the cashier, I was wondering what they thought about me … there was a little bit of shame locked out in there. I was like, I don't know what this person is thinking about me, if they think I'm poor, I don't have a job, whatever it is.

Pointing out the various stereotypes that come with using public assistance, such as not having a job, Jer-emy understands and acknowledges the social ram-ifications of using the card in the first place, even though he earlier reported seeing no shame in the *idea* of the card—in that it could be used as a way to make ends meet for a temporary period of time. Jer-emy questions whether the cashier would see him as poor, signifying that he does not define being poor as the attribute of one who receives some sort of assistance (Simmel 1965), but in some other intan-gible way. Daniel, who had struggled to even apply, paralleled this statement in response to the question of how he felt about using the card:

> I had the same experience every time, first to last, and it goes back to this notion of family history involved with it all. My context automatically makes me feel ashamed to have to use that. I felt some form of shame every time.

Jeremy and Daniel point out the presence of shame in using the food stamps card, but suggest different perceptions of shame over time, perhaps related to their previous experience with financial assistance.

Many AmeriCorps members reported experiencing an additional level of discomfort while shopping for groceries because they did not look like the "typical" food stamps user. Many AmeriCorps members engage in service at schools, non-profits, and community cen-ters (AmeriCorps 2012b), where workers are expected to dress professionally. Ariel worked for a non-profit that offered after-school and in-school tutoring, and the dress code was business casual, and she reported the tension in her dress and shopping for groceries:

> And there were times I would feel really self-conscious because I felt like the clothes I was wearing, then this person shouldn't have food stamps. Like, I'm wearing heels and a skirt and my hair's all done up and my makeup's all done up and it looks like I'm going to this sort of professional job, and then buying lunch on food stamps.

This discrepancy between looking middle class and using poverty class resources added to members' unease. Dawn furthered this idea and added the component of race, saying,

> I don't know how to put this, but, like, I guess I feel like I don't necessarily look like a person who would be us-ing food stamps. And, so, sometimes I'm like, I kind of just wonder what the cashier or like other people think. Because I don't want to make it sound like people who have food stamps don't dress well or look dirty, I'm like a White, blonde girl, and I, you know, like to go shop-ping and buy clothes [laughs]. So, I don't necessarily scream poverty.

Both Ariel and Dawn implicitly assume White, well-dressed women are not the types of people to be on food stamps, and suggest others view food stamp users in the same way. Gabriel, a self-reported "fash-ionable" male, furthered the idea of racial differenc-es in food stamp use, but pointed to his experience as a Latino:

> It's not like I dress like a bum, hobo, or anything, I dress in decent clothing ... like, you see these T-shirts, you know that they're not just purchased in random little places. They're hard to find [pointing to nice, Inter-net-bought T-shirt]. I kind of felt like people would look at me like, what do you need these for? Are you really poor or are you just leeching off the unemployment sys-tem, you know, food stamps? So in some respects, yeah, I was feeling like I was kind of being stereotyped.

Despite Gabriel's upper class dress, he reported that his experience being a Latino entered into how he perceived the cashier's treatment—given his race, there was no way to avoid being seen as, in his words, "leeching off the system." Ariel and Dawn, on the other hand, did not explicitly mention a racial iden-tification process. However, the idea of what a food stamps user should look like, and what the Ameri-Corps member *did* look like, manifested itself in all three accounts. Respondents were very aware of the cultural stigma of poverty, and acknowledged that, by dressing professionally, a perception that cashiers think they are scamming the system. On the other hand, not dressing well might better fit the cultural representation of someone who is poor, which might lead to more stigmatization. With food stamps and nicer clothes, there seems to be no winning.

In sum, AmeriCorps members' initial reactions to their situation showed discomfort and apprehension

with the DHS office and the use of food stamps. Furthermore, while most AmeriCorps members reported discomfort in using the services, the reasons behind that discomfort varied based on one's previous experiences with class, race, and, interestingly enough, fashion sense. AmeriCorps members reported feeling uncomfortable with the signs associated with traditional definitions of poverty (Hoy, Thompson, and Zheng 2010), and addressed conceptions that food stamp use is viewed as the actions of lazy, irresponsible people (Reutter et al. 2009).

Doing "Not Poor"

Though AmeriCorps members experienced shame and discomfort with the association they had with poverty, eighteen out of twenty-two explicitly did not identify themselves as poor individuals in response to the direct question—"While you were a member of AmeriCorps, did you ever consider yourself to be poor?"—suggesting their definitions of poor were indeed malleable to individual interpretations, and were less of an external, objective category. Members use two primary methods to distance themselves from the potential identity as a "poor" person: joking about their poverty to each other, and appealing to their middle class roots.

Joking Away Stigma

Many AmeriCorps members reported joking about their income as the major way they ever discussed themselves as being poor. By joking, AmeriCorps members could both talk about their experiences living in poverty, but separate themselves from the serious negative ramifications that come with that

identity, changing the impression that they give to others (Goffman 1963). For example, Riley stated, "[we] just kind of joked about being a poor person, like temporary poverty or something," and in that way the whole process did not "feel particularly real." Ariel furthered this idea:

> **Researcher:** Did you ever consider yourself to be a "poor person?"
> **Ariel:** I joked about myself being a poor person, but I knew that I wasn't.
> **Researcher:** How come? You were living below the poverty line.
> **Ariel:** Yes, we all joked about how poor we were and how little money we made and, uh, I mean, it's not we were bitching about it. We all expected to make not very much money, right, and work for pennies. That's part of being an AmeriCorps, that's what you do.

By saying that she "knew" that she was not poor, Ariel could differentiate herself from those who really were poor, in her mind. Hannah also told a story about leaving her purse on a seat she was saving and yelling to the small crowd, "Don't anybody steal my purse. I'm poor! Don't take my food stamps!" Here, Hannah used a joke to simultaneously announce that she was living in this situation, but that she did not take this situation too seriously, perhaps because interpreting her financial situation as something serious might lead to a concrete self-identification as "poor," and more stigmatization.

These jokes also helped AmeriCorps members bond with other members. Both Riley and Ariel mention that fellow members joked about their lack of funds,

and Daniel revealed how joking within the workplace reinforced camaraderie:

> So, we made lots of jokes … it went so far as to, like, we got AmeriCorps stickers, just bumper sticker size things. All of us, we had them on our desk and we crossed out the "Corps" part of it and put in "Poor."

Here, Daniel points to a way he stated his low income (through the bumper sticker), made it humorous, and bonded with fellow AmeriCorps members through it (through having them all write the same joke on the bumper sticker). His social response to the deprivations of funds he experienced as an AmeriCorps member worked to remove himself from the social category of being in poverty (Simmel 1965) and signified his attempt to show off a self with a sense of humor about the situation.

Finally, some members reported joking about their lack of funds with family and close friends. For example, Andrew, a White 21-year-old male, spoke about having conversations with his girlfriend about his AmeriCorps job: "We always joke, like, we're going to be poor if we get married, we're going to be very poor." Overall, though, members almost exclusively reported joking about their lack of funds with other AmeriCorps workers, sometimes with other friends and family members, once with a general crowd of people (in Hannah's story above), but never with the people that they served.

Appealing to Resources

Another way that AmeriCorps members dissociated from any pretense of being poor was through

appealing to the fact that they come from a middle class or upper class background; therefore, the poverty they experience is unlike "real" poverty, and is only temporary in nature (Barber 2011). Though these individuals often prided themselves on living away from their families and forging a life by working long hours in the AmeriCorps program, they still claimed the tangible resources they could access through family members separated them from being part of the social category of those in poverty, despite the use of institutional services.

Dawn said she had access to "a lot of resources and people and support to fall back on if I were to, like, ever face a really hard financial time." Notice here that she did not claim that she was in the middle of a "really hard financial time" during the AmeriCorps program, signifying that her low level of pay did not equate to the sense of desperation she associated with being poor. Similarly, William, acknowledging his pre-AmeriCorps experience, said:

> Even though my salary is low, I'm not coming out of poverty, so I don't have the other things that come with being out of poverty. Because of my family resources, I have a family that can rally around me, places [where] I never worry about a roof over my head.

By appealing to the resources of his family, William (intentionally or not) separates himself from those who do not have such resources—those who he perceives to truly be poor. Others pointed to resources they currently benefit from provided by their families. For instance, Betty, a 21-year-old White female, mentioned that her housing situation was uniquely beneficial, by saying, "I live in a house by

myself, but since my family owns the house, I don't have to pay rent, so, luckily, that was taken care of." Others reported parents paying for cell phone bills or their car insurance. Therefore, members report there were actual tangible benefits and resources AmeriCorps members were not in want for, or that they knew they could easily access if need be. In this way, members might be managing the stigma of living in poverty, minimizing their "poor" experiences to ensure that they are not viewed as truly not well-off (Goffman 1963).

Proving this idea, those four individuals not on public assistance at the time of the interview reported that AmeriCorps members *did* suffer a tangible lack of resources, and indeed *were* "poor." Janice, who was married and did not apply for food stamps, said, "I know that they [AmeriCorps] try to provide you accommodations with being that poor." Diane, who did not use food stamps because her husband had a "good paying job," said that while "no one in America is poor compared to the definition of poor that the majority of people in our society in the world defines as poor," AmeriCorps members, in relation to "so many more people in America," were poor. This only furthers the idea that, for the individual, poverty is not a social category that one is placed into, but instead how one chooses to interpret and manage that identity (Coser 1965).

In sum, respondents reported not internalizing a "poor" identity. One way they removed themselves from this identity was by joking about their situation and making light of the level of poverty they faced. Another way was when individuals appealed to their either real or perceived resources

to differentiate themselves from people who were "truly poor." Given this, it seems easy to conclude that AmeriCorps members do not feel any sense of being enmeshed in a "poor" identity. However, such verbal techniques might be ways to manage undesired stigma (Goffman 1963), and the findings below reveal that individuals' interpretations of their experiences with poverty complicate the idea that individuals truly do not see themselves in such a category.

Doing "Poor" (Positively)

Ultimately, once AmeriCorps members separated themselves from internalizing identities as poor people, they were able to use their objective poverty (as measured in income and use of resources) in AmeriCorps in beneficial ways. They worked to frame the potential hardship (poverty) into a valuable attribute (both for current service and for their own futures). In this way, members "do poor" by pointing to the positives that come to them from making such low wages (West and Fenstermaker 1995). Members did this by pointing to the benefits of making such little money for 1) relating to the population they served and 2) the fact that later in life they would be making more money and AmeriCorps provided a valuable baseline from which to start their fiscal responsibility.

Access to Individuals

While members reported not internalizing a poor identity, they used their experiences with poverty to relate to those who they were serving. For example, Diane, who said that her family had gone through

a major transition when she was laid off from her job, and who worked as an academic mentor for a low income school, said there was one positive to the low pay in that, "it allowed me to know that the students who I worked with were not even blessed enough to have the lifestyle that I had currently. You know, living on the AmeriCorps salary." Here, Diane points to her AmeriCorps pay as one way to relate to the people she served, and indeed interprets her situation in a new light (West and Fenstermaker 1995), using her low wages to identify in some way with the population she served. While she still did not *identify* with the population she served by pointing to her resources as a major differentiator, she acknowledged a newfound appreciation of their plight and attributed that to her experience with the AmeriCorps salary.

Members appealed to tangible experiences that they had not faced before in their interactions with those they served. For instance, Dawn, who worked with homeless youth, said:

> I know that I will never be in this position that these kids are in or their families. But, I also know that I am having to access public services like food stamps and, um, kind of understanding like dealing with [DHS] and understanding some of the issues that they are facing.

Here, Dawn reinforces the benefits of her experience with the social services to bond with those she serves, while, as written above, she reported feeling uneasiness around cashiers because she felt they saw her as someone much different than the people she served. By stating, "I know that I will never be in this position," Dawn explicitly separates herself

from those she serves, and manages the stigma of using such social services by pointing to her service use almost as a training experience.

William mentioned how his experience with social services would allow him to be able to better relate to his population because he had gone through at least a "facsimile of the experiences they might go through on a daily basis." Similarly, Ariel reported being better able to communicate and understand the circumstances of the individuals she was serving because of her experience with the same services:

> There were definitely times later when I would relate my experiences within the social services office with people who I was working with and they were like, "Oh yeah, they suck and they're so slow there." It became something I have.

Note how her experience becomes something she reported *having*, a tool to use in her interactions with others, and not something that she actively internalizes into her sense of self.

Diane, Dawn, William, and Ariel reframed their lived experience—that of living in poverty—to better relate to the population that they serve. However, language such as Diane's "not even blessed enough to have the lifestyle that I had currently," Dawn's "I know that I will never be in this position that these kids are in or their families," William's "facsimile of the experience," and Ariel's "something I have" all show a sense of separation that the members report experiencing from those who, ironically, they report bonding with. In short, members emphasize the benefits of doing

certain aspects of a "poor" identity, while removing themselves from truly internalizing that role (West and Fenstermaker 1995).

A Sense of Accomplishment

Another benefit that AmeriCorps members reported having from their experience living below the poverty line was the sense of accomplishment they had in living a low income life. Many members looked forward to moving past the AmeriCorps program to higher paying jobs, and often expressed gratitude for learning how to live off of low wages because more funds would look *that* much greater after their experience. For example, Hannah, who as an AmeriCorps VISTA member made even less than most members, said, "part of the experience is to really understand what poverty is and I would say that, 'Mission accomplished, VISTA.' I know what poverty is now." Hannah, being one of the individuals who did state that she felt "poor" during her AmeriCorps tenure, provided the insight that the poverty felt was all part of the AmeriCorps experience, and something that one could move away from. These poverty experiences provide members a space to grow from, but often do not constitute "reality" in the same sense as someone enmeshed in such an experience (Barber 2011; Haney 2011).

Other members pointed out that the tight budgetary constraints of the program provided discipline. For instance, James, a White male who served in his early thirties, said,

I had only so much money so I had to monitor my activities; I had to monitor of what I spent in terms of

gas, I had to be more considerate in, like, my grocery shopping. I had to make sure not to go over budget at all.

Chuck reported attending more free community events because of his low level of pay, "which I guess is part of what you're supposed to do as an AmeriCorps member, anyway." While the need for budgeting and living in poverty might have been a potential hardship, these AmeriCorps members interpreted it as an opportunity to grow.

Furthermore, members also think of AmeriCorps as a tool for teaching them to greatly appreciate the funds they may receive in the future in the private or public, non-AmeriCorps setting. In the words of Daniel, "I remember thinking at the time, 'I cannot wait to get an actual real paying job. I cannot wait to move past this experience and be able to actually make a living wage,'" but that once he got through living on AmeriCorps wages, he could get through living on anything. In this way, AmeriCorps is not only a tool for budgeting and an experience to move away from, it is also an opportunity to see one's future prospects in a positive light. William provided the best example of this, when he said that AmeriCorps has provided him the benefit of living within his means and that, when he looks into his hopeful future career as a teacher, "it's like people say teachers don't make anything. I look at the pay scale, I'm like, I'm going to be like Scrooge McDuck, just diving into my money!" In this way, AmeriCorps members accept the negative aspects of living in poverty as long as it relates positively to their future growth, further indicating a sense of removal from having a "poor" identity, but si-

multaneously showing that elements of living below the poverty line have real ramifications on the members, at least in terms of how they present themselves to others.

Discussion and Conclusion

Thinking of one's self as poor can lead to negative conceptions of self and society in general (Mickelson and Williams 2008), and poverty itself is less of a concrete category that one finds one's self in (Simmel 1965), but something that one accomplishes through accepting the identification of being poor (Coser 1965) and living life in a way that falls in line with stereotypical "poor person behavior," making that identity most salient (West and Fenstermaker 1995). By examining individuals in the AmeriCorps program, this piece argues that, despite the external attributes of one's situation (e.g., living below the poverty line and receiving food stamps from the government), an individual's interpretation of his or her state of being is more nuanced in the context of temporality, proximity to resources, and internalized sense of self. Furthermore, even if one accepts some of the attributes that are associated with poverty, such as government assistance, one still can maintain a sense of self far removed from any association with being poor, or at least manage one's identity to be perceived by others as not poor (Goffman 1963).

These findings suggest many AmeriCorps members experience poverty for the first time in the waiting room at the DHS and in using the food stamps card at grocery stores, and in both cases they feel discomfort and disassociation from oth-

ers around them. Then, AmeriCorps members actively work to distance themselves from a potential "poor" identity, primarily by joking about their poverty and by appealing to familial resources as reasons for why they are not "truly poor." Despite this lack of internalization of the identity, AmeriCorps members still reap two main benefits from their service: the benefit of having a low income to relate to the population served, and the benefit AmeriCorps has in forcing people to budget their money. Therefore, they operate in a world where the positives of low pay (budget-mindedness, connection with others) are accepted into how one interprets his or her situation in AmeriCorps, but the negatives (food stamps) are not.

Despite real world labels, for the most part, AmeriCorps members do not think of themselves as poor. While this may be beneficial for AmeriCorps members, due to a lack of internalized stigma (Mickelson and Williams 2008), and by virtue of representing themselves in such a way that certain members of society do not see them as fitting in such a category (e.g., by wearing nicer clothing or discussing their well-off parents), leading to less external stigma (Goffman 1963), the negative side is that individual members might perpetuate stereotypes and ideas about the poor people they serve. This was especially clear in discussions on how different members felt at the grocery store and the waiting room from those they considered to be "truly poor." In this sample, respondents did not feel like they were "those types" of people, and therefore they did not perceive themselves as people deserving of social stigma associated with poverty. Through joking and appealing to resources, members literally and

symbolically distance themselves from those they perceive to be the real poor, otherwise known as those they serve. Herein, members reproduce the very same hierarchies and social distances that AmeriCorps, in its mission as a community service organization, hopes to alleviate. Instead of forming relationships with those they serve in meaningful ways by acknowledging their similarities in living in poverty, members run the risk of instead forming divides and boundaries between them and the population they serve because they fail to see themselves in the same social category as their service population. While the ramifications of this in real world settings are unknown, this finding begs the question: How does this divide impact those people AmeriCorps members aim to serve? While I perceived no sense of malice in any of the interview subjects towards those they serve, it is clear that popular conceptions reinforcing a poor/not-poor divide are pervasive even in these service-minded individuals. When AmeriCorps members buy into the popular conceptions of what poverty looks like, and manage their stigma in a way that reinforces conventional views of what poverty looks like, it might be impossible for them to not inadvertently judge, and distance themselves from, those they serve.

Usually, AmeriCorps members interact with impoverished individuals who need some sort of assistance. What does it mean, then, that AmeriCorps members do not see themselves as poor, and, in fact, instead of opening up their ideas about what living in poverty means to include themselves, actually further perpetuate stereotypes of what it means to be poor *by* removing themselves from that defini-

tion? This paper provides a starting point for looking towards what interactions might exist to show that inequality is being reinforced. Clearly, differentiation occurs in these respondents' minds; with that, as West and Zimmerman (2009) ask, understanding if, and if so how, inequality is being reinforced *in practice* during interactions between members and those they serve would be the next logical step in research.

Moving past this, these findings have ramifications for sociological understandings of the self with reference to poverty, especially the ways that individuals do or do not internalize "poor identities." In this sample, AmeriCorps members do not internalize a "poor identity," and I find no real variation in race, class, or gender: neither lower income, upper class, racial minority, males, nor females were more likely to interpret their identities as "poor." What seems somewhat clear, however, is that these respondents implicitly and explicitly view their relationship of living in poverty as tied in with their previous social class background, especially their relationships with having a college education. For many of my participants, their levels of education, and to a somewhat lesser degree their family backgrounds, permanently exclude them, in their opinions, from being members of the "truly poor." Even for individuals who were raised in poverty, such as Shanice, having a degree provides a level of forward momentum that gives individuals reason to believe they are in merely a temporary stage of their lives. It seems that one's level of education has quite the impact on one's interpretation of his or her current social standing. Of course, the qualitative nature of this study does not allow for general-

izations or statistical tests of significance, but these relationships should continue to be addressed in later studies. In particular, examining how members of other volunteer organizations, such as the Peace Corps, or other volunteer organizations that do not require a college education, deal with their wages might be a particularly fruitful place to examine these topics.

Finally, this study has implications for public policy. Primarily, these findings suggest that if people have a way—any way—to say they are not poor, they will do so. This means that poverty is still a highly stigmatized status to have in America. Though AmeriCorps members might make the same amount or even less money than members of the population they serve, the fact that members do not internalize their "poor" identity, but the people they serve might internalize such an identity, points to a power imbalance between the two populations. Policy-makers and trainers might attempt to correct this power imbalance through training individual AmeriCorps members on the nature of social context of poverty, how it affects many different people at different life points, and how poverty is a social construction in itself. With this knowledge, perhaps AmeriCorps members will feel less stigmatized to adopt a "poor" identity, which might have an effect on the "poor" individuals they serve feeling less stigmatized themselves. The AmeriCorps program must understand the way members deal with living in poverty is problematic, not just for themselves, but also for those they serve.

Finally, and perhaps more abstractly, what should be done to address the broader issue of the stig-

ma and negativity facing those living in poverty and using social services? For AmeriCorps members, while addressing this matter through paying them more money would lead to less anxiety for the AmeriCorps member in navigating the world of living in poverty, such a solution would contradict the volunteer-oriented approach of the program, and would limit the tangible benefits AmeriCorps members express in living below the poverty line. However, symbolically and instrumentally restructuring the way services are offered might be a step in the right direction. Recall that Ariel previously stated a sense of ease in using student loan services because she interpreted that type of service as non-problematic, and something that one does to move ahead in life. If other services, such as food stamps or public housing, were framed in ways that established they were aid to move forward and not merely aid for aid's sake, AmeriCorps members, and most likely the people that they serve, would feel less unease and stigma in accepting such services. And, if the goal of AmeriCorps is to better the plight of low income individuals, changing the stigma of living in poverty, redefining what "poor" looks like, could only help in such a regard.

Acknowledgements

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Faith-Based Charitable Giving and Its Impact on Notions of "Community": The Case of American Muslim NGOs

Abstract With the current economic downturn, increased levels of unemployment, and poverty, the role of non-profits has come into spotlight. Considering that there are over 1.5 million NGOs in the U.S.A., and a proliferation of faith-based organizations (FBOs), their role in social capital, civic engagement cannot be discounted (Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier 2000). The role of FBOs has also been recognized as being important, and this became a part of mainstream discourse with the Charitable Choice provisions introduced by President Bill Clinton and consolidated under George W. Bush. While there is a lot of literature on Christian FBOs, there is very little written matter on American Muslim NGOs, or comparative research. American Muslim FBOs have emerged in the last 20 years, as important players in both domestic and international humanitarian aid movement. I will examine the case of Muslim faith-based giving to organizations to analyze how charitable giving towards them is influencing discourse about the American Muslim "community," and how it is best to understand their work "relationally" rather than in opposition to other faith traditions (GhaneaBassiri 2010). While the narrative of giving among American Muslims seems simple and there is also very little literature on this issue, my preliminary research points towards a complicated landscape of giving, which combines both local giving at the mosque level and giving at the international level to the *Ummah* (community) or brotherhood, through transnational humanitarian aid agencies such as Islamic Relief. I argue that giving practices are creating new forms of "relational communities" in America. This notion of "relationality" can be applied in philanthropy, and is evident in the global humanitarian aid movement, as I demonstrate. I ask whether this is forming a new "moral geography" that is more pluralistic and broader than the one that we are familiar, especially in the American context. A closer examination of this phenomenon offers us insights into how a community is imagined and created. This paper seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on FBOs, and also that on American philanthropy.

Keywords Community; Faith-Based Giving; American Muslims; Philanthropy; NGOs

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Historically, scholarship on philanthropy points to its significance as a site for forming "relational communities" (GhaneaBassiri 2010). Contemporary debates in American philanthropy are no different and point to the potential of philanthropy in not only community development but also several other facets of institutional development and organizing, both across secular and FBOs (Frumkin 2006). While many aspects of FBOs, such as fundraising, the dynamics, and norms of giving, have been studied closely for Jewish and Christian congregations, such studies do not exist for American Muslim FBOs or congregations. Also, as several scholars have argued, the narrative of Muslim philanthropy is extremely narrow and usually focuses on national security perspectives, and is mostly grounded in policy literature (Singer 2008; Howell and Jamal 2009). Though there is a vast body of literature on *zakat* (a form of obligatory alms in Islam) and *sadaqa* (a form of voluntary alms in Islam) from a theological and historical perspective, it is not very helpful in painting an accurate picture of how philanthropy is evolving in Western societies (Singer 2008).

There are no large-scale sociological or anthropological studies that seek to explain the norms of giving among American Muslims and how the individual donors and organizations that receive these funds are utilizing them towards community development or related activities (Alterman and Von Hippel 2007; Singer 2008). What is known, however, is that there has been a steady increase in the number of mosques across the county (Bagby 2012). This study by Ihsan Bagby is among the only known surveys about social capital formation

and related issues at the local community level. Given that measures of social capital and philanthropy are positively correlated, one can assert that philanthropy is also growing in the American Muslim community. But, the landscape of giving is not clear, both in terms of how and why giving occurs and the motivations of the donors—whether they are purely religious, secular (despite giving to religious organizations), or both. The cultural dynamics of giving and the meaning-making process have also not been thoroughly examined.

The narrative of American Muslim philanthropy is thus very ill-informed and also based on recent developments, many of which have not been studied in a scholarly manner. As several scholars have argued, the "terrorism delusion" has overshadowed any other discourse of philanthropy towards Islamic philanthropic entities (Mueller and Stewart 2012). They argue that "the terrorism/counterterrorism saga persists determinedly, doggedly, and anticlimactically onward, and the initial alarmed perspective has been internalized" (Mueller and Stewart 2012:82). The narrative of terrorism and the resulting discourses of securitization have had an enormous impact on how Islamic charities are perceived and treated in courts of public opinion, as well as in legal cases (Crimm 2011). The resulting picture of Islamic philanthropy that exists is one-dimensional and does not capture the complexity of the role philanthropy is playing in the American Muslim community. In this paper, I address this gap in understanding and offer an alternative discourse—through an examination of how American Muslim philanthropy, to the "humanitarian aid" sector specifically, is creating "relational

communities" (GhaneaBassiri 2010) and also enhancing the understanding of what constitutes a "community" for American Muslims.

I begin with a brief overview of the philanthropic landscape of the U.S.A., and look at the various paradoxes that it contains, both in the "religious" giving space, as well as in the "secular" domain. While the U.S.A. is one of the most generous nations in the world, it is also one of the most individualistic ones. Then, I offer various perspectives of how a "community" has been defined and the ongoing contestations of this concept, given immigration, shifting demographics, et cetera. The fact that people are able to hold such deeply held notions of "common good" along with a great concern for their own well-being is part of the "enlightened self-interest" that Alexis de Tocqueville noticed when he wrote *Democracy in America* (2006 [1787]). Next, I draw on the findings of Jonathan Benthall (2008) and Amy Singer (2008), and analyze the humanitarian aid movement in the U.S.A., specifically among American Muslims, as a lens to look at the changing dynamics of how philanthropy is being conceptualized to create new boundaries of a "community." This new notion of community, I argue, is both cosmopolitan, in that it draws on trans-geographic ideas of welfare, charity, and universal brotherhood, and also draws on religious notions of belonging to the same *Ummah* (community), or spiritual brotherhood through Islam, as reflected in their mission statements and projects. Finally, I draw this connection to how this "relational understanding" of philanthropy is being operationalized through partnerships and projects in the humanitarian aid movement. Following

GhaneaBassiri (2010), who has investigated some historical aspects of American Muslim giving, I argue that philanthropy among American Muslims should be seen as a medium that defines new "moral geographies" by redrawing boundaries of a community, and is thus a very powerful tool that can have a lasting impact on how the community develops and forms its own identity in the American context. This framing will also help us move beyond the dichotomous Islam versus West framing that is not conducive to a clear understanding of the issues under examination (GhaneaBassiri 2010).

Philanthropy in America: An Overview of Individual Giving in 2012

Individual giving in the United States of America is estimated to be about $316.23 billion in 2012, according to a recent report by the Giving USA Foundation (2013a). The annual report that is brought out by the Giving USA Foundation and Lilly School of Philanthropy documents giving by various sources, including publicly declared sources, as well as the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) data. Of this estimated $316.23 billion, about one-third or $100 billion were directed towards religious institutions. This is a very large number, but, as a percentage, it has shrunk since the 1950s, when it was roughly half of the total giving.

Religious giving has undergone a shift since the recession of 2008, too. Other factors, including demographic changes, shifting denominations, and other sociological factors, have all taken a toll on this sector. As the Giving USA Foundation report

(2013a) pointed out, giving to religion was virtually flat (a -0.02% decline) with contributions estimated to be $101.54 billion. Giving to religious organizations (mostly local houses of worship) represents the largest share of U.S.A. charitable giving at 32% in 2012. This is a reflection of both the historical role that churches have played in the country and the renewed salience that has come about for the FBOs sector. All of this is not to suggest that philanthropy is becoming redundant or that religious giving will decline, eventually. Quite the contrary.

Philanthropy is as American as apple pie, and its manifestations are visible across all segments of society. Those who can, write million dollar checks, while those who cannot, volunteer their time in the local church or to the fire brigade. As Robert Bellah has argued in his book, *Habits of the Heart* (1985), Americans are deeply individualistic, as well as idealistic about their communities. This book is a study of how Americans, who are among the most individualistic people in the world, often balance self-interest with an enlightened understanding of what is good for the others—through volunteering and acts of generosity. This fact of forming "civic associations" for the general good of society, of being civic minded, and politically active are features that have been admired by the American public. Philanthropy has been conceptualized in many forms, and various synonyms have been used for it: civic engagement, volunteering, charity, et cetera. All these words have been used to capture the same essential spirit—that of being of service to others and going beyond the call of duty to help others. As Bellah (1985:22) asks in his book, "How are we, Americans, to think about the

nature of success, the meaning of freedom, and the requirements of justice in the modern world?," these questions are being rephrased and re-examined in light of new challenges. In the year 2013, growing income inequality, religious fundamentalism, intolerance, decreasing civic engagement are all converging into a deadly mix of factors that threaten to overwhelm us, if not for the palliative effects of some of our "higher" values that bind us together. While these anxieties tug at our hearts and we seek solutions for them, hoping that the old structures and logics will offer us some hope, we may have to re-imagine some of the old institutions, and, in some cases, find new ones. One of them is that of philanthropy.

My working hypothesis in this paper is as follows: Philanthropy is not only an act of faith—indeed, it is one of the "five pillars" of Islam that binds Muslims, but also one that is being used to re-imagine new boundaries of "community" and create a new "moral geography" of many dimensions. The sub-thesis is that the notion of "community" among American Muslims is being defined in relation to other communities, and is not as rigid or fixed as is assumed. American Muslims are finding common ground and "contact zones" with others to practice their philanthropy, thereby extending the notion of "community." NGOs and campaigns that these organizations are creating are acting as these "contact zones" for various ideas to meet and converge. Further, the re-imagining is occurring through using tools such as an intertextual interpretation and reading of the Koranic injunctions of philanthropy and practices that are re-imagining what philanthropy is and its role in Muslim society.

Faith-Based Humanitarian Aid for International Affairs: The American Landscape

One of the "growth areas" in philanthropy is that of international humanitarian relief. As the Giving USA Foundation report (2013a) shows, this sector is robust and growing, despite the recession. While the history of the humanitarian aid movement, by which I mean "emergency relief," is rich, there are new emerging configurations that need a closer examination.

While the international humanitarian movement's work has been studied quite extensively, with rich documentation of the work of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Oxfam, Save the Children, a similar study of the Muslim organizations is missing. It is only recently that with the work of scholars such as Jonathan Benthall, Jerome Bellion-Jourdan, Jon Alterman, Karin Von Hippel, to name a few, and a group of upcoming scholars, this field is beginning to grow. In this curious mix of actors, there are both "secular" and "faith-based" actors, and I confine my discussion to largely FBOs.

As the chart below shows, there has been an overall growth in this sector in the last three decades.

Figure 1. Giving to International Affairs vs. Combined Giving to All Other Charities.

Source: Giving USA Foundation (2013b:2).

Further, these FBOs within Christianity are what Robert Wuthnow (2006) has called "special purpose groups," and span the spectrum of both New Age, as well as purely fundamentalist ones. Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan (2003) call for an analytic separation of "confessional" NGOs—those that are formally aligned with a particular religious group—from those that are "faith-inspired"—those that depend on a looser affiliation and commitment to Christian ethics and values. My focus in this paper is on the latter group.

In her paper titled "Religion and Giving for International Aid," Allison Schnable (2013) argues that: 1) higher service attendance, placing importance on spiritual growth, and exposure to international needs through one's congregation all are associated with giving to international causes; 2) individuals with more frequent attendance, those who place importance on spiritual growth, and evangelicals are significantly more likely to prefer church over government aid; and 3) aid organizations affiliated with a religious tradition enjoy an "in-group" advantage in support. This occurs, she states, because religions teach people values about the causes and effects of poverty, and thus encourage people to support particular causes. Also, religious congregations are sites for enforcing social norms, where one is "pressured to give" (Schnable 2013:89). Schnable's argument is predicated on the understanding that it is hard to predict how exactly someone is motivated to give to a particular cause and why. Even with large studies, it is hard to say what caused a behavioral change.

Schnable further argues that religion is an important determinant when it comes to encouraging Americans to support international causes and also to determine which organizations to support. There is reason to believe that religious approaches to relief and development enjoy continued legitimacy among Americans. World War I and II era religious aid groups like Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Relief, and the American Friends Service Committee remain important and financially robust providers of aid. As the evangelical movement blossomed in the latter part of the 20th century, so, too, did a crop of evangelical aid organizations: World Vision (1950), Samaritan's Purse (1970), and Rick Warren's P.E.A.C.E. Plan (2004). Religious groups across the theological spectrum advocated jointly for debt relief for poor countries in the late 1990s (Kurtz and Fulton 2002). Concomitant to these (largely) Christian and Jewish organizations are a new crop of American Muslim NGOs that have emerged—the most prominent of them being Islamic Relief—that are working alongside these NGOs and government agencies in emergency relief.

Similarly, Jonathan Benthall (2008) has argued that humanitarian relief until recently was a largely Western enterprise, and Western scholars largely underestimated the non-Western traditions of humanitarianism. To elaborate on this point, he states that, "The *Waqf* [inalienable religious endowment], for instance, dates back to the founding of Islam and is a very important institution in the Muslim world" (Benthall 2008:89). Similar to this are traditions in Confucianism, where paternalism sustained the Manchu dynasty for centuries in China (Benthall 2008). The Muslim humanitarian aid movement globally has grown in salience over the last two-three decades, as the leaders have embraced principles of transparency, accountability, and also have

become more active in the international realm, Benthall argues. Their growth has also resulted because of their "entry" into the international aid domain, by embracing international principles of non-discrimination (Benthall 2008:93).

While there has been a growth of non-denominational and "secular" organizations that offer relief without any proselytizing agenda, there are several others that have both a visible or subtle faith-based messaging in their program. At the other spectrum are several Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim organizations that have come out to operate as non-denominational, non-proselytizing, and "cultural pluralists," embracing all those who need and working from a purely humanitarian ethic of "caring for the stranger" (Appiah 2007). I will explore this dimension in the examining of the changing "moral geography" of American Muslim philanthropy.

Literature Review

This section provides a brief overview of faith-based giving in the U.S.A., and how it relates to the notion of "community." While FBOs have been positioned as one of the crucial levers to fight poverty and social depravity in the U.S.A., since the passage of the Charitable Choice provisions, the vast array of legislations made it easier for religious institutions to receive federal funding. The mechanism for funding them, the purposes of funding have all come under severe attack (Wuthnow 2006; Wineburg 2007). The salient arguments against funding FBOs by the federal government have involved First Amendment provisions of separating the State from religion by keeping the State funding out of religious institu-

tions. Secondly, scholars such as Wineburg (2007) have argued that funding FBOs is inherently "inefficient," given the bureaucracies that go with implementing this model of working.

The literature review is divided into four sections, each exploring an aspect of the issue at hand.

FBOs and Civil Society

With the salience of religion in the public realm, since the 1980s, there has been much research on the sociological and policy implications of religiously inspired organizations in the public sphere (Wuthnow 2006). In attempting to answer the question of *Why faith-based, why now?*, Wuthnow argues that FBOs are not well understood by those in the policy circles and there are many misconceptions about them. He states,

> [f]or instance, I show that congregations, despite being more numerous, are less important than more specialized faith-based service organizations as service providers. I show that the most extensive ways in which congregations provide services do not occur through the formal programs on which most discussion has focused, but through the informal activities—fellowship circles, Bible studies, classes and worship services—that constitute what congregations themselves would refer to as the "caring community." (Wuthnow 2006:xvi)

His key argument in *Saving America* (Wuthnow 2006) is that

> faith-based social services are a complex array of activities that sometimes work quite well, that often

differ little from the activities of nonsectarian organizations, that on the whole contribute positively to the functioning of civil society, and yet that also play a relatively small role in relation to government and other service providers. Faith-based agencies must therefore be understood in terms of their linkages with larger civil society networks of which civil society is composed. (p. 7)

This means that FBOs can, and perhaps should, be examined for the factors that shape other non-religious organizations, such as social capital, linkages to political structures, their needs for creating their own identity, et cetera. The results in *Saving America* (Wuthnow 2006) are based on three national surveys, comprising both qualitative and quantitative data. The data dig deep into questions such as how these congregations provide services to the needy, how faith is expressed in these organizations, and the kinds of clients who seek help, among other factors. As a contrarian book, *Saving America* points to data that many of the assumptions about congregations and FBOs are wrong. For one, congregations do not provide as many services as do specialized FBOs. Also, the reasons why some FBOs are effective are the very ones that would disqualify them from receiving federal government support. Finally, Wuthnow argues that faith-based services contribute positively to the cultural norms in civil society by promoting trust. He argues for continuing federal support to the FBOs by saying, "Yet there is considerable evidence to suggest that specialized faith-based agencies function just as well as non-sectarian agencies, and for this reason, should not be discriminated against in receiving government support" (Wuthnow 2006:xvii). This is by no means

an uncontroversial view as many scholars and practitioners are vehemently opposed to support of FBOs through the State apparatus, as it compromises many of the First Amendment provisions and is seen as undermining American democracy.

Wuthnow's argument is relevant to the one I am making here, that faith-based giving to FBOs can strengthen civil society and also form new "relational spaces" for American Muslims. Wuthnow makes a strong case for considering the value that FBOs bring in increasing social capital, other "loose networks" that can have a positive impact on society.

> The value of renewed interest over the past decade in civil society is that it reorients thinking away from the modernization story and criticisms of that story. Where modernization pointed to institutional differentiation, civil society emphasizes the interaction among institutions. Voluntary associations draw people from their families and workplaces into organizations that may look very similar to businesses even though they are not oriented towards profit, and their activities may link local concerns with national interests and generate a political response even though they are not part of the government. (Wuthnow 2006:16)

The debate about religion, policy, and involvement of the federal government is a complex one and is on-going, with no final agreement thereon. While the debate rages on, there is growing recognition that as complicated as the discourse about FBOs is, one cannot ignore them.

In case of American Muslim NGOs, Nina Crimm (2011) has argued that these NGOs provide much

needed assistance in times of crisis and humanitarian disasters in the developing world, and this is a matter of human dignity. She states that ensuring that those impacted by disasters get support to restore their political, social, economic, and other vulnerabilities is a task these organizations provide, and that these goals might serve to keep the terrorist groups at bay. Approaching American Muslim NGOs as agents who can further the cause of human dignity around the world is crucial, she says, as many of them have been providing much needed humanitarian services for decades now, and have an element of trust that many government agencies do not.

The Changing Notions of "Community"

While scholars and thinkers have argued that America is essentially an individualist society, with the primacy of "individualism" as the nation's creed (Bellah 1959; Wuthnow 1991), there have been calls for reviving the "communitarian" ethic in American society, one that Alexis de Tocqueville so praised in the 18th century (Etzioni 1994; Delanty 2003). As the U.S.A. recovers from the great recession, questions pertaining to the role of individual, communities, and institutions in dealing with the economic recovery are being asked. While the fiscally conservatives offer "enterprise" and free market solutions to all these problems, those on the left call for greater communitarianism and collaborative governance at the local level.

Amidst these debates and discussions, the notion of a global cosmopolitan identity is also being debated. While much of philanthropy in the U.S.A. occurs locally, there is a growing size of international giving,

as the data from the Giving USA Foundation report (2013a) indicate. The communitarian credo, according to Amitai Etzioni (1994), one of the most famous and articulate proponents of this philosophy, reads:

> Americans—who have long been concerned with the deterioration of private and public morality, decline of the family, high crime rates, and the swelling of corruption in government—can act without fear. We can act without fear that attempts to shore up our values, responsibilities, institutions, and communities will cause us to charge into the dark tunnel of authoritarianism and moralism that leads to a church-dominated state or a right-wing world. (p. 2)

These fears articulate the liberal tradition that most Americans claim to uphold and celebrate, in their fiery individualism. The conversation about "values" and "traditions" is being revived by the insecurities, vulnerabilities of the day-to-day existence. Speaking of America's youth, Etzioni (1994) states:

> [y]oung people have learned only half of America's story. Consistent with the priority they place on personal happiness, young people reveal notions of America's unique character that emphasize freedom and license almost to the complete exclusion of service or participation. Although they clearly appreciate the democratic freedoms that, in their view, make theirs the "best country in the world to live in," they fail to perceive a need to reciprocate by exercising the duties and responsibilities of good citizenship. (p. 3)

This captures the tension between rights and duties, Etzioni says, pointing to the gradual shift in rhetoric from President John F. Kennedy onwards to George

W. Bush. While Kennedy called on the moral and civic duties of every American, George Bush and Clinton's administration pushed the agenda of government paying for many of the services and the market taking care of other social obligations. Etzioni and others of his persuasion have shown that "rights talk" without the corresponding focus on obligations/duties is both unethical and illogical.

Relationality and "Contact Zones"

In his book, *A History of Islam in America* (2010), GhaneaBassiri argues that the charitable practice of giving—*saraka* or *sadaqa* (a form of voluntary alms in Islam)—in Antebellum America brought Muslims and non-Muslims together, into communal relations. He states,

> [e]nslaved African Muslims in America may have given *sadaqa* with any or all of the personal reasons, that is, to attain divine favor in the here and now, the expiration of sins, and assurance of general well-being for one's self, family, or community against calamity or evil. (GhaneaBassiri 2010:71)

He adds that what is notable about all of these is the communal dimension of *saraka*. In the case of one of the participants in the Georgia writer's project, Katie Brown, *saraka* marked an annual day of giving, especially of rice cakes.

The giving of rice cakes between grandparents and grandkids showed the transfer of this understanding across generations; additionally, this practice also occurred between generations of unrelated people, showing that this clearly went outside any kin

relationships. These practices were part of everyday life among the African American slaves. Magical practices also brought Muslims and non-Muslims into communal relations in West Africa, according to GhaneaBassiri (2010). This is echoed by Kwame Anthony Appiah (2007) who talks about the Muslim healers who cured sick people and catered to the needs of all in the community, irrespective of religious affiliation. In his book, *Cosmopolitanism* (2007), Appiah, a Princeton University professor, talks about the healing practices in Ghana, his native country, and the communal aspect of how magic and spirituality played a role of bringing communities together. Speaking of his own family's experience in witchcraft, he talks about his father's death and how some of his relatives suspected that there was some foul play involved.

> Since my aunt was supposed to be a powerful witch, this wasn't the only danger we faced. So it was fortunate that there are also practitioners of good witchcraft—many of them Muslim *malaams* [clerics], actually—who could counteract bad witchcraft. My sister made sure we brought a white ram to be sacrificed to protect us. (Appiah 2007:35)

Such religious practices are part of the common practices of asking the spirit world for intervention, which is common in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. There is an overlap of traditions and understandings of "this world" and the "other world" or that of spirits.

GhaneaBassiri (2010) also points to the use of amulets among African Muslims in colonial and Antebellum America:

[e]ighteenth- and nineteenth-century West African Muslim societies were semi-literate societies in which writing had great religio-magical significance. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Arabic-Islamic writing was used in amulets and talismans that provided protection from calamities or adverse spirits and individuals. Marabouts regularly produced and sold amulets with Arabic inscriptions to both a Muslim and non-Muslim clientele. (p. 75)

The practices and beliefs of the Africans and African Muslim slaves and those they encountered seem to have been shaped by a "relational" understanding of the world, the role of religion and religious practices, as not exclusive, but one that was shared by those not belonging to the same faith traditions. This "syncretic" and "relational" understanding of practices is key to the understanding of how *zakat* and *sadaqa*, the two philanthropic practices that are under discussion here, have evolved, and continue to grow in the U.S.A.

Appiah (2007:38) reasons about this relational understanding of religious and faith practices by arguing that "in belief, as in everything else, each of us must start from where we are." This means acknowledging the beliefs, worldviews, and understandings that each group of people bring to the table, and working from that as the starting point. What both Appiah and GhaneaBassiri seem to be pointing to is the need to look for the commonalities that exist between the various diverging traditions, and how they have managed to reach a "syncretic" understanding of each other, through creating shared boundaries and "mental models" or "paradigms."

Mary Louise Pratt's (1991) notion of "contact zones" is also useful to my discussion of the evolution of American Muslim charitable giving. She uses the term to refer to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt 1991:34). She uses the term to reconsider the models of community that are used in pedagogy and practice. Her notion of "autoethnographic texts" (Pratt 1991) as those written by people who undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them is also of particular use to my discussion of American Muslim charity, as much of the representations of *zakat* and *sadaqa* are made use of in a language and manner that are compatible with the humanitarian aid narrative, even though the religious notions of giving that this institution is fused has a slightly different intent and purpose. Pratt (1991) argues that these autoethnographic texts are addressed to both a metropolitan audience and the speaker's own community, and can often be seen as a marginalized group's entry into the mainstream. In these terms, the entire discourse of giving that American Muslim NGOs are creating can be seen as an effort at producing autoethnographic texts that use elements of intertextuality to get the message across. A related notion of "transculturation" describes the "processes whereby members of subordinated groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (Pratt 1991:36). Pratt states that this allows the subordinate group to incorporate those parts of the dominant culture that are important for them, while ignoring others that are not

so key. I will examine this in later sections as I deal with the messaging campaign of American Muslim NGOs and how they are using these elements in communicating with an audience that is aware of both the mainstream American notions, as well as deeply held religious norms among Muslims.

Arab American and American Muslim Giving

Giving by American Muslims largely occurs through individuals giving to other individuals. This is in contrast to the "mainstream" notion of giving, where more than 80% of donors are individuals, where virtually all legally registered tax-exempt recipients of these contributions are organizations (Ostrander and Schervish 1990:69). But, among American Muslims and Arab Americans there is a gradual recognition of the need to build institutions. As Adil Najam (2006:20) has pointed out, there is also a growing realization, over the past few decades, about the importance of building institutions such as mosques, Islamic schools, et cetera, and hence this has resulted in increased philanthropic activity towards these institutions, as well. Therefore, a close study of religious giving by American Muslims is important. Giving to religious institutions has been historically high (e.g., see: Giving USA Foundation 2013a). Increased focus on FBOs as providers of social services has been in place since the Charitable Choice provision and the subsequent push by George W. Bush's administration in establishing the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in the White House.

Given the salience of the non-profit sector and preponderance of faith-based institutions, this sub-sec-

tor is set to grow. With an increased focus on the non-profit organizations in general and FBOs in particular, there has also been an increased interest and research in this field. Given the salience of issues related to Islam and Muslim societies, scholarly and media interest has increased in this sector.

Similarly, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim and Asma Mohamed Abdel Halim (2006) have proposed a "human rights-based framework" for Islamic charity. They offer a compelling case for building a vision for philanthropy that addresses the societal needs of everyone in a society, using the framework of human rights. As they use the example of Egypt to point out, there are issues such as poverty, public health concerns, and environmental degradation that can only be addressed by mobilizing the human and material resources of all communities involved—Muslim, Christian, and others. They also suggest that there needs to be a synergy between the secular forms of organization and the religious incentive to give to those organizations to prevent any misunderstandings.

While there are pragmatists and cultural pluralists among American Muslims, who see the need for adopting new norms, practices, and methodologies of practicing philanthropy, there are also traditionalists, for instance, Salafisists who are literalists. They often tend towards a fundamentalist reading of texts and interpretation of Koran, and hence can be considered rigid and inflexible. And in this worldview, any innovation in religious matters (or *bid'ah*) is forbidden (or *haram*). This is a line of reasoning that presents a challenge to the institutionalization and regulation of charity, as it can be considered an

"innovation" (*bid'ah*). These are some of the key outlines as it pertains to innovation in American Muslim philanthropy.

Ethnic, diaspora giving is a growing body of literature that investigates ethnic groups engaging in philanthropy in the U.S.A. Arab Americans, Asians, Pakistanis, Indians, Bosnians, Turks, and others, all have their own organizations catering to education, health, cultural issues, and a vast range of activities that are part of the ethnic mobilization efforts. On November 15, 2011, the Chronicle of Philanthropy hosted a discussion on Arab American philanthropy and targeting Arab Americans for fundraising. Jeanette Mansour, a prominent Arab American practitioner who participated in a discussion, stated that Arab Americans are interested in education, community, family, youth programs, and mainstream organizations, and further added that through philanthropy, Arab Americans break down stereotyping about the community.[2]

In their book, *From Charity to Social Change* (2008), Ibrahim and Sherif discuss the ways in which Arab diaspora giving is evolving, albeit slowly. Speaking of the change from a religious norms to more institutionalized ways of giving (giving to foundations, more organized community foundations, or "secular charities" that do development work), they point out:

There are important social traditions of giving …
What is new is the reconfiguration of the old forms

(*Waqf* [inalienable religious endowment] into social investing, corporate philanthropy, and establishment of grant-making foundations). Another trend is regional funding institutions, based in one country but governed by a pan-Arab board of directors. (Ibrahim and Sherif 2008:5)

This is an indicator of the trends towards institutionalizing and building of organizations that has gone on for many decades now, but is catching up as a trend. While there has always been a strong element of institution building among the African American communities in the U.S.A., including Ahmadiyya, Nation of Islam (before and after Elijah Muhammad), the trend towards giving to institutions can be considered somewhat new. This is because, as mentioned earlier, the culture of giving to individuals has been the predominant mode. Added to this is the assumption that many Muslims hold they would rather know the beneficiaries of their charity than give to an anonymous person or cause, over which they have very little control.

The Center's for Global Prosperity (2012) *Index of Global Philanthropy and Remittances* highlights the growing phenomenon of global philanthropy and its significance in America. The report points out that the total "American private flows to the developing world increased to $39 billion in philanthropy, $95.8 billion in remittances, and $161 billion in private investment capital" (Adelman 2012:3). According to Carol Adelman (2012:3), the changes taking place in this sphere are due to a combination of "[s]ophisticated technology, new financing mechanisms, and a generation of hands-on problem solvers … blurring the lines among philanthropy,

remittances, investment, and profit/not-for-profit socially aware organizations." The new philosophy of capital flow is to encourage capital flows into the developing world through any and all means possible—through philanthropy, private capital flows, investments, foundation grants, et cetera—with an access to defeat poverty and help people have access to resources to meet the challenges before them.

In the U.S.A., ethnic mobilization in philanthropy is particularly strong given that about 2/3 of American Muslims are of immigrant origin. While the giving patterns of diaspora have not been studied closely, one can reasonably estimate that much of the philanthropy among this segment occurs to the countries of their origin (i.e., through remittances or even helping in development or other needs). This may perhaps be changing, as the demands of institution building and growing of American Muslim presence in the public sphere.

In an insightful book on the giving practices of the Pakistani American community, Adil Najam (2006:106), a professor at Boston College, discusses how and why the community gives money and support. He points out that the Pakistani American community gives about 3.5% of their household income to charity, while the average giving in the U.S.A. (national sample) is about 3.1% of household income. While pointing out the uniqueness of the community's giving behavior, he highlights seven lessons learned during the research (that consisted of 54 focus groups and 461 completed surveys). He summarizes the lessons as following: 1) Pakistani Americans are a generous, giving, and active community; 2) There is a strong preference for giving

directly to individuals in need; 3) People are motivated by faith, but mostly give to social issues; 4) The philanthropy of Pakistani Americans is not limited to Pakistan; 5) 9/11 made the Pakistani diaspora more vigilant, but not less giving; 6) There is a significant potential for more giving by Pakistanis in America, including more giving to Pakistan; 7) There are serious hurdles that make it difficult to give more to Pakistan, including a lack of trust in the public sector in Pakistan, practical difficulties in giving to Pakistan, and a lack of credible information about philanthropic organizations in Pakistan (see: Najam 2006).

While all of the above show the behavior of just 15% of the American Muslim population (Najam 2006:4), this is based on empirical evidence and a thorough investigation into the community's behavior, and one can say that this provides us a glimpse of what is going on.

As briefly discussed in this section, ethnic and community based philanthropy is a growth sector. In addition, the fact that religious and faith-based giving is linked to the broader economy means that we can expect this sector to rise, as the economy picks up, slowly. Also, as mentioned in this section, the changing sociological dimensions in American society do pose serious challenges to the sector. While the "melting pot" hypothesis in the U.S.A. has not worked exactly as some scholars and thinkers point, there seems to be great mobilization in terms of ethnicity, and this is proving to be a safety net for many communities. In their book, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Glazer and Moynihan (1963:17) have argued that "[e]thnic groups in New

York are also special interest groups"—an insight that has validity in the context of my discussion in this paper. This seems particularly relevant in the case of philanthropy, as well, as we will see in the following sections.

Sampling, Data Collection Strategy, and Analysis

I chose two of the largest Muslim Humanitarian Relief NGOs in the U.S.A., that is, Helping Hands for Relief and Development (HHRD) and Islamic Relief USA (IR USA). I have chosen these as purposive samples as they represent the largest NGOs of their kind in the U.S.A. in terms of revenues. Qualitative samples tend to be purposive rather than random. As Miles and Huberman (1994:27) state, "[t]hat tendency is because the initial definition of the universe is more limited … and partly because social processes have a logic and coherence that random sampling can reduce to uninterpretable sawdust." As they further argue, sampling in qualitative studies needs to create boundaries, as well as a frame to help one uncover the phenomena and constructs that undergird the study (Miles and Huberman 1994). As Mautner (2008:49) advises, "[b]efore embarking on a project, it pays to delve into a small data sample, collecting initial observations, formulating general hypothesis, identifying promising lines of inquiry, testing your methodological toolkit, and honing your analytical skills." I have done precisely this, focusing on a small body of marketing material and other resources to analyze the messaging, as well as test my hypothesis so they can be refined in the larger study I hope to undertake.

While Islamic Relief is headquartered in the U.K., the offices in the U.S.A. function independently. Similarly, HHRD is part of the Gulen Movement, inspired by Fethullah Gulen (Turkish spiritual leader).

To get maximum variation in data collected, I gathered the following items from the websites of both organizations: five most recent newsletters[3] and marketing material regarding their fundraising campaigns (posters and e-mail alerts).

I followed a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the various texts. This method is suitable as it seeks to look for the connection of the text with larger themes and structures in society. As Mills (1997) argues, this method is appropriate for socio-psychological analysis as the framework is drawn from discourse analysis and conversation analysis. Utterances in this instance cannot be taken as standalone, but are in essence ambivalent and interpreted by participants according to hypothesis and working models that they develop in the course of a conversation (Mills 1997:126). As Mills (1997) argues, CDA has forced analysts to shift their attention from words in isolation to words within context.

Analysis and Discussion

What follows is a brief analysis of the various discursive strategies adopted by HHRD and IR USA. I carried out the analysis looking for the research question in mind: How are these organizations incorporating "Islamic" messaging in an American

context? Further, how is this relational understanding of giving impacting notions of "community?"

I will examine the texts for these main elements that can give us insights about the changing norms or "relational understanding" of Muslim charity. While these concepts are intimately interconnected, they do represent different facets of the issue/phenomenon under investigation.

Helping Hands for Relief and Development

One can analyze the text/other material for various elements. One of the key elements I will focus on is intertextuality. As Wodak (2004) defines it:

> *Intertextuality* refers to the fact that all texts are linked to other texts, both in the past and in the present. Such links can be established in different ways: through continued reference to a topic or main actors; through reference to the same events; or by the transfer of main arguments from one text into the next. The latter process is also labeled *recontextualization*. By taking an argument and restating it in a new context, we first observe the process of decontextualization, and then, when the respective element is implemented in a new context, of recontextualization. The element then acquires a new meaning because meanings are formed in use. (p. 3)

One of the fundraising campaigns involves a comedy show, *Comedy for a Worthwhile Cause*, with the title "Empowering the Women of the Ummah."[4] The visual and textual elements of this power (and

the accompanying text) are quite intriguing to notice. While the campaign itself is styled as a regular fundraiser that any "secular" non-profit would carry out, the motive is clearly more than mere "entertainment." The fundraiser is clearly for helping the "women of *our* Ummah," referring to the women of the Muslim *Ummah*, where *Ummah* is the Arabic word for community. It is a polysemic word and has been used in various ways, but the most commonly used meaning refers to the global Muslim community (Petersen 2011). The images that go together show (visibly) poor and disadvantaged women and children who are working. The combination of images and text invites the reader (or potential donor) to enter this space and participate, by making sense of and connecting with the various motifs offered—Islamic, developmental, and "social justice" oriented.

Secondly, there is clearly an appropriation of fundraising techniques borrowed from mainstream NGOs that have followed the turn towards a neoliberal framework and started to use aggressive fundraisers, appeal for funds, and celebrity endorsements. The use of comedians such as Azhar Usman and Mohammed Ammer as their signature "brand ambassadors" is also quite an interesting discursive strategy.

Further, the newsletters begin with verses from the Koran, such as, "The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, 'Allah will not be merciful to those who are not merciful to the people.[5]" While the stated mission of the organization is: "HHRD is committed to serve humanity by

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[3] HHRD newsletters and videos are accessible at: http://www.hhrd.org/hhrd_AllNewsletters.aspx. Retrieved January 12, 2013.

[4] See: https://www.facebook.com/events/649019615151169/permalink/666417806744683/. Retrieved August 17, 2015.

[5] E.g., see: http://hhrd.org/hhrd_enewsletter?title=Jan212014NL. Retrieved August 17, 2015.

integrating resources for people in need. We strive to provide immediate response in disasters, and effective Programs in places of suffering, for the pleasure of Allah,[6]" the organization is trying to position itself as both a "religious entity"—through its messaging infused with religious language—while at the same time utilizing capitalist means of raising money.[7] As Charles Tripp (2006) has argued in his book, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, while some Muslim scholars have chosen the path of confrontation with capitalism, most have chosen the path of compromise. The work is framed around the development of Islamic socialism, Islamic economics, and the rationale for Islamic banking.

Humanitarian development aid provision for HHRD seems to be one of the key ways that Muslims can participate in the global economy while staying true to their faith. The intended audience for their messaging seem to be—quite obviously—practicing Muslims, given the consistent use of Koranic messaging, as well as visuals that communicate observant, pious Muslims. The attraction for participating in their form of development would be to be part of a movement that works to help others, through the message of Islam. It is interesting to also see that while the language is infused with Islamic messaging, at the same time, it is also inclusive. For instance, the organization is sensitive to women's issues, as well as other non-Muslims.

There are campaigns that are run by the organization for women and Philippines[8] (a Christian majority country). This should also be interesting from a discourse perspective, as some traditional Muslim scholars argue that *zakat* money should only go towards Muslims. This is a contested idea as most Muslim organizations in the West have adopted an ecumenical conception of where this money can be used. In fact, the Fiqh Council of North America (association of Muslims who interpret Islamic law) and other organizations have brought out *fatwa* (legal rulings) arguing for the use of *zakat* money for any humanitarian purpose.[9] There seems to be an incorporation of some elements of the feminist discourse, too, with empowerment of women coming to the foreground. As Leila Ahmed (2012) has argued, the reformist discourse regarding women's rights is emerging from the politically engaged Islamist women, that is, those who practice Islam and believe that it has an active role to play in the public sphere. This is another instance where traditional categorizations of "feminism," "Islamism" do not hold, and such instances and examples complicate the narrative of Islam that we are used to.

While there certainly are elements of consumption philanthropy in the messaging of HHRD, one can argue that many of the campaigns are for "genuine needs" of victims who are struck by natural disasters or those stuck in hopeless situations—in Pakistan, Haiti, Philippines, et cetera. While there is a call for participating in entertaining events, which

carry the element of consumption philanthropy, the underlying message is definitely to do what is right, to "help the servants of Allah," in other words, to fulfill one's obligation as a pious Muslim. There is a healthy tension between aspects of consumption philanthropy and a needs-based model in the messaging of this organization.

Islamic Relief USA

Islamic Relief mission statement is:

> Islamic Relief strives to alleviate suffering, hunger, illiteracy, and diseases worldwide regardless of color, race, religion, or creed, and to provide aid in a compassionate and dignified manner. Islamic Relief aims to provide rapid relief in the event of human and natural disasters and to establish sustainable local development projects allowing communities to better help themselves.[10]

As in the case of HHRD, one can see that their mission statement is ecumenical and broad-based, going beyond just the Muslim community. This is a discursive strategy that re-imagines the boundaries of who is eligible for *zakat*, as I have pointed out in the previous section. This is similar to the practices of African American Muslims who re-imagined community through their charitable practices (see: GhaneaBassiri 2010).

One of the most recent and successful campaigns that IR USA has run is the #WithSyria campaign (as part of the #WithSyria coalition) that garnered

massive support on Twitter, reaching a quarter of a billion people in over 111 countries.[11] As part of the marketing email that was sent out, the Public Affairs manager is quoted as saying:

> Islamic Relief is providing lifesaving humanitarian assistance inside Syria, but this campaign reminds us that we can also be a voice for positive change. We aim to continue the momentum to demand humanitarian access into challenging areas and raise more dollars that will save and improve the lives that have been forever changed by war.[12]

While this meets the criterion of fulfilling their mission statement, what is lacking, one could argue, is a lack of any long-term orientation towards addressing the conflict or an engagement to garner this massive support to press the American political establishment for any political action. As Nickel and Eikenberry (2009) argue, this discourse could be seen as mollifying the donors and luring them into thinking that their donations have made a difference, and they have done their bit. This could be seen as co-optation of philanthropy for a short-term gain (provision of aid), but not really addressing the root cause of the problem, that is, the continued violence and injustice in Syria.

Further, the promotional video of IR claims: "Because of you we are building roads, bridges, water systems, even homes. Together we are building entire villages.[13]" The discourse of "sustainability" is

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[6] See: http://www.hhrd.org/about-us-profile. Retrieved August 17, 2015.

[7] This is one of the major criticisms of existing models of philanthropy, where large sums of money go towards "raising" funds through events or other activities that cost millions of dollars. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see: http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/kbfiles/551/Fundraising%20Costs%20excerpt.pdf. Retrieved January 15, 2013.

[8] E.g., see: http://hhrd.org/hhrd_enewsletter?title=Jan142014NL. Retrieved August 17, 2015.

[9] For an example of this debate, see: http://www.sunniforum.com/forum/showthread.php?110530-Can-you-give-your-Zakat-to-a-non-Muslim. Retrieved September 20, 2013.

[10] For more, see: http://www.interaction.org/member/islamic-relief-usa. Retrieved August 17, 2015.

[11] See: https://withsyria.com/. Retrieved August 17, 2015.

[12] Source: email received by the author of this article.

[13] View the video at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wJy-bI6l0Fw. Retrieved August 17, 2015.

also co-opted in their messaging as the voice-over says, "We call these intelligent solutions," referring to the sustainable practices of IR. There is a very strong emphasis on long-term solutions for the communities concerned. As Pratt (1991) has argued, this strategy could be seen as one of "transculturation," where American Muslim NGOs are adopting the language of mainstream philanthropy to further their own discourse. While this can be seen as a pragmatic move, it also can be interpreted as a move to expand the definition of both *zakat* and *sadaqa*, and taking them beyond the purely religious purposes that they are identified with.

Other campaigns that are ongoing, such as Skate for Syria,[14] are in the realm of a consumption philanthropy model. This could be seen as belonging to a category of philanthropy through entertainment and consumption of services that IR USA creates.

Intertextuality

As Sturken and Cartwright (2009) argue,

> [o]ne of the fundamental aspects of intertextuality is its presumption that the viewer knows the text that is being referenced. Intertextuality is not a new aspect of popular culture or specific to postmodernism. After all, the use of celebrities to sell products can be seen as an intertextual tactic—the stars bring to the ad the meaning of their fame and the roles they have played. However, contemporary intertextuality operates on a level that is much more ironic and complex. (p. 265)

While the advertisements used by both HHRD and IR do contain imagery and words that refer back to themes and ideas that are familiar to their audience (e.g., words such as *Ummah*, *zakat*, or *sadaqa* and certain verses from the Koran or Hadith), there is an appeal to either religious symbolism or that of "development." IR falls under the latter spectrum, while HHRD tends to use more of the religious discourse, to make their appeals more emotive. With IR USA, there is also a conscious effort on part of all the communication devices used to appropriate "sustainability," as a paradigm.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to problematize Islamic philanthropy and "community," and tried to show the discursive strategies of philanthropy that are impacting the latter. While there are scholars who have argued for the use of *zakat* and *sadaqa* money only towards Muslim causes, newer and more interpretive works by religious scholars in the West, as shown above, have challenged this, creating a new understanding of charity, and hence expanding the notion of "community."

As GhaneaBassiri (2012: 175) argues, the histories of Western Muslims have only recently been critically examined, but they offer us an opportunity to make "considerable theoretical and methodological contributions to our understanding of Islam and the modern world." He further adds:

> While the diversity of the modern world has generally been examined through bifurcating categories that distinguish the self from the other, the histories

of Western Muslims, situated in between "Islam and the West" call for a rethinking of the modern world by viewing diversity—not as an intractable problem that needs to be explained or contained, but as the grounds on which modern experiences, identities, institutions, and concepts are formed. (GhaneaBassiri 2012:175)

Muslims in the West offer this opportunity of studying these polyvalences, and thus are not just products of history but themselves productive of history. This sentiment of GhaneaBassiri reflects what other scholars, such as Tariq Ramadan (2012) and others, have called for, that is, a recognition for the multiple identities of individuals and a more nuanced and complex understanding of how it can and does influence the way identities are formed and shaped.

Creating a New "Moral Geography?"

American Muslim philanthropy lies at the intersection of religious, ethnic, and transnational boundaries. While it is certainly a "border-crossing" phenomenon, and one that has and continues to evolve in America, as GhaneaBassiri (2010) has demonstrated, the implications of this change are not clear. While discourses of identity and religion embrace polysemous meanings, the same flexibility has not been accorded to Islamic philanthropy in the U.S.A. While both the NGOs discussed above are using the discourse of social justice, sustainability, and religion in their messaging, the discourse of Islamic philanthropy has not received sufficient investigation, apart from certain narrow, policy analysis.

As Caroline Nagel (1999:134) argues, the discourse of multiculturalism could be problematic for the mi-

norities (she uses the example of Muslims in Britain), since it assumes unity and homogeneity that do not exist. As she further argues, this creates false categories and individual power brokers are often struggling to maintain monopoly over representing the "interests" of their groups. Both supporters and critics of multiculturalism are in a bind, given the complexity of the phenomenon, she argues. The growth of a "Muslim identity" has also created a sense of alienation among certain segments of society, and critics point that projects such as separate Islamic schools can create further divisiveness in society.

While philanthropy, in many cases, is tied to identity politics, and in the example of HHRF and IR USA, there is certainly an element of this, there is a greater emphasis on social justice issues. One can argue that both these organizations are addressing the central notions of social justice that Islamic philanthropy emphasizes in its intentionality. While the discourse of Islamic philanthropy has co-opted various discourses—development, sustainability, and environmentalism—to name a few, the central concern remains that of social justice. And this is one of the key reasons why several government agencies across the world have signed up to partner with various projects of both the NGOs. In fact, The United States Agency for International Development and the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives at the White House have very strong relationships with IR, on several initiatives.

As Nagel (1999) further states, there has been quite a lot of theoretical work in the area of social justice and distributive justice that can help us understand the dimensions related to trans-border issues. The

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[14] See: https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152125372380208.1073741904.6919565207&type=1. Retrieved April 18, 2014.

work of David Harvey, in particular *Social Justice and the City* (1973), is useful in framing issues related to injustice and redistribution of wealth. Harvey (1973) argues that the problem facing distributive justice is not one of individual selfishness, but one of the modes of production, that is, capitalism. Nagel (1999:139) states: "While Harvey's work inspired countless geographers and brought Marxism into the mainstream of geographic thought, Marxist views on social justice have come under fire by feminists and others since the 1980s." While this is a structuralist perspective of looking at wealth redistribution, much of the rhetoric of both the NGOs does not go to this level of analysis, preferring to stay at the level of "doing what you can" to help the members of *Ummah* around the world. Both the NGOs examined, while certainly promoting activism, remain silent in their messaging about the need to question why things are the way they are. They are also silent about the political dimensions of the conflicts.

Similarly, in her book, *Islam Is a Foreign Country*, Zareena Grewal (2013) argues that transnational communities produce ties that pull at the seams of national demands for complete and total submission of one's attachments. She uses the example of American Muslim student travelers, who traverse across the Middle East in search of knowledge, to illustrate how this shifting "moral geography" occurs and how it is best to understand it. She presents the example of Omar, a young American student inspired by Malcolm X, the charismatic Black leader who defined his identity in transnational terms—of being an African in America, until, perhaps, the end of his life. This "protest" mindset has been part of how American Muslims have, in the past, imagined

their identities, and this could, perhaps, explain some of the tensions in discourses pertaining to Islamic philanthropy. While there is a definite tendency among American Muslim NGOs to focus on "domestic" projects and build communities "here," there is also an overwhelming focus on Muslim communities and projects globally, alluding to the needs of the global *Ummah*. Grewal (2013:83) argues that the "Islamic East has become an archive for the transnational moral geography in the American mosques." This process, one can argue, continues in the form of discourses created by American Muslim NGOs, as we see in the examples in this paper.

Indeed, much of the backlash against Islamic charities that came about post 9/11 was largely due to the alleged connections of some of the NGOs with "terrorist networks," in the Middle East and Africa. While many of these allegations turned out to be false, there have been some convictions in these cases, with the American Civil Liberties Union and other civil liberty groups calling these judgments as politically motivated (see: American Civil Liberties Union 2009). This has been further corroborated by research from Benthall (2007), who wrote his famous article "The Overreaction Against Islamic Charities," arguing for looking at the positive role they can play and for not exaggerating the threat from a few organizations or individuals that had dubious links with terrorist networks.

As Grewal (2013) further argues,

Muslim Americans' transnational moral geographies challenge the primacy of national affiliation through devotional practices, calls for racial equality, and

global religious communion. As we see, the transnational moral geographies of the American Muslims are not only in competition with those of the nation, but also with one another. (p. 85)

While this seems to be true, what Grewal misses out on, or rather does not focus on, is the level of co-optation that is undergoing. The borrowing, lending, and merging of norms, discourses of giving between the various Islamic discourses of donating and those of the "mainstream" American ones, as we have seen, are too many to be ignored. To simply put, these in competition with one another would be simplifying the argument. Perhaps, GhaneaBassiri would agree with this perspective.

The level of merging of norms of consumer philanthropy, marketing principles, the use of "commonalities" between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism to call for serving "mankind," and the various "inter-faith" programs that seek to bridge barriers between "Abrahamic faiths" are all further examples of this shifting moral geography. This shift can be

seen as a reconfiguration of relations between how philanthropy, community boundaries are constantly being re-imagined in America.

Finally, the study of American Muslim philanthropy offers us the opportunity to also look at the plurality of how philanthropy is being imagined and recreated. The discourse starts with an assumption of diversity and further pushes us to be conscious of the need for this vocabulary of pluralism. There is no single modernity, as GhaneaBassiri (2010) has argued, but "multiple modernities," that are being negotiated. The notion of "contact zone" that Pratt (1991) has proposed also pushes the boundaries of imagining language as a "community" that is homogenous. This may well be the biggest contribution, both theoretically and conceptually, of studying American Muslim philanthropy. Apart from helping us redraw the boundaries, this effort can also help us become conscious of the barriers in our own language, conceptual frameworks that are stopping us from fully understanding the norms of giving in this frame.

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Book Review

Konecki, Krzysztof, Anna Kacperczyk, Piotr Chomczyński, and Marco Albarracín. 2013. *The Spirit of Communitarianism and the Cultural Background of the Limoncocha Community in the Context of Sustainable Development*. Quito: Universidad Internacional SEK Ecuador

Imagine a community comprising of 80% teachers living in a nature reserve, deep in a tropical forest. Imagine, then, that 88% of inhabitants feel that this community needs external help, especially by providing them with knowledge and teaching them to solve their problems. Why would these teachers not be able to solve their problems on their own? What have they been taught to teach? And, finally, how can they overcome these challenges and ensure the sustainable development of their community?

These are real questions, posed in a real community. These questions have been studied by a team of sociologists from the University of Lodz, working together with Ecuadorian colleagues in Limoncocha National Biological Reserve in Ecuador. This is a fascinating case study, in particular for sociologists and anthropologists. The history of the community living in the reserve can be seen as an experiment, with its members uprooted from where they had lived before, brought to Limoncocha by powerful external forces, and then left on their own. It weaves together (neo)colonialism, evangelization, globalization, oil extraction, and environmental protection. And it takes place in a country which itself is now seen as a large-scale social experiment.

In a relatively short time, Limoncocha has experienced a number of very peculiar situations, many of which are representative of other sites in developing countries. Examples include relocation of people for (neo)colonial purposes, related to evangelization, the (neo)colonial administration, the adaptation of the community to new circumstances, and then an attempt to self-organize after the end of the neocolonial rule, with the new initiatives undertaken by regional authorities to fill-in the administration gap. Furthermore, in the background, we have the important social-ecological conflict, which again is very representative for many developing countries—thus, the authors touch upon many important trade-offs that our civilization faces (such as oil extraction vs. the preservation of a tropical forest, a challenge that is particularly evident in Ecuador).

The authors report on a study they carried out in Limoncocha with the use of multiple methods. They managed to observe the life and culture of the community and derived much information from the interviews. The use of random sampling in such a rural and isolated setting is particularly noteworthy. Thanks to this multi-method approach, the authors managed to find not only what is normally exposed but also the relatively hidden social norms. Looking carefully at the different aspects of community life, the authors managed to avoid the paternalistic approach and idealizing of local cultures.

This study follows a particularly interesting approach of linking cultural and biological diversity. Indeed, this approach is increasingly advocated in international committees and policy circles, in particular referring to the so-called biocultural diversity. Biocultural diversity captures relationships between local communities and biodiversity and refers to the diversity of life in all its manifestations (biological, cultural, and linguistic), which are all interrelated within a complex social-ecological co-evolving and adaptive system (Pilgrim and Pretty 2013; Cocks and Wiersum 2014). The authors address the essence of the social-ecological systems approach when they underline that "the environment consists of both nature and culture" (p. 8) and when they acknowledge that human behaviors, practices, and attitudes shape the environment, but also that the environment shapes those behaviors, practices, and attitudes.

In this context, the authors address the important issue of non-monetary values that people attach to nature. With regard to the importance of collective meetings and deliberations which were studied by the authors, this report is in line with the broader literature on deliberative processes as a way of eliciting shared values, which is an increasingly important body of literature in the area of sustainable development and in the studies of social-ecological systems (Kenter et al. 2011; Raymond et al. 2014). Interestingly, some of the cited statements from interviewees provide evidence of eroding social values.

The main focus in this report is on communitarianism, the community spirit still present in Limoncocha, as reflected in the social and cultural life of the community. As we find out, the inhabitants still undertake collective work for the community. However, we can also see that the Limoncochans do not have an effective common property management system. This is particularly evident with regard to environmental protection and contrasts with much research on indigenous communities elsewhere, within which internal rules evolved for governing the sustainable use of natural resources over millennia (Berkes and Folke 2000; Berkes, Colding, and Folke 2003). Most often, such rules have evolved as a result of some kind of communitarian spirit, community work, or deliberation, coupled with an understanding of the community's dependence on its natural surroundings. The Limoncochans do understand that they depend on nature, but they are not able to set the internal natural resource management rules by themselves. Perhaps, this can be related to the fact that this community was uprooted and subject to extremely strong external influence. Or, maybe this is linked to the fact

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Book Review: Konecki, Krzysztof, Anna Kacperczyk, Piotr Chomczyński, and Marco Albarracín. 2013. *The Spirit of Communitarianism and the Cultural Background of the Limoncocha Community in the Context of Sustainable Development*. Quito: Universidad Internacional SEK Ecuador

that the Limoncochans originate from Tena, a town about 300 kilometers away, and not an indigenous group that would have lived according to a more traditional way of life. Indeed, it would be particularly interesting to do further research on how the culture these people have today differs from other cultures in the country with regard to environmental management, especially compared to the inhabitants of Tena, and indigenous peoples still living in natural conditions.

Anyway, it will be necessary for the people of Limoncocha to learn how to use the available natural resources in line with the concept of sustainable development, as these resources are scarce, population numbers are growing, and the environment is under pressure from additional activities (oil industry). We can see some initial ideas on how this could be achieved, with tourism (ecotourism and birdwatching in particular) indicated as the most promising option. 74% of Limoncochans perceive tourism as a development opportunity, to benefit from which they generally understand they need to protect nature. I fully support the authors' conclusion referring to the opportunity of using the extraordinary story of the village, along with the Limoncocha lake's natural assets, as tourist magnets. Nevertheless, such

a potential development strategy has to be very carefully planned. In line with the concept of sustainable development, special attention needs to be paid to obeying the local ecosystem's tourist carrying capacity (Cater 1995; Kronenberg 2014).

In short, Limoncocha has been affected by typical problems of economic development clashing with environmental objectives. On top of those issues, Limoncocha can be seen as part of a larger story of disappearance of cultural and biocultural diversity, resulting from the expansion of Western culture, religion, and consumption patterns. Indeed, the widespread expectation among the Limoncochans that someone from the outside will help them solve their problems contrasts with the communitarian spirit highlighted by the authors. Apparently, in this case, communitarianism can no longer translate into the community's ability to solve their own problems. This might be another interesting research avenue to pursue in the future in Limoncocha.

There is still a lot to learn for the teachers of Limoncocha on how to ensure the sustainable development of their community. And there is a lot to learn for us from this very interesting case, with this book as an interesting contribution to this mutual learning process.

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