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Qualitative Sociology Review

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Lukas T. Marciniak
Lodz University, Poland

Editorial introduction

Do we have to learn about yesterday's people if we want to understand today's social phenomena? Are classical scientific works still valid and useful for current investigations? Is there anything interesting for contemporary scientists in ancient scholarship or is the evolution of old theories and methods possible? We believe that you will find the answers to the above and to other questions in this issue of our journal.

We start with Robert Prus's article and get to know how he applies symbolic interactionism as a device for developing transhistorical comparisons, examining Aristotle's works and establishing links between ancient Greeks' scholarship and the contemporary social sciences.

Applications of the symbolic interactionism and other classical qualitative conceptualizations is also presented in Tim Gawley's article. The author explores trust development process, compares findings with studies from different substantive fields and discusses implications of his work for future trust development studies.

Another successful combination of classical sociological works with new approach is at the basis of Frank Nutch's article. The author explores commercial whale watch cruises referring to past studies of the cooling out process but recognizing cooling out the mark not on a face-to-face basis but as a collectively organized anticipating process, what makes this work innovative.

In the article written by Allison L. Hurst, well known sociological issues like social mobility, inequality and class identity formation are investigated from a narrative perspective and through ethnographic research. This new approach to "old sociological problems" offers a chance to perceive individual attempts to navigate class cultural differences and to discover identity formation strategies of college students.

The methodological article by Richard C. Mitchell also offers a "new way" of applying past theoretical and methodological works. First, the author proposes empirical adoption of autopoietic systems theory. Second, Mitchell argues for "grounded systemic approach," a combination of grounded theory methodology with systems theory, as an evolution of method and its application.

Another two articles are significant analyses of macro-scale changes, relatively new phenomena and events in contemporary societies.

The article written by Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen is a semantic examination of a social policy practice and some new kinds of active citizenship – citizens' contracts. The author precisely describes historical context of the phenomenon, identifies the present situation and the consequences.

The article written by Ellu Saar and Margarita Kazjulja presents relationship between structural changes and individual life courses. The authors analyze the situation of people experiencing socio-economic transformation and reconstruct cumulative advantage and disadvantage patterns in their biographies.

The last three articles are very interesting examples of qualitative studies focused on new media and pop-culture phenomena.

The examination of popular Hollywood movies is presented by Wendy Leo Moore and Jennifer L. Pierce in their article. The authors conducted a narrative and frame analysis of the films to discuss important issues of race, racism and gender to identify movies in the so called anti-racist white male hero genre and to highlight their ideological implications.

The article written by Barbara Adkins and Eryn Grant is a study of online interactions and an internet backpackers' notice board. The study illustrates the importance of information and communication technologies in developing group solidarity and the way of constructing culturally shared understanding of the category "backpacker".

Finally, Harri Sarpavaara's article demonstrates an analysis of television advertisements. Using the dichotomy of the Dionysian and Apollonian philosophies derived from ancient Greek culture, the author examines the existence of the Dionysian impulse in today's advertising culture.

Beginning with an emphasis on ancient Greek contributions to current scholarship and ending with the study influenced by ancient Greek mythology, this issue of *Qualitative Sociology Review* aims to present the past as a useful resource of data, concepts and ideas; the present as a basis for comparative analysis and innovative development of theories and methods; and the future which should orientate our activity. All these and many other, interesting problems are to be found in an extensive interview with Robert Prus, which perfectly completes the issue. Thanks to Steven Kleinknecht who interviewed Professor Prus and has edited and rearranged the material to foster flow and clarity for the reader, we have an unusual opportunity to become familiar with Prus' thoughts on the discipline. Reading about the academic career of the distinguished interactionist ethnographer, his reflections on sociological theory and method and his approach to understanding the social world, we can learn a lot about every aspect of practicing qualitative sociology.



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Robert Prus

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Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*:ⁱ

Laying the Foundations for a Pragmatist Consideration of Human Knowing and Acting

Abstract

Whereas a great many academics have presumed to speak knowledgeably about Aristotle's work, comparatively few have actually studied his texts in sustained detail and very few scholars in the social sciences have examined Aristotle's work mindfully of its relevance for the study of human knowing and acting on a more contemporary or enduring plane.

Further, although many people simply do not know Aristotle's works well, even those who are highly familiar with Aristotle's texts (including *Nicomachean Ethics*) generally have lacked conceptual frames for traversing the corridors of Western social thought in more sustained pragmatist terms. It is here, using symbolic interactionism (a sociological extension of pragmatist philosophy) as an enabling device for developing both transsituational and transhistorical comparisons, that it is possible to establish links of the more enduring and intellectually productive sort between the classical scholarship of the Greeks and the ever emergent contemporary scene.

After (1) overviewing the theoretical emphasis of symbolic interactionism, this paper (2) locates Aristotle's works within a broader historical context, (3) situates Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* within the context of his own work and that of his teacher Plato, and (4) takes readers on an intellectual voyage through Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Not only does his text address a great many aspects of human lived experience, but it also has great instructive value for the more enduring study of human group life.

Accordingly, attention is given to matters such as (a) human agency, reflectivity, and culpability; (b) definitions of the situation; (c) character, habits, and situated activities; (d) emotionality and its relationship to activity; (e) morality, order, and deviance; (f) people's senses of self regulation and their considerations of the other; (g) rationality and judgment; (h) friendship and associated relationships; (i) human happiness; and (k) intellectual activity.

In concluding the paper, one line of inquiry that uses contemporary symbolic interaction as resource for engaging Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is suggested. However, as indicated in the broader statement presented here, so much more could be accomplished by employing symbolic interactionism as a contemporary pragmatist device for engaging Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Keywords

Aristotle; Ethics; Activity; Knowing; Agency; Politics; Pragmatism; Character; Morality; Virtues; Happiness; Friendship; Symbolic interactionism

Before Aristotle embarked on a statement of political science (i.e., the science of managing the *polis* or community) which he defined as the most essential of all human sciences, he realized that he needed to develop a broader approach to the study of human knowing and acting.

Thus, whereas *Nicomachean Ethics* [NE] is only one of several texts that Aristotle developed on the human condition and also is best comprehended in conjunction with his other works, *Nicomachean Ethics* remains one of the most highly enabling statements ever written on human knowing and acting.

Because Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* represents the key to comprehending all of the variants of pragmatist social thought that would be developed in the human sciences in the ensuing centuries, including our own time and beyond, it would be most instructive for every student of the human condition and especially those working in symbolic interactionism and related pragmatist and constructionist traditions to be familiar with this text. Indeed, if one were to know only one manuscript from the classical Greek era, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is clearly among the most indispensable.

Focusing on activity, NE has an enduring relevance as a highly enabling set of concepts as well as a set of comparison points and analytical linkages with more contemporary realms of activity. Thus, NE is an extremely valuable resource for achieving transhistorical conceptual continuity in the study of human knowing and acting. Further, because of its relevance to all manner of human endeavor, NE provides an exceptionally viable pragmatist basis for communication among scholars from a wide variety of disciplines and nations.

Although few social scientists seem familiar with Aristotle's works on ethics and people often use the term "ethics" in ways that more exclusively imply notions of civil relations, justice, and generalized politeness, Aristotle not only engages a wide variety of topics of fundamental relevance to social scientists in his analysis of ethics but, even more consequentially, also lays the foundations of pragmatist scholarship. Thus, he establishes what may be known as "the pragmatist divide."

Whereas Aristotle (c384-322 BCE) has learned much from Plato (c427-347BCE) and benefits from Plato's pragmatism as well as other aspects of his scholarship, Aristotle dispenses with Plato's theology along with Plato's ideal forms. As well, because Aristotle *focuses so centrally on activity as a humanly engaged process*, he also moves well beyond the open-endedness of much of Plato's dialectic considerations of the "nature of knowing and acting." Clearly, Aristotle has learned much from Plato's reflective, "quasi-pragmatist" dialectic analyses. However, in a manner that more closely approximates Plato's considerations of activity in *The Republic* and *Laws*, Aristotle much more singularly concentrates on the enacted features of human group life.

For Aristotle, the humanly engaged world is the single and primary source of human knowing. Thus, people are to be recognized as biological essences and, like all living things, people are to be understood in terms relative to their capacities for sensation and movement. Accordingly, for Aristotle, people exist, function, and are to be understood as community-based animals who, on acquiring speech, also achieve capacities for thought, deliberation, intentionality, purposive activity, and collective enterprise. As well, Aristotle insists on the (empirical) necessity of developing concepts from examinations of the instances and the related use of instruction-based knowing (especially see Spangler 1998) and analytic induction (i.e., comparative analysis).

Elsewhere (Prus 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006), I have addressed the affinities between symbolic interactionism and classical Greek scholarship (particularly the

works of Aristotle). Still, recognizing the natural skepticism that many contemporaries, who are unfamiliar with this literature, have expressed about the accomplishments of classical Greek scholarship and its correspondence with 20th and 21st century developments in the social sciences, it is important to provide a more sustained, closely documented statement on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Aristotle is known to most social scientists in only the most superficial of terms and even most philosophers have a rather limited familiarity with Aristotle's pragmatism. Nevertheless, Aristotle's works on ethics, rhetoric, politics, and poetics amongst others, have provided the foundations for virtually all instances of pragmatist social thought in Western social theory. This most certainly includes the development of American pragmatism (associated with Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead, see Prus 2005).ⁱⁱ

While attending to notions of good and evil in comparatively sustained manners, Aristotle also addresses a number of issues that are central to community life (and the foundations of political science) in highly insightful, explicit, and analytically precise terms.

In the process of developing *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle directly and consequentially deals with (1) *the human quest for good* (i.e., desired ends, purposes); (2) *virtue and vice* (as humanly engaged realms of activity); (3) *human agency* (with respect to voluntary behavior, deliberation and counsel, choice, practical wisdom, and activity); (4) *character* (as formulated, enacted, and alterable); (5) *happiness* (with respect to pleasure, pain, virtues, and activity); (6) *emotion* (as experienced, developed), (7) *justice* (as in principles, law, and regulation); (8) *self regulation* and an altruistic attentiveness to the other; and (9) *interpersonal relations* (as in friendship, family, benefactors, and citizenry).

Relatedly, whereas Aristotle is deeply concerned about people developing virtues (and competencies) on more personal levels as well as fostering a greater sense of well-being in the community at large, Aristotle recognizes that morality of both sorts cannot be understood apart from sustained examinations of (1) the nature of community life and (2) the ways that people actually do things.

Thus, Aristotle not only intends to use *Nicomachean Ethics* to lay the foundations for a more extended theory of political science, but he also endeavors to establish the base for comprehending all manners of meaningful human activity (including the interchanges and relationships that people develop with one another in the course of community life).

Still, before focusing more directly on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is important to (1) provide an overview of the theoretical approach that centrally informs this consideration of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, (2) locate Aristotle's scholarship within the broader historical flow of Western social thought, and (3) situate *Nicomachean Ethics* within the context of Aristotle's other considerations of human knowing and acting. Although these matters may seem diversionary to some readers, this material is fundamental not only for understanding the neglect of Aristotle's work in the social sciences but also for appreciating the roots of the positivist - idealist - pragmatist schisms that one presently encounters in the human sciences.

The Theoretical Frame

Because it is symbolic interaction (and pragmatist social thought more generally) that provides the conceptual mechanism that enables this project to develop in more sustained analytic terms, it is instructive to review the premises that inform an interactionist analysis of human group life.

In developing a larger project on the linkages of classical Greek thought and the contemporary human sciences, of which Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* represents a highly consequential component,ⁱⁱⁱ I have built fundamentally on the symbolic interactionist tradition associated with George Herbert Mead (1934), Herbert Blumer (1969), and Anselm Strauss (1993).^{iv} Since Mead and Blumer are particularly instrumental in articulating the theoretical and methodological foundations of a social science that attends to people's lived experiences (i.e., the ways that people engage all aspects of their known worlds), their work serves as a consequential reference point throughout.

Because all research and all theory makes claims or assumptions about the world (regardless of whether these are explicitly recognized) and so much variation exists in the human sciences, it is essential to provide readers with a more precise indication of what the present approach entails (and, correspondingly, what it does not).

Thus, before comparisons of a more meaningful sort can be made, one requires a conceptual technology or apparatus for considering similarities and differences between things as well as their connections and consequences. This also is necessary to offset the tendency on the part of many to view the material and intellectual productions of the past as largely inconsequential and/or essentially as matters of passing curiosity (whereby considerations of the classical Greek and Latin eras may be likened unto ventures into an archaic museum).

In developing the conceptual framework for the present paper, eleven premises or assumptions that inform the interactionist paradigm are briefly outlined:^v

1. *Human group life is intersubjective.* Human group life is accomplished (and made meaningful) through community-based, linguistic interchange.
2. *Human group life is knowingly problematic.* It is through symbol-based references that people begin to distinguish realms of "the known" and (later) "the unknown."
3. *Human group life is object-oriented.* Denoting anything that can be referenced (observed, referred to, indicated, acted toward, or otherwise knowingly experienced), objects constitute the contextual and operational essence of the humanly known environment.
4. *Human group life is (multi) perspectival.* As groups of people engage the world on an ongoing basis, they develop viewpoints, conceptual frameworks, or notions of reality that may differ from those of other groups.
5. *Human group life is reflective.* It is by taking the perspective of the other into account with respect to one's own being that people become "objects unto themselves" (and act accordingly).
6. *Human group life is sensory/embodied and (knowingly) materialized.* Among the realms of humanly knowing "what is" and "what is not," people develop an awareness of [the material or physical things] that others in the community recognize. This includes appreciations of the [sensory / body / physiological] essences of human beings (self and other); acknowledging capacities for stimulation and activity as well as denoting realms of practical (enacted, embodied) limitation and fragility.

7. *Human group life is activity-based.* The interactionists approach human activity as a meaningful, *formulative*, multifaceted process.
8. *Human group life is negotiable.* Because human activity frequently involves direct interactions with others, people may anticipate and strive to influence others as *well as* acknowledge and resist the influences of others.
9. *Human group life is relational.* People do things within group contexts; people act mindfully of, and in conjunction with, specific other people.
10. *Human group life is processual.* Human lived experiences (and activities) are viewed in emergent, ongoing, or temporally developed terms.
11. *Human group life takes place in instances.* Group life is best known through the consideration and study of the particular occasions in which people engage things. Conceptions of human experience are to be developed mindfully of, and tested against, the particular occasions or instances in which people attend to and otherwise act toward things in the humanly known world.

Although this paper uses symbolic interactionism with its pragmatist philosophic foundations as an enabling technology (Prus 2004) for developing more sustained, informative, and consequential comparisons with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, something more is required to effectively establish the linkages between classical Greek scholarship and contemporary social thought.

Accordingly, even within the confines of the present statement, it is important to acknowledge *the historical flow* of Western social thought

The Historical Context

Although people often assume that scholarship has developed in a highly systematic, cumulative manner with progressively new ideas replacing the less adequate materials of the past, those who actually take the time to examine scholarship in historical terms learn that this simply is *not* the case.

Indeed, given (a) the great many instances of political (and religious) turmoil that has characterized human affairs over the millennia, (b) the wide range of human interests and tensions, (c) other human limitations and frailties, and (d) a broad array of natural disasters, the development of scholarship has been far from uniform, cumulative, or progressive.

Further, while we may recognize the value of many newer developments, it also is instructive to see what may be learned from the past. Indeed, despite the optimistic claims frequently made by “the champions of the new” and their often-intense denunciations of the past, closer examinations of the documents developed by earlier authors indicates that there is much to be learned from the scholarship of the past (also see Durkheim 1977).

This is particularly true for the literature developed in the classical Greek and Latin eras. Not only have virtually all realms of the human and physical sciences been built on aspects of classical Greek thought,^{vi} but much highly instructive material in the classical Greek and Latin literatures has been overlooked by academics in the centuries following.

This material also (as Durkheim 1977 insists) has unparalleled relevance for students of the human condition. Not only is Western civilization rooted in classical Greek and Roman thought, but it also is to be appreciated that the people of the present can only be better understood in reference to (and in comparison with) those who have lived (and acted) in other places and times.

Popular attention typically has focused on Greek art, architecture, and mythology (and superheroes), but it is in the realms of philosophy (including logic, science, theology, and ethics), rhetoric, history, and poetics that the Greeks have contributed most uniquely, instructively, and consequentially to Western social thought.

Whereas the Greeks or Hellenes of the classical era (circa 700-300BCE) would derive inspiration from the various peoples with whom they had contact in the broader Mediterranean arena, the classical Greeks emerge as a most exceptional community of scholars. Not only did they establish a phonetic alphabet but they also developed and preserved a wide assortment of texts that dealt with virtually every area of human knowing and acting in extended detail.

Further, although aspects of classical Greek thought have been with us for some 2500 years, there still is much to be learned from the exceptional intellectual legacy they have left behind. This may seem an odd claim to readers who think that those in classical studies, philosophy, history, and literature would have gleaned in more thorough, systematic terms all of the essential materials and insights from the classical Greek and Roman eras.

This has *not* been the case. Not only has this literature been subject to much inadvertent neglect, general ignorance, and extended confusion, but much intellectual material also has been lost through the willful denunciation and intentioned destruction of classical Greek and Latin texts.

It is not possible to trace the development of Western social thought in detail, but if we are to understand the place of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* or other materials from the classical Greek era within the context of Western social thought, it will be necessary to establish some base-line historical markers.

Using Homer's (circa 700BCE) *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as starting reference points and recognizing that the Greek empire broke up with the death of Alexander the Great (356-323BCE) and the Greeks subsequently became more theological and moralistic in thrust (with scholarship largely stagnating thereafter), one may define the classical Greek era as that period between 700BCE and 300BCE.

Without going into detail (see Prus 2004 for a somewhat more extended commentary on the more notable participants and emphasis of classical Greek scholarship), it should be emphasized that the classical Greeks not only made great progress in all manners of craft and trade but also emerge as the most remarkable of educators, poets, rhetoricians, historians, philosophers, theologians, and politicians.

Still, whereas one finds an incredibly wide assortment of structuralist, skepticist, pragmatist, entertainment, moralist, and religious themes in the classical Greek literature, Greek scholarship deteriorated dramatically following the death of Alexander the Great.

Greek thought subsequently became much more focused on moralist, fatalist, and religious matters, with scholarly (and scientific) enterprise sliding into comparative disregard. Thus, whereas aspects of classical scholarship persisted in Greece and what later would become known as East Rome and Byzantine, it tended to assume more static and, in many respects, substantially retrogressive, dimensions

Even though the Romans would emerge as the next great European empire, Roman social thought is very much a product of Greek scholarship.

Through contact with Greek educators and texts in the preceding centuries, the Romans already had absorbed a good deal of Greek civilization prior to taking possession of Greece in 146BCE. However, it clearly was a substantially weakened realm of Greek scholarship that the Romans would carry into the Western European and Mediterranean territories that they invaded.

Thus, although some of Plato's and Aristotle's texts were translated into Latin, the Romans appear to have lost and/or ignored many other texts that have been written by Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek scholars. Indeed, if not for Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43BCE) and some of his associates (many of whose texts also would be disregarded in subsequent centuries) even more contact with Greek rhetoric and philosophy would have been lost.

In general terms, the Romans were much more interested in military technology, rhetoric, and poetics than Greek philosophy and history. Further, the Romans typically sought to impose more distinctively Latin stamps on the Greek materials they used.

As the Roman Empire disintegrated over the next few centuries and education (and scholarship) fell more completely into Christian hands, even more pagan Greek and Latin materials were ignored, denounced, or destroyed.

In turn, it was a series of Christian theologians (notably including Augustine, 354-430) who preserved elements of Latin civilization and maintained something of an educational focus during the Western European dark ages (c500-1000).

Still, when Alcuin (732-804) and Charlemagne (742-814) embarked on the task of developing an educational program in France, it is to be understood that they worked with the threads and fragments of their Roman-Latin heritage. Relatedly, although the Christian scholars also acknowledged aspects of Greek thought, Latin was the primary language of instruction. Likewise, it would be Rome rather than Greece that generally would be seen as the intellectual base of Western civilization.

Remarkable strides were made in restoring Latin grammar during the Carolingian era of the 8th–10th centuries and in re-establishing dialectic analysis during the Scholastic era of the 12th–13th centuries.^{vii}

Even more vast intellectual gains were on the horizon when the scholastics gained access to some of Aristotle's texts through crusade-related contacts with the Islamics, Jews, and Byzantine (Eastern Christian) Greeks. This is especially evident in the scholarship of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who engaged Aristotle's work in uniquely enabling terms. However, classical Greek scholarship would encounter yet other setbacks as a consequence of the 16th century Renaissance and the somewhat related Protestant Reformation movement.

Ironically, as well, although the Renaissance is commonly associated with a re-emphasis on classical Greek and Latin scholarship, the Renaissance movement contributed unevenly to the reintroduction of Classical Greek social thought in Western European scholarship.

Thus, whereas artistic accomplishments and literary expression were prominently emphasized, philosophy, rhetoric, and history were comparatively neglected where these latter subject matters were not more intensively denounced as corrupting by prominent Renaissance authors (e.g., Francois Rabelais, Desiderius Erasmus, and Michel de Montaigne).

Likewise, whereas Aquinas and the scholastics had invoked Aristotelian logic and pragmatism in developing their theologies, it was the theological and idealist emphases in Platonist thought that Renaissance authors generally emphasized over the pagan pragmatism of Aristotle.^{viii}

Focused on the rejection of Catholic theology, the Protestant Reformation characterized by the more austere, individualized religious emphases of Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564) also fostered an extended disregard of the works of Thomas Aquinas as well as those of Aristotle (on whom Aquinas and some of his Catholic associates so centrally had built).

Although various scholars have attempted to reintegrate Greek scholarship more directly into Western social thought over the intervening centuries, this has not been very successful. Beyond the clearly pronounced Roman-Latin loyalties of Italian academics, intellectual developments in France, Britain, and Germany also are deeply rooted in Latin traditions.

Generally speaking, scholars in all of these major arenas of Western European scholarship have been comparatively resistant to classical Greek thought when they have not been more adamant in proclaiming the superiority of their own (contemporary) brilliance over that of all of their predecessors.

Thus, for instance, while their own materials are centrally informed by aspects of classical Greek thought, Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), Francis Bacon (1561-1625), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), René Descartes (1596-1650), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) have all adopted positions that disparage the contributions of earlier scholars. In turn, deriving much inspiration from the works of René Descartes, David Hume, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) effectively set the philosophic (idealist / rationalist) tone for much German social theory.

Turning more directly to the contemporary scene, it should be appreciated that (a) academics in “classical studies” generally do not focus on the philosophic contributions of classical Greek scholars, (b) most philosophers are Platonists and/or tend to deal with Aristotle primarily as a formalist and logician, and (c) most historians give little attention to the works of the Greek historians (Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon). Similar observations may be made about contemporary academics in rhetoric, political science, and poetics (literary fiction) most of whom also exhibit only fleeting familiarity with classical Greek scholarship.

Social scientists, including those in political science, psychology, sociology, and anthropology are generally even less informed than those “in the humanities” about the potential that classical Greek scholarship has to offer for the study of human group life.

Thus, while representing only a modest step in this direction, it is hoped that this statement on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* may alert readers to some of the enormous potential that this text (and the broader classical Greek and Latin literature in which it is embedded) has to inform present day research and analysis.

Aristotle's Works in Context

To this point, we have (1) outlined the conceptual frame for this project and (2) located Aristotle's works within the broader flow of Western social thought. While much more could be said in both respects, it also is important to (3) consider Aristotle's approach to ethics mindful of Plato's viewpoints on morality and activity and (4) situate *Nicomachean Ethics* within the broader context of Aristotle's own works. Although it also will be necessary to deal with these latter two topics in highly compacted terms, when these matters are in place we can engage Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in more direct terms.

Plato vs. Aristotle on Virtue, Vice, and Activity

As with many aspects of Aristotle's writings, it is instructive to consider Aristotle's works on ethics as a *counterpoint* to positions developed by Plato. Thus, when one examines Aristotle's analysis of ethics or human conduct (as in

Nicomachean Ethics, *Eudemian Ethics*, and *Magna Moralia*), it is helpful to be mindful of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, as well as various of Plato's dialogues on virtue and human knowing (especially, *Protagoras*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and *Philebus*).

In addition to being Aristotle's mentor, Plato has been the single most prominent intellectual source for philosophers, theologians, and scholars in the humanities more generally.

Notably, too, because Aristotle's works on ethics very much engage matters with which Plato also dealt, the two authors not only represent valuable reference points with respect to one another but also foster a greater comprehension of one another's works and the more general issues with which they deal.

To a very large extent, Plato appears to follow Socrates on philosophic matters pertaining to theology, morality, and dialectics (or reasoning). Still, Plato acknowledges an assortment of diverse positions in his dialogues. Thus, while Plato does not fully or systematically articulate the positions that Aristotle later will develop with respect to human knowing and acting, Aristotle more directly engages many of the issues that Plato identifies (but often disclaims) in various of his texts.

In *Protagoras*, Plato (with Socrates as his spokesperson) takes issue with the sophist position that virtue can be taught. Thus, Socrates adopts the viewpoint that virtue is an inborn quality, the eventual realization of which is contingent on people's philosophic wisdom. Virtue is seen as multifaceted, as well, signified by courage, temperance, justice, and holiness, but these qualities are only realized through people's wisdom or capacities to recognize the value of these other virtues.^{ix}

Relatedly, for Socrates, vice, evil, or wrongdoing is attributed not to any intention to do things of this sort but to people's ignorance or lack of wisdom.

Plato develops a somewhat related set of viewpoints in *Meno*, wherein Socrates argues for the importance of higher (divine) virtue, but questions the viability of (more mundane) human notions of virtue.

In *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, Plato argues that philosophers are the best sources of virtue (conduct and wisdom). This is because philosophers have greater interests in maintaining the moral integrity their souls. As well, it is posited that their souls possess greater awareness and recollection of virtue as a consequence of their (transcendental) souls' earlier instances of divine contact. Plato presents somewhat similar notions of virtue and vice in *Republic* and *Laws*.

Still, in other ways, Plato's *Philebus* represents a more consequential reference point for many of the issues that Aristotle develops in *NE*. This is particularly evident in matters pertaining to considerations of whether pleasure or wisdom is the most desirable of human states (as these take shape in human theaters of operation).

Likewise, those who examine Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* will find much in these texts of a distinctively pragmatist quality. Thus, even though Plato presents these materials as models of more ideal states (one governed by philosopher-kings, the other regulated by constitution, respectively), Plato's consideration of the programs, plans, procedures, and problematics of implementing basic features of community life (as in education and scholarship, religion, family life, politics, justice, deviance and regulation, the marketplace, entertainment, outside relations and warfare) are not only exceptionally detailed but these matters also are engaged in processual terms and addressed from multiple standpoints. As such, Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* represent remarkable contributions to the pragmatist analysis of human knowing and acting.

In developing his work on ethics, Aristotle extensively builds on as well as distinctively recasts Plato's analysis of human conduct. While retaining some of

Plato's moral emphases (i.e., on the importance of achieving individual virtue as well as the moral order of the community - as in loyalty, responsibility, and justice), Aristotle puts the focus much more singularly and directly on the human known world (vs. Plato's divinely inspired and humanly experienced worlds). Notably, Aristotle approaches moral conduct (virtue and vice) as a community-based and deliberative, human-enacted process.

Aristotle has learned a great deal about pragmatist thought from Plato, but Aristotle's approach to virtues and vices is much more consistently pragmatist than is that of Plato. Thus, whereas Plato also deals with notions of divinely-enabled (and inborn senses of) virtue, Aristotle envisions people only as having inborn animal species capacities for sensation and motion. Aristotle focuses on human knowing and acting as a developmental, instructional, and enacted, community-based process. Consequently, although he is not the first to emphasize matters of these sorts, it is Aristotle, more than anyone of record, who essentially establishes "the pragmatist divide."

Approaching human knowing in active, developmental terms, Aristotle is attentive to people's tendencies to develop habits (and characters of sorts) before they achieve capacities for linguistic comprehension. Thus, activity precedes thought, as likewise also may the development of habits. Activity and knowing, therefore, occur as a developmental process. Viewing character as encompassing people's (developmental) habits and dispositions, Aristotle considers the tendencies, (practices, preferences, and resistances) associated with character as basic for understanding human behavior.

However, in contrast to those who may be inclined to draw more direct (determinist) linkages between character and action, Aristotle also envisions *activity* as entailing a minded, voluntaristic, and deliberative essence that extends far beyond people's habits and dispositions.

Although people may assume more characteristic ways of doing things over time and, likewise, may develop sets of interests, preferences, and attitudes, Aristotle says that these notions are inadequate for explaining the production of human activity.

Thus, while acknowledging people's habits and preferences, as well as other dispositions and reluctances, Aristotle envisions people as acting with intention, exercising choice, invoking deliberation, knowingly participating in action, attending to their own activities and outcomes as well as the matter of being judged by others.

Relatedly, whereas people may attempt to shape or control other people's behavior via the application of rewards and punishment and the provision of instruction, so may they also monitor, criticize, and adjust their own activities.

No less consequentially (and in contrast to Socrates and Plato), Aristotle does not envision human vice or wrongdoing as a direct or primary consequence of ignorance. Instead, Aristotle insists that vice is to be explained within the very *same* conceptual frame as virtue.

For Aristotle, vice and virtue are parts or products of the very same process. Hence, although only some aspects of human activity may be viewed as virtuous or evil, virtue and vice are to be understood centrally with respect to matters of human agency (i.e., voluntariness, intentions, deliberation, choice, activities, assessments, and adjustments).

Further, whereas virtue and excellence, or conversely, vice and deviance are often envisioned as individual qualities, Aristotle extends these notions somewhat by locating virtues and vices (or the production, analysis, and guidance of human conduct) within a community context.

Aristotle does not deny people's capacities for meaningful, intentioned behavior as individuals, nor is he inattentive to people's habitual styles of doing things. However, Aristotle still envisions people's involvements in good and evil as part of a larger humanly enacted, community-based process.

Without pursuing the matter further at this point, it also may be observed that the great many of the debates in the humanities and social sciences reflect positions that Plato and Aristotle articulated. Notably, thus, in contrast to Plato who often approaches the matters of human knowing and acting in more theological, idealist, and skepticist terms, Aristotle stresses the necessity of envisioning people as biologically enabled, community-based, linguistic beings as well as the necessity of studying purposive activity as the basis for comprehending all aspects of human group life.

Aristotle on Knowing, Acting, and Achieving

Aristotle's work on ethics or human conduct (*Nicomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics*, *Magna Moralia*) represents only part of his extended analysis of human knowing and acting. Thus, in addition to Aristotle's depictions of more scholarly practices of reasoning in *Categories*, *De Interpretation*, *Prior Analytics*, *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations*, *Physics*, and *Metaphysics*; readers should also be aware of Aristotle's related, more generic considerations of mindedness in the human condition in *On the Soul*, *Sense and Sensibilia*, and *On Memory*; as well as Aristotle's more direct discussions of human reflectivity, interchange, and relationships in *Poetics*, *Politics*, and *Rhetoric*.

Further, while developed as part of a larger agenda to develop a philosophy of human affairs (*NE* X: ix), Aristotle also envisioned his work on ethics as a foundational statement on political (from *polis* or city state) science or the analysis of the production and maintenance of social order in the community (i.e., as a prelude to *Politics*).

Three major works on ethics are conventionally attributed to Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*), *Eudemian Ethics*, and *Magna Moralia*. In what follows, I have focused primarily on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Whether or not *Nicomachean Ethics* is a more appropriate choice in our quest for a pluralist social science than *Eudemian Ethics* or *Magna Moralia*, *NE* is presently the most accessible (reprinted) text and thus offers readers greater opportunities to examine one of Aristotle's statements on ethics.

Sidestepping these issues somewhat, one might appreciate the value of these three texts on a collective basis. Although each of these texts contains some distinctive emphases and divergencies, these statements more generally provide valuable confirmations of one another. Indeed, reading the texts as a set typically helps one better appreciate materials developed in each of the individual texts.

At the same time, though, readers should be cautioned that Aristotle's works on ethics are intellectually intense, multifaceted statements. Not only does Aristotle deal with a wide range of topics, but he also engages an incredible number and diversity of ideas about each topic within a highly compacted text. As a result, it is very challenging to summarize his texts and yet convey his views on so many issues.

This also means that readers not only should anticipate that Aristotle will deal with a broad array of topics relating to the human condition in *Nicomachean Ethics*, but readers also should be prepared to find that Aristotle engages these matters in remarkably insightful analytic detail. Relatedly, because Aristotle's texts are so highly

condensed, a great deal can be learned from comparatively short passages of his work.

In developing this statement, thus, I have made ongoing references to NE and followed his ordering of issues. This way, readers can more readily locate pertinent sections of his text and examine these in greater detail. As well, in the absence of more extended quotations, these “chapter and verse” citations will allow readers to more quickly access (and assess) the statements I have attributed to Aristotle.

While some may be disenchanted with Aristotle for some of the standpoints that he develops in his works on ethics, it would be most unfortunate (and small minded) for people to let either Aristotle’s moralities or their own interfere with a fuller appreciation of the highly conceptually enabling materials that Aristotle has provided.

Accordingly, the immediate objective is not one of endorsing or contradicting Aristotle in matters of morality or fact. Instead, the emphasis is on examining the materials he has bequeathed to us as (a) a series of conceptual departure points for subsequent inquiry and (b) a body of observational material for comparative analysis with similar issues on a more contemporary plane.

Because of his sustained focus on activity, including human interchange and reflective thought, Aristotle also anticipates much of what is presently encompassed by a “symbolic interactionist approach” (see Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969; Prus, 1996, 2003, 2004, 2005) to the study of human group life.

As a result, Aristotle’s ethics offers particularly valuable insight into the *study of human knowing and acting* as well as representing an invaluable transhistorical reference point or testimony to some of the more generic and enduring features of human group life.

Still, Aristotle’s agenda is not so readily or singularly defined. Following Plato, Aristotle also attempts to promote higher levels of personal accomplishment as well as a more effective social order. For readers interested in social reform of one or other sorts, this may be the more intriguing aspect of Aristotle’s ethics. It is here, thus, that some may engage Aristotle’s materials with greater moral passion. For our more immediate purposes, though, Aristotle’s attempts at moral guidance may be seen to obscure or obstruct the quest for a more pluralist or nonprescriptive social science. Still, even with these limitations, Aristotle’s work on ethics has so much to offer the student of the human condition.

Nicomachean Ethics (NE)

In developing this commentary, I have maintained the flow and divisions of Aristotle’s text. However, because Aristotle presents so much material in highly compacted manners, some subheadings [in brackets] have been provided for readers’ convenience.

While I will be citing Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* “chapter and verse” in developing this statement so that readers can more readily locate these materials in Aristotle’s text, the intellectual payoff for this venture is threefold: (a) to generate an increased awareness with one of the most astute analysis of the human condition ever produced; (b) to provide materials that could serve as reference points for more sustained comparative, conceptual analysis of human endeavor; and (c) to indicate particular features of Aristotle’s considerations of human group life that could be used to inform contemporary and enduring research on the human condition.

Relatedly, although I have introduced some commentary in footnotes and in the conclusion of this paper, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* contains so much instructive insight to pertaining to human knowing and acting that I have concentrated on

presenting his material and as clearly, comprehensively, succinctly, and accurately as I could.

Book I [On Human Good - Objectives]

Aristotle begins *NE* (I: I) by observing that the *good* is that (goal, end, purpose) to which human activities are directed. In developing this position, Aristotle notes that the various arts and sciences are directed toward different objectives. He also says that some pursuits may be subsumed by others and that these broader ends appear more worthwhile than the lesser pursuits (and objectives) that they encompass.

Aristotle (*NE* I: ii) extends these notions further, arguing that the supreme good would be that which is most consequential for the conduct of human life. Focusing on the human community (*polis*) for which (and in which) all human arts and sciences are developed, Aristotle contends that the ultimate good should be approached within the context of a *political science*.

Emphasizing *the centrality of the community over the individual*, Aristotle defines the good of the people (in the community) as the primary objective of the science of politics.

Aristotle (*NE*, I: iii; also *NE*, I: vii) further states that we should not expect equal levels of precision across all realms of study (philosophy, arts, science) and asks readers to recognize the more tentative nature of the present subject matter.

Aristotle also observes that although age is no guarantee of wisdom, young people generally lack an experiential base with which to appreciate the study of political (community) life. As well, he notes that people who are unable to achieve emotional detachment from the analysis of their subject matters do not make good students.^x

Next, Aristotle (*NE*, I: iv) observes that almost everyone would agree that *happiness* is the major goal in life. However, he immediately notes, there is great disagreement about the *nature of happiness*.

Acknowledging Plato's analytical practices, Aristotle insists on the importance of establishing first principles or a fundamental conceptual frame before considering happiness in more direct terms. For Aristotle, this means to start with what is known.

Aristotle (*NE*, I: v) then distinguishes four broad ways in which people may pursue happiness: (a) enjoyment, (b) politics, (c) contemplation, or (d) wealth.

Quickly dispensing with the highly generalized but less refined attractions of sensate pleasure as too superficial, Aristotle next deals with the life of politics. Then, after distinguishing (the more superficial) honor accorded to prominent citizens (in politics) by others from political virtue as an enacted quality, Aristotle indicates that virtue, too, is inadequate as an end (virtue does not guarantee happiness).

Saying that he will attend to a life of contemplation later (see *NE*, Book X), Aristotle then quickly dispenses with centralizing concerns with financial prosperity. Money, Aristotle states, also is not an appropriate end in itself. While noting that some people become engrossed in the pursuit of wealth, Aristotle says that money is of value primarily as a means to other things.

Aristotle (*NE*, I: vi) next asks *if* there is a universal (human) good. After observing that people use the word "good" in many different ways, Aristotle declares that there is *no* single, universal notion of good.

Then distinguishing (a) things good in themselves from (b) things good as a means to other things, Aristotle asks if there are things that truly can be considered good in themselves.

Noting that people's conceptions of good depends on their objectives, Aristotle (*NE*, I: vii) asks if it is viable to judge the value of things in terms of people's more final objectives. In this respect, Aristotle says, *happiness* seems to be the most final objective because happiness is one thing that is chosen for its own sake rather than a means of realizing some other objective.

From there, Aristotle comments, the good of humans may reside in the unique essences of humans, assuming that they have some unique qualities or functions.

Subsequently, Aristotle notes that (a) all living things (plants and animals) are involved in matters of nutrition and development, and (b) all animals experience sensations. What is unique about people, accordingly, is the use of the human mind or *psyche* and the related human capacity for virtue or minded excellence.

In an aside of sorts, Aristotle states that he is only offering an outline or generalized conception of human good and, mindful of the limitations of one's subject matter, the ensuing task will be that of developing a more adequate comprehension of good with respect to the human condition.

In approaching this task, Aristotle reiterates, it is important to establish the frame or first principles in a manner that is as precise, accurate, and thorough as possible.

Aristotle (*NE*, I: viii) then distinguishes goals directed toward external objects from ends directed toward human bodies and minds.^{xi} More specifically, Aristotle declares, happiness is effectively contingent on activities that are directed to ends associated with the human mind or *psyche*. Recognizing that people may value different ends or objectives in the pursuit of happiness (as in virtue, wisdom, pleasure, prosperity), he emphasizes the importance of excellence in pursuing those ends.

While viewing happiness as the most desirable and pleasurable of things, Aristotle further stresses people's more virtuous or noble expressions and experiences of happiness.

Continuing, Aristotle also observes that people require access to external resources if they are to assume nobler, benevolent roles. After referencing several types of external advantage (e.g., friends, wealth, political position), Aristotle argues for the importance of resources of these sorts for people who intend to achieve virtuous life-styles.

Aristotle (*NE*, I: ix) subsequently asks if happiness is something that can be learned, or whether it is a divinely enabled tendency or, perhaps, even the function of people's fortune.

He adopts the viewpoint that while the capacity for happiness is widely diffuse, more virtuous notions of happiness can be attained through study and effort.

Likewise, Aristotle posits, happiness is greater when people are more actively involved in its instances of achievement as opposed to obtaining things through gifts or fortune.

Aristotle then restates his goal for political science. It is to encourage people to adopt virtuous standpoints and to participate in noble activities. Still, he says, as a life-long quest or objective, happiness requires the effective and continual realization of one's goals (interests). Happiness, thus (I: x) would require good health and fortune throughout one's life.

Given these conditions, he asks if people can be deemed truly happy in their (human) lifetimes. In contrast to those who discuss the importance of people's happiness after death, Aristotle (I: xi) assigns little credence to matters of people's (individual) happiness after their deaths.

Approaching things in this manner, he proceeds to argue that happiness is best located in people's excellence of mind and that happiness is best achieved by acting in ways consistent with these excellences.

Then, after noting that it is the noble and honorable things leading to happiness that merit praise rather than happiness in itself, Aristotle (*NE*, I: xii-xiii) argues for the importance of political leaders learning about and attending to human nature.

Aristotle observes that the human soul (*psyche*) consists of an *inseparable*, nonrational bodily component and a minded or reasoning capacity. Mindful of these two aspects or features of the human organism, he intends to focus on the virtues, moral and intellectual, as these pertain to people's excellences of character.^{xii}

Book II [Agency and Virtues]

Aristotle (*NE*, II: i) begins his consideration of moral virtues by distinguishing these from intellectual virtues.^{xiii} Whereas *intellectual virtues* or the virtues of thought (discussed later, *NE*, VI) are seen as contingent on explicitly developed instruction and experience, *moral virtues* or the virtues of habit are seen to derive from people's longstanding habits or styles of doing things. Although Aristotle sees people as born with capacities for both intellectual and moral development, he explicitly states that none of people's moral virtues are determined by nature.

While Aristotle (later, *NE*, II: iii) defines moral virtues and vices as contingent on people acting appropriately (or inappropriately) with respect to pleasure and pain, he envisions virtues and vices in developmentally learned and enacted terms.

Thus, Aristotle (*NE*, II: i) states that people's moral excellences directly reflect people's earlier activities. They reflect the habits that people develop around *ways of doing things* and the types of associations that people develop with particular others. Because people's habits begin to develop early in life, he contends that people's early childhood training (and education) can be especially consequential for shaping one's character and dispositions in this regard.

Continuing, Aristotle (*NE*, II: ii) notes that one of the problems pertaining to people's conduct is that people, as *agents*, must decide what is most appropriate to do in the circumstances at hand. Recognizing the highly variable nature of human conduct, Aristotle says that models dealing with this subject matter will necessarily be somewhat imprecise.

Aristotle (*NE*, II: iii) also states that considerations of moral virtues are to be understood centrally with respect to people's concerns with joy or pleasure and sadness or pain.

However, while people pursue things because of the attractions or pleasures they afford and avoid things because of the sorrows or punishments they associate with particular things, he notes that people's notions of pleasure and pain need not correspond with things that others would so define.

Still, Aristotle defines moral virtue as a matter of acting in the best or most honorable way with respect to people's senses of joy and sorrow. Conversely, vice is defined as the failure to act in appropriate fashions with regard to pleasure and pain.

Aristotle then isolates *three motives of choice* that help define acts as more or less virtuous: noble vs. common (or base) interests; advantageous vs. harmful considerations; and pleasure vs. sadness.

Still, in order *for acts to be considered virtuous*, Aristotle (*NE*, II: iv) says that certain criteria must be met. Thus, people must (a) act with knowledge about what is being done; (b) act with intention; and (c) act mindfully of a moral standpoint.

Aristotle (*NE*, II: v) subsequently distinguishes virtues from people's emotions and capacities. While virtues may involve emotions such as anger or shame, and are contingent on people's capacities to act, he says that virtues most basically represent habits or dispositions to act.

Next, Aristotle (*NE*, II: vi) introduces the concept of *the midpoint*, which he defines as half way between the two extremes of a continuum. Still, he observes, the midpoint is a quality of (relative) human definition rather than a quality of the thing under consideration.

This midpoint is important for Aristotle's notion of virtue, for he defines both extremes (i.e., excesses and deficiencies of qualities) as undesirable states or vices. Prudent or wise people, thus, would attempt to regulate their lives so as to avoid both extremes (and alternative sets of vices).^{xiv}

To clarify his position further, Aristotle (*NE*, II: vii) references a diagram in which he distinguishes twelve types of action or feelings that he associates with virtues (and vices). A chart of that sort is presented here.

Table 1: Virtues and Vices^{xv}

Excess	Virtuous State	Deficiency
Brashness	Courage (or fortitude)	Cowardice
Gluttony	Temperance (or self regulation)	Abstinence
Extravagance	Liberality (spending/sharing)	Stinginess
Vulgar Display	Magnificence (public generosity)	Miserliness
Vanity	Honor (pride in self)	Disregard
Ambitiousness	Dedicated	Inattentive
Irritable	Gentle	Spiritless
Boastful	Sincere (regarding self)	Self-depreciative
Buffoonery	Wittiness /Charm	Distant
Pretentious	Friendly	Rude
Shameless	Modest	Bashful
Envious	Righteous (or just)	Malicious

After briefly justifying the categories he introduces, Aristotle (*NE*, II: ix) observes that one reason that it is difficult for people to be virtuous is that it is hard for people to find the midpoints in anything. Thus, for instance, it may be appropriate for people

to become angry, exhibit public generosity, or feel shame but it is quite another matter to do so in an appropriate (midpoint) fashion.

As a set of basic guidelines, Aristotle then proposes that people (a) strive for midpoints as a general rule; (b) try to ascertain the particular errors or extremes to which they are more habitually oriented and try to adopt corrective (midpoint) positions; and (c) be cautious of things that seem pleasurable since it is in reference to pleasures that people are more particularly inclined to lose impartiality of judgment.

Still, Aristotle notes, how much people actually err from desired midpoints and how particular departures from these midpoints are assessed is a matter of (relative) human judgment.

Book III [Voluntariness, Virtues, and Vices]

Aristotle assumes two tasks in Book III. The first, and most important one for our purposes, is his consideration of human responsibility. His second objective is to begin a more detailed examination of the specific moral virtues.

Stating that virtue revolves around emotions and actions, Aristotle (*NE*, III: i) says that *praise and blame* are appropriate only when people engage in *voluntary action*. To this end, Aristotle embarks on considerations of voluntary and involuntary action and the related matters pertaining to choice, deliberation, ignorance, and opinion, as well as an identification of several of the components of action.

Noting that the issue of *actor responsibility* is apt to be of concern to people assigning rewards and punishment to others as well as to students of human conduct, Aristotle says that actions are generally characterized as *involuntary* when people are able to exercise little control over the direction of their action either as a result of compulsion or ignorance.

Aristotle also recognizes that many instances of action are *mixed* in effect, whereby people may have some abilities to choose or control things in the setting, but may still encounter other kinds of limitations. As well, he distinguishes cases of more general ignorance (wherein one does not know many things), from those instances in which people lack a more specific awareness of some aspect or circumstance of the act at hand.

Accordingly, Aristotle distinguishes a number of *features of the situation* that people may consider in assigning voluntary or involuntary status to those involved in particular episodes. There are (a) the agent; (b) the act; (c) the things (i.e., persons or other objects) affected by the act; (d) the instruments or devices employed in conducting the activity; and the outcomes of the act; (e) the outcomes of the act; and (f) the manners (e.g., gently or violently) in which particular acts were performed.

Relatedly, Aristotle observes, while people (as agents) often know about these things in advance, when people are unaware of certain features of acts or misjudge any of these components, this may be seen to introduce an involuntary feature into the event at hand.

Voluntary acts, Aristotle notes, refer to situations in which (a) an activity is initiated by a person and (b) the person is more completely aware of all of the aspects of the situation pertaining to that activity. He adds that it should not be presumed that acts that are generated amidst anger or desire are involuntary. In part, he explains, if people can voluntarily act in noble terms under these conditions, it makes little sense to characterize ignoble acts based on the same explanatory motives as involuntary.

Aristotle (*NE*, III: ii) next turns to the matter of *choice*. Because people may not be able to act as they desire or intend, he reasons, people's choices may provide better understandings of their virtues than their eventual actions. He views choice as a voluntary act, but notes that not all voluntary acts entail (deliberative) choice.

Although people often describe choice as desire, passion, wish, or opinion, Aristotle says that these viewpoints are mistaken. Choice is not a desire or other standpoint on things.

Choice involves a selection between two or more items and implies some *deliberative activity*. Likewise, while people may have definite viewpoints, opinions, or preferences pertaining to things, it is not to be assumed that people will automatically make choices that correspond to those ideas.

Aristotle (*NE*, III: iii) then addresses the topic of *deliberation* in more direct terms. Rather than deliberate about everything, he says that people tend to deliberate about things over which they have some control and seem attainable through their activities. As well, he adds, people deliberate about things about which they are more uncertain. And, when they consider particular issues important, people are more likely to involve others or seek counsel in their deliberations.

Continuing, Aristotle notes that deliberation constitutes a form of investigation wherein people may consider, in varying degrees of detail, all aspects of the situation about which choices are to be made. As well, because all voluntary actions are purposive or intended to do or accomplish something, deliberation revolves around the ways that one might attain things.

Aristotle (*NE*, III: iv) then reminds readers that because wishes are for certain outcomes or ends, people's wishes or desires are to be distinguished from choices and deliberation about how to achieve wishes or other ends.

Aristotle (*NE*, III: v) then turns more directly to *virtues* and *vices*. Having excluded certain actions from praise and blame because they are involuntary in some way, Aristotle argues that *both* virtues and vices are to be understood as *voluntary matters*. Still, he reminds readers, people are not as readily able to control dispositions as many other features of their actions.^{xvi}

Subsequently, Aristotle (*NE*, III: vi-vii) embarks on a more extended discussion of the virtues,^{xvii} beginning with courage.

Noting that *courage* or fortitude represents a midpoint between cowardice and brashness, Aristotle says that courageous people deal with fear and discomfort in moderated and reasonable fashions.^{xviii}

Aristotle (*NE*, III: viii) then stresses the reasoned nature of courage by distancing virtuous courage from activities (a) pursued at someone else's command; (b) associated with experience with similar situations; (c) arising from anger; (d) associated with feelings of superiority, and (e) attributable to ignorance of the dangers at hand. He adds (ix) that in addition to moderated composure in the face of fear, virtuous courage also may be associated with those who endure pain and suffering in noble fashions.

Aristotle (*NE*, III: x) next focuses on *temperance* or self-control. After distinguishing the pleasures of the body from that of the *psyche*, he explains that temperance refers to moderation in bodily pleasures. He (disdainfully) associates bodily pleasures, particularly those pertaining to touch, with lower animals and urges moderation in these matters.

Book IV [Virtues and Vices, continued]

In Book IV, Aristotle focuses on generosity, self-esteem, anger, and some social (interpersonal) graces and failings.

After distinguishing more typical practices of liberality in spending and/or sharing one's possessions with others from more substantial or magnificent (usually public) acts of *generosity*, Aristotle (*NE*, IV: I-ii) encourages people to be mindful of midpoints in their practices. More specifically, while recognizing the differing financial base with which people work, he discourages people from being miserly on the one hand and irresponsible with their money on the other hand.

One should, Aristotle contends, give appropriate amounts, to appropriate people, at appropriate times, and so forth, adding that one also should act so in manners that are mindful of the advantages and limitations of one's own circumstances. He further considers the ways in which people obtain the money they spend, indicating some nobler as well as more despicable ways of obtaining money.

Aristotle (*NE*, IV: iii-iv, vii, and ix) also attends to people's senses of *self worth* as this pertains to notions of honor, ambition, sincerity, and modesty. Interestingly, while encouraging people to attend to midpoints in their emphases, Aristotle is concerned that people claim what they deserve and that they be sincere in any references they make to themselves.

Thus, Aristotle is critical of (apparent) vanity as well as (undue) self-depreciation, the excessively ambitious as well as the highly complacent, the boastful as well as the excessively modest, and the shameless as well as the excessively bashful.

Further, although Aristotle often refers to these virtues as (a) dispositions, he also references virtues as (b) qualities that people would attribute to others as well as claim (and disclaim) for oneself, and (c) ways of acting and modifying one's own behaviors.^{xix}

Aristotle (*NE*, IV: v) also deals with *anger*, noting that while indignation may be appropriate in some cases, one should try to be congenial, to avoid undue anger as well as excessive complacency. In this respect, Aristotle pointedly indicates, as well, that it is difficult to say when and how, in what manners, to what extent, and for how long, one might appropriately be angry. He also notes that definitions or assessments of appropriate notions of anger will depend on people's perceptions of things as opposed to particular expressions of anger.

Somewhat relatedly, Aristotle (*NE*, IV: vi) next considers people's *friendliness* toward others in group contexts. Here, he distinguishes excessive acquiescence, responsible pleasantry, and excessive surliness. Aristotle encourages people to act responsibly in their dealing with others but to do so in more pleasant, diplomatic fashions.

Aristotle's (*NE*, IV: vii) commentary on people's *expressions of self worth* (boastfulness, sincerity, and self-depreciation) further attests to his concern with responsible pleasantry, as does his subsequent (*NE*, IV: viii) discussion of amusement. Thus, he contrasts playful conversation with buffoonery on the one hand and those stances in which one is strictly opposed to all humorous exchanges on the other.

Aristotle concludes this part of *NE* (IV: ix) with a statement on *modesty and shame*. While encouraging people to avoid things that might cause them to feel shame or a sense of disgrace, Aristotle asserts that excessive modesty is also inappropriate.

Book V [Justice]

While continuing his discussion of the moral virtues in some respects, Aristotle focuses Book V of *NE* more directly and consequentially on *justice*.

After noting that people use the terms just and unjust in several ways, Aristotle (*NE*, V: i) introduces two themes that will become central to his analysis. These pertain to people (a) being law abiding and (2) receiving fair or equitable shares of things.

Aristotle states that “what is lawful” is a matter of legislation, noting that what this actually includes and how this is decided reflects the type of government in effect at the time. Thus, Aristotle defines justice in reference to the political body in charge of the community.

Aristotle also argues that justice should be envisioned as the most consequential of the moral virtues because it is engaged mindfully of others.

Justice, thus, is seen to represent a community standpoint that goes beyond the interests of the individual. While virtue is envisioned as an individual disposition to act in an ennobling fashion, justice may be seen to epitomize virtue because it is directed toward the good of the community in a more comprehensive sense.

Continuing, Aristotle (*NE*, V: ii) reaffirms the centrality of justice as a virtue and injustice as a vice. He then distinguishes distributive or proportionate justice from remedial or corrective justice.

Aristotle defines *distributive justice* as an equitable, proportional distribution among people who employ pre-established norms of comparative merit. Thus, for instance, citizens or equal partners may share things equally among themselves but are not obliged to share things with those who do not possess this status.

Remedial or restitutive justice is intended to correct imbalances that are attributable to the undesired effects of people’s behaviors on particular others. Thus, the negatively affected parties may seek restitution for their losses, pursue other kinds of remedial services for themselves, or desire correctional treatments for the perpetrators. Remedial justice may involve situations in which the aggrieved parties participated voluntarily (as in marketplace transactions), but the injured parties also may have had things involuntarily imposed on them (as in theft, robbery).

Focusing more directly on restitutive justice, Aristotle (*NE*, V: iv) states that people go to judges to seek justice because judges represent the personification of justice, adding that in some locales judges are labeled *mediators* because people presume that judges will invoke a midpoint (or median) in determining what is just to the parties involved.

In discussing the problem of determining justice (as in costs and repayments), Aristotle (*NE*, V: v) explicitly acknowledges *money* as a particularly valuable standard. While observing that the value that people put on money will fluctuate somewhat (as with other things), he notes that money not only facilitates exchange of all sorts but money also represents a resource that people conveniently may use at future points in time.

Aristotle (*NE*, V: vi) then discusses *political justice*, applying this term to people who are free and equal with respect to one another within a particular community context. Relatedly, he notes, this is why people emphasize the law over a ruler. The appropriate function of the ruler is to be guardian of justice.

Subsequently, Aristotle (*NE*, V: vii) distinguishes two conceptions of political justice. One is *natural justice*, wherein the same notions of justice would apply to everyone, everywhere. The other, Aristotle describes as *conventional justice* and

envisions it as having a local quality. He insists that there is a natural justice, while observing that all rules of justice (presumably as invoked) are variable.

In a similar manner, Aristotle points to a distinction between things considered just or unjust and actual conduct that is just or unjust.

Aristotle (*NE*, V: viii) then notes that *considerations of just and unjust conduct* are contingent on people acting in voluntary manners, exercising choices, and acting in ways that are mindful of the outcomes that could be expected under the circumstances.

Thus, Aristotle observes that the penalties associated with injury may be minimized when injurious acts are done without evil intent, are due to outside forces, or reflect uncontrollable instances of passion.

Aristotle (*NE*, V: ix) then asks if people might knowingly intentionally harm themselves. He argues that people would not wish to act unjustly toward themselves.

More consequentially for our purposes, Aristotle (*NE*, V: ix) states that things prescribed by the law are actions but that actions need to be qualified when matters of justice are invoked. Thus, while people contemplate acting in certain ways, he notes that it is not easy to know exactly how to act so that the result would be considered a just or appropriate act.

Next, Aristotle (*NE*, V: x) briefly comments on the relationship of equity and justice, observing that the two are not synonymous. He suggests that concerns with equity, as a concern with fairness to the parties at hand, may provide a corrective of sorts to justice that has a more abstract or generalized application. He also notes that because laws are intended as general statements, they cannot be expected to fit all cases.

Aristotle (*NE*, V: xi) concludes this section with a consideration of self-injury. He argues that since no one would voluntarily direct injustice to oneself, suicide would seem to be an act directed toward the state rather than oneself. This is why, he reasons, the state envisions suicide as an offense against the state. Aristotle then concludes this section suggesting that there may be an internal sense of justice between the rational and nonrational parts of one's *psyche*.

Book VI [Knowing, Deliberating, and Acting]

Whereas Books III-V focused primarily on the moral virtues, Aristotle uses Book VI to engage the *intellectual virtues* in more direct terms.

In an interesting turn, Aristotle (*NE*, VI :i) states that while his earlier statements on the importance of striving for the midpoint in all virtues is correct, his emphasis or instruction is not at all enlightening in itself.

After referring to people's moral virtues as the nonrational (not as fully or directly subject to the reasoning part of the *psyche*), Aristotle divides the rational component into two, corresponding to the scientific and the deliberative features of the mind.

Using the term *scientific* to refer to things considered invariable, as in first principles, premises, or things taken as factual, Aristotle envisions *deliberation* as a calculating or contemplative feature about the things that are less certain.

Aristotle (*NE*, VI: ii) then identifies three aspects of the human *psyche* that control action and shape definitions of the truth. These are sensation, thought, and desire.

After stating that sensations cannot in themselves generate rational (as in minded or deliberative) action, he observes that desires (as in moral virtues) provide

direction, but that people's desires also are inadequate for explaining human behavior.

Thus, Aristotle states, the more effective cause of (human) action is *thought* in the form of choice. Still, he adds, thought in itself moves nothing. Thought is consequential in causal terms *only when* it is directed toward some ends and when it is manifested in action. Aristotle continues, stating that people, thus, are *originators of action*, by unifying desire and thought.

Focusing more directly on the ways that people acquire notions of the truth, Aristotle (*NE*, VI: iii) says that there are five ways in which people affirm or disconfirm *knowing* pertaining to things. These are: art or technology; scientific knowledge; prudence; wisdom; and intelligence.

Aristotle first discusses *scientific knowledge*. Here, he references premises pertaining to things thought invariant or eternal in nature, claims about things that are external to particular individuals, or principles of a more generic and enduring quality.

To know things scientifically, thus, is to comprehend the principles that explain those things in some way. Without an awareness of these principles, one only knows science incidentally at best.

Likewise, because scientific knowledge transcends instances, Aristotle contends that all scientific knowledge can be shared by teaching and that knowledge of this sort is contingent on people learning things.

Still, Aristotle observes the first principles of science can be achieved only through induction wherein people make inferences about the certainties of things based on comparisons. Deduction, by contrast, is contingent on earlier established premises or notions of universals. Aristotle adds further, that where people are more certain of their premises, they place greater faith in the conclusions derived through their deductions.

Aristotle (*NE*, VI: iv) describes art or technology (*techné*) as both a procedure for making something and the study of the ways of making something (presumably to develop more adequate or effective procedures). In the process, he explicitly stresses the rational, reasoned features of "techné". Thus, Aristotle considers (also see Aquinas, *CNE*, VI: iii) how things would be produced, as in locating and assembling the required materials, and accomplishing the actual work entailed in the production of things.

Aristotle (*NE*, VI: v) next considers *phronesis* or *prudence*. Here, he refers to people's capacities to deliberate effectively about matters of concern; to achieve carefully reasoned judgments on things of some consequence.

While noting that some people reason well in more general terms and others in more limited respects, Aristotle says that deliberation is not synonymous with scientific knowing because people do not deliberate about things that they consider as certain. Nor is deliberation synonymous with the art (or technology) involved in doing something. Instead, prudence is a deliberative consideration of what is most likely true or viable. Prudence, thus, lays the basis for people making choices about their subsequent activities.

Aristotle (*NE*, VI: vi-vii) next deals with *wisdom*, arguing that wisdom is the most perfect of all modes of knowledge. Still, while observing that wisdom is generally contingent on some degree of scientific knowing and often assumes the mastery of some arts or technologies, he uses the term wisdom to encompass a yet more comprehensive or transcendent sense of knowledge than implied in scientific knowledge per se.

Likewise, wisdom also would incorporate aspects of effective deliberation. However, whereas prudence is largely confined to the practical affairs to people, wisdom would be expected to extend well beyond a knowledge of the things people do.

Approached in this manner, wisdom is seen as a philosophic virtue that combines understanding, science, and an extended analytic capacity for engaging a wide variety of subject matters. Still, Aristotle observes, some people of exceptional wisdom have shown themselves to be highly impractical in more (mundane) human affairs.

Aristotle (*NE*, VI: viii) then refocuses the analysis more directly on *prudence* or *phronesis*. Prudence, he says, is more akin to political science, except that instead of directing one's thoughts to the affairs of state (as in legislature, the domestic economy, and the judicial system), prudence is more specifically directed towards one's own actions and circumstances.

As well, because prudence represents the basis for action, Aristotle is attentive to the importance of people (who would act prudently) having a viable knowledge of both scientific (universal or abstracted) principles and the ways in which things take shape in instances of the sort under consideration (also see Aquinas, *CNE*, VI: vi).

As in his consideration of political science, Aristotle states that young people typically lack the experiential base to make the more viable decisions associated with prudence as a virtuous quality.

Continuing, Aristotle (*NE*, VI: ix) says that because deliberation (as in prudence) deals with uncertainties, it entails a process of investigation. However, in further contrast to science (that deals in concepts of a more universal sort), the emphasis in deliberation (as prudence) revolves around the understanding and anticipation of specific instances or applications.

As well, Aristotle (*NE*, VI: ix) states prudence is not synonymous with either a quickness of mind or the practice of deliberating at length about something. Instead, prudence is contingent on people arriving at better, more effective decisions.

Aristotle (*NE*, VI: x) also distinguishes prudence from the fuller understanding or familiarity that people may achieve about more specific things, again referring to prudence more directly as the ability to judge effectively.

Likewise, Aristotle (*NE*, VI: xi) isolates prudence from people's thoughtfulness of others. As well, he notes, prudence is different from *intelligence*, wherein the emphasis is on comprehending things and drawing the existing and possible connections between things.

Aristotle (*NE*, VI: xii) then asks about the value of the intellectual virtues. After noting that the intellectual virtues do not insure that people will act in morally virtuous terms, he argues for the importance of prudence for moral conduct.

While Aristotle takes issue with Socrates for claiming that all of the virtues represent variants of prudence, Aristotle says that Socrates was correct in saying that the moral virtues cannot exist without people exercising prudence.

Aristotle does not intend to argue that prudence is more consequential than wisdom but he is aware of the centrality of deliberation for *all* meaningful human conduct. Drawing an analogy between prudence and virtue and religion and politics, Aristotle [1926] concludes with the following observation:

And again, one might as well say that political science governs the gods, because it gives orders about everything...in the state. (VI: xiii)

Book VII [Human Failings]

Although Book VII, which focuses on *the weakness of the will*, is somewhat less well developed, Aristotle uses this as a means of extending his consideration of prudence.

In discussing people's apparent lack of self-restraint, Aristotle (*NE*, VII: ii) takes direct issue with Socrates. According to Aristotle, Socrates implies that there is no such thing as a lack of self-restraint and claims that people do not intentionally engage in evil things but only do so through ignorance. Aristotle asserts that this view simply does not correspond to what is known.

Aristotle (*NE*, VII: iii) says that the way to begin is to ask whether people exhibit restraint or a lack of self-control with respect to specific things or whether people's actions are determined by dispositions of character.

Aristotle also acknowledges situations in which people consider things to be wrong but do not think of it that way when they do certain things.

As Aristotle develops this material, he emphasizes the desirability of self-restraint, particularly with respect to moral virtues, qualities which he envisions as further differentiating people from (other) animals.

Then, Aristotle (*NE*, VII: xi) embarks on a discussion of pleasure and pain (a prelude of sorts to Book X). The topics of pain and pleasure, he says, are important to students of politics as well as people interested in morality more generally because moral virtues and vices revolve around matters of pleasure and pain.

While Aristotle had earlier defined desirable states pertaining to pleasure as ones that are more in keeping with the moral virtues, it is important to acknowledge the *variety of viewpoints* that Aristotle introduces *with respect to pleasure and pain*.

First, Aristotle notes, some people argue that pleasure and virtue are incompatible. At one extreme, some people encourage others to avoid all pleasure, claiming that pleasure interferes with people's judgment and that pleasure is suitable only for children or lower animals. Others contend that while some pleasures are evil, disgraceful or harmful, others are acceptable or good. Some also argue that although pleasure is good, it cannot be the supreme good or end (but is instead a process).

Aristotle (*NE*, VII: xii) challenges these positions. First, he says, that one should differentiate the good (i.e., pleasure as an end) with respect to absolute and relative standpoints. Notably, Aristotle argues that things that are seen as absolutely bad need not be so viewed when applied to, or by, particular people.

He also observes that since people may derive pleasures from opposite physical sensations (as in sweet and bitter), it should not be assumed that certain physical states are automatically or absolutely pleasurable.

While some contend that pleasure is a process or motion, Aristotle insists that pleasure is instead an activity (more encompassing and different from a process) of a more natural sort.

When discussing pain, Aristotle (*NE*, VII: xiii) notes extensive consensus that pain is an evil to avoided as well as an impediment to human activity. Freedom from pain, thus, is generally seen as desirable; although only some argue that pleasure (as the opposite of pain) should be viewed as good.

Aristotle also notes that while all animals and all people pursue pleasure, they do not pursue the same notions of pleasure. However, because physical pleasures (as in food, drink, sex) are the ones most readily achieved by all, sensual pleasures often are the ones most readily referenced. He also claims that bodily sensations are apt more seem particularly intense for people incapable of experiencing other pleasures.

Still, Aristotle adds, nothing can continue to give people consistent pleasure because of the complexity of human minds. Thus, Aristotle notes that changes are important in enabling people to experience pleasure [Aristotle re-engages several of these themes in Book X, although Books VIII and IX (on friendship) also deal with aspects of happiness].

Book VIII [Friendship]

Envisioning *friendship* as a noble, as well as an enabling and essential feature of the human condition, Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: I) embarks on an extended consideration of the nature, forms, and continuities of friendship.

While recognizing that (a) some people claim that friendship is based on the attractions of similars, and (b) others contend that friendship arises from the attractions of opposites, Aristotle intends to examine friendship (c) as it is humanly engaged.

Aristotle's analysis of friendship is skewed throughout by his concerns with moral virtues, but Aristotle's consideration of friendship provides readers with a remarkable appreciation of friendship as a generic or enduring transcontextual and transhistorical phenomenon.

Aristotle also provides present day readers with a vast array of conceptual materials with which to consider their understandings of the friendship phenomenon. The central value of this material, thus, for the social sciences rests not on proclaiming the validity of Aristotle's position in any specific sense but rather in recognizing the potency of the many analytical themes that he provides for further research and analysis.^{xx}

Early in his analysis, Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: ii) states that people love or are attracted to others not on the basis of what is good for them in a more absolute sense, but rather what appears to them to be good for them. Or, conversely, what is loved is viewed as good.

Relatedly, Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: ii) also contends that the term friendship is not properly applied to inanimate objects (even though people may love or become thoroughly intrigued with these things) because no reciprocity of affection is possible in the case of inanimate objects. Aristotle further distinguishes "goodwill" from friendship, saying that people may act kindly to people they have never seen, whereas friendship assumes some mutuality of affection.

Thus, Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: ii) defines genuine or more complete *friendship* by reference to states in which two people (a) have goodwill toward each other, (b) are aware of their mutual goodwill, and (c) appreciate the goodwill that each has for the other.

Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: iii) then distinguishes *three types of friendship*, wherein affection for the other is based on (a) *utility* of the other to oneself, (b) *pleasure* that the other provides to oneself, and (c) *virtuous* caring for the other in a more enduring sense.

Aristotle posits that friendship among the elderly is often based on utility, while the young are more likely to concentrate on friendships based on notions of pleasure. Relatedly, Aristotle suggests, virtuous friendships are most likely to be found among good or noble people who have more sincere and extended concern for the well-being of the other. However, he states, because good people are comparatively rare and virtuous friendships require time and familiarity, these fuller, more ideal relationships are comparatively uncommon for people generally.

Continuing, Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: iv) says that friendships that are based on pleasure more closely approximate the virtuous ideal than do those based more exclusively on utility. Still, he observes, friendships based on both of these elements are prone to dissolution whenever people's interests or situations change. Also, Aristotle suggests, longer-term friendships are less likely to be destroyed by gossip and suspicion.

Still, in a note that runs throughout his analysis, Aristotle insists that bad people do not make good friends (either in their actions as friends to others or as the objects of friendship on the part of others). Aristotle claims that virtuous friendship can exist only between good people.

After elaborating further on the preceding matters (*NE*, VIII: v-vi), Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: vii) next considers friendships that involve *status differentials*, wherein one person is able to do more for the other than can be reciprocated in any direct manner.

In cases of these sorts, Aristotle suggests that the person who is disadvantaged in this manner might restore balance to the friendship unit by being more affectionate toward the other than vice-versa. Aristotle (viii) later adds that although many people love honor (and thus are susceptible to flattery), affection is generally a more desired element than is honor. Indeed, he contends, affection is one of the most consequential signs of a good friendship.

Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: ix) then shifts frames somewhat as he begins to consider parallels between friendships and other (civil) relationships that people might experience.

Thus, Aristotle references the *affinities* that people develop through association in other group contexts. These relationships are more common among shipmates, fellow soldiers, fellow travelers, members of political associations, and people bound together in religious groups. While some tendencies toward friendship may be noted among people in all of these circumstances, the affinities that develop within these associations are generally more situational as opposed to more enduring friendships.

Next, Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: x-xi) considers three *forms of state* or governing arrangements. To this end, Aristotle distinguishes monarchies or kingdoms; aristocracies or the rule of elite groups; and timocracies (or constitutional governments, including democracies).

After briefly commenting on some weaknesses and strengths of these three types of government, their transitions and their particular vulnerabilities to failure (also see Aristotle's *Politics*), Aristotle applies his notions of friendship to the relations of those in various forms of government.

Although the relations of governors to those governed vary notably within and across these political arenas, Aristotle observes that the concept of friendship (good and bad) may be invoked to characterize the relationships of the people in each political arena.

Then, stating that all friendships are to be understood within community contexts, Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: xii) considers *family relations* as variants of friendship. He observes that parental affection for their children is generally more intense and enduring than that of children for their parents. Not only is the parents' affection for their children likely to start earlier and be of longer duration than that of the children for their parents, but parents also view their children as extensions of themselves.

Because their differing situations generally preclude the types of friendships that may develop between equals of long-term association, Aristotle suggests that the friendships of parents and children are commonly based on pleasure and utility. He also characterizes the friendship of husbands and wives as based on utility and

pleasure combined. However, he adds, marital relations also may be based on virtue where both spouses are of a noble character.

Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: xiii) then returns to a more general consideration of friendship. Whereas relationships based on pleasure are prone to disaffection when people cease to view others as enjoyable companions, people involved in relationships characterized by utility are apt to become disenchanted when they define their benefits as inadequate relative to their contributions to the other.

When relationships are unequal in status, Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: xiv) notes that both parties may envision themselves as deserving more. People giving more (material goods, services) to the other may see themselves as warranting more affection in return, while those to whom things are given may see themselves as deserving more because they have less than their friends.

People on either or both sides of the relationship, thus, may become disaffected with the other for not doing more. Aristotle sees this as potentially troublesome for people's friendships because people in unequal situations may begin to concentrate on what they think is due them rather than what they can do for the other.

Book IX [Friendship... cont'd]

Aristotle (*NE*, IX: i) concludes his discussion of friendship based on utility or pleasure by discussing people's disappointments with inappropriate returns for their friendship. Beyond not obtaining the things they want, he observes that people who do not obtain as much as they want often see themselves as getting nothing at all.

Aristotle (*NE* IX: ii) also raises the matter of *loyalty* in friendship asking to what extent people should concentrate on repaying those who have in various ways benefited them as opposed to helping (as in gifting to) others who have done less for them.

Aristotle (*NE*, IX: iii) subsequently asks when people might *continue or terminate* their friendships. In addition to those relationships that fail to provide what people had formerly enjoyed or found advantageous, he notes that other changes might also generate ruptures.

Thus, Aristotle observes that relations may be severed when formerly good people become evil, or at least are so perceived by their associates. Likewise, formerly equal associates might find that their friendships have become imbalanced relative to one another as a consequence of the gains or losses (as in virtue, wealth, education, abilities) of one person compared to the other.

Aristotle (*NE*, IX: iv) also asks if people can be good friends to themselves. After observing that people normally desire their own well-being, share in their own interests and tastes, and act in those terms, as well as find their own company agreeable, he concludes that people can indeed be good friends to themselves.

Interestingly, Aristotle contends that evil people would not be good friends even to themselves. He says that bad people are of such inferior moral worth that they even fail to act in their best (longer term) interests. As well, they find little in themselves that is likable.

Aristotle (*NE*, IX: v) then distinguishes goodwill (see *NE*, VIII: ii) that people may direct toward others from friendship, although he notes that goodwill may provide some early rudiments of what later may become friendship. He (*NE*, IX: vi) also comments on the desirability of widespread friendliness (as in goodwill or concord) in the community for the general good of the community.

Aristotle (*NE*, IX: vii) next examines the relationship of *benefactors* to their beneficiaries. Likening the position of the benefactor to that of the artist, Aristotle [1926] says that people generally appreciate the things they have accomplished:

[W]e exist in activity, since we exist by living and doing; and in a sense... one who has made something exists actively, and so he loves his handiwork because he loves existence. (IX: vii)

Moreover, Aristotle continues, there is a nobility associated with giving. While the beneficiaries may appreciate the items they gain, the beneficiary role lacks the virtuous quality of giving. Because benefactors achieve greater nobility through the act of giving, Aristotle suggests, they are more apt to retain more pleasant memories of the experience than is the recipient. Further, he adds, people who put more effort into things are more apt to appreciate the ensuing outcomes than are those who witness or benefit from the activity.

Aristotle (*NE*, IX: viii) returns to the question of *affection for self* and whether people should love themselves or other people more. He notes that people generally condemn those who openly put themselves first and argue that noble people put their friends' interests over their own.

However, Aristotle points out, if people take the viewpoint that one should love one's best friend best, it is one's own self that fits all the attributes of the best friend.

In an attempt to resolve these two viewpoints, Aristotle contends that by invoking a noble sense of self (virtuous, caring as opposed to a more materialist or sensate sense of self), people would be able to love and benefit both their associates and themselves. In this sense, he concludes, one should strive to obtain the greater amount of nobility for oneself.

Subsequently Aristotle (*NE*, IX: ix) asks *if friends are necessary for happiness* or whether the truly happy person has no need of friends. Relatedly, he asks if friends might be more valued at times of prosperity or difficulty.

Stating that people are social beings, Aristotle says that it seems odd that someone might choose to be happy on the condition that one must do so alone. Indeed, he says, people require friends in order to be happy.

Still, Aristotle reasons that a happy person would not require friends of utility, for a happy person would have no desires that would require instrumental or material objects or services. He also questions whether a happy person would require friends for pleasure, since the happy person is already happy. On these bases, one might infer that happy people do not require friends at all.

Aristotle then approaches the matter from another viewpoint. If happiness is a form of *activity* and activity is something that people do, as opposed to something that people possess in a more material sense, then people who engage others in more sustained, pleasant terms would have greater opportunities to be happy on a more enduring basis.

Noting that people have the capacities for sensation, thought, and activity, Aristotle argues that it is in (meaningful, self-conscious) activity that the fuller human reality exists. Further, this human consciousness of self is enhanced, he adds, when people interact with others, when they share their thoughts and activities with others. Without this, people's senses of, or capacity for, happiness would be incomplete.

Aristotle (*NE*, IX: x) next asks *how many friends* ought to have. Observing that each friendship entails ongoing commitments and interchange, and that it is desirable that all of one's friends are friends with one another, he says that it will be difficult for people to be good friends with a large number of people at the same time.

Aristotle (*NE*, IX: xi) then considers the importance of friends when people are doing well as opposed to faring poorly in other matters. He begins by noting that those experiencing adversity require assistance while those enjoying prosperity wish to have companions for pleasure as well as companions toward whom they can (nobly) express their generosity (as benefactors).

In addition to any direct aid one may receive from friends when experiencing difficulties, Aristotle also observes that friends also may help alleviate the sense of loss or sorrow experienced by those encountering difficulties. This may come about either through the realization that one's friends share in one's grief or through the more routine pleasure of their company.

At the same time, Aristotle points out, people sometimes avoid their friends when they are encountering difficult times. This way, their friends would not be burdened or sorrowed by the difficulties that they are suffering. Relatedly, Aristotle observes, people adopting this (more noble) stance would only be inclined to ask for their friends' assistance when it could be of great service to them and would generate a minimum of disruption for their friends.

Aristotle adds that it is fitting for people to quickly offer assistance when their friends encounter difficulties. However, should their friends enjoy prosperity, he suggests that it is appropriate for people to be slow in presuming the role of beneficiaries of their friends' good fortune. Nevertheless, should their friends endeavor to share their well-being with them, then people should be gracious in accepting (as beneficiaries) the things their friends offer to share with them.

Aristotle (*NE*, IX: xii) continues, adding that friends thrive on witnessing the well-being of their friends. Indeed, he states, it is in encouraging and sharing the other person's happiness that life is worth living. Then, stating that friendships among more virtuous people are likely to result in greater states of happiness and the production of yet more noble characters, he claims that closer associations between evil people are likely to lead to yet more depraved states and characters,

Book X [Pleasure, Activity, and Mindedness]

Aristotle (*NE*) begins Book X by introducing two common but contrasting *views of pleasure*; that pleasure is a desirable state and (conversely) that pleasure is an undesirable experience.

Aristotle (*NE*, X: ii) first references the position of Eudoxus who claims that pleasure is good. While noting that part of the popular appeal of this position revolved around Eudoxus' outstanding reputation as a citizen, Aristotle attributes the following arguments to Eudoxus.

First, all animals (including humans) seek pleasure and when all creatures pursue a similar objective, this attests to the desirability of that objective. Second, since pain is evil or undesirable, and pleasure is the opposite of pain, then pleasure must be good. Third, whatever is sought as an end in itself, as opposed to a means to an end, is most desirable. Fourth, since pleasure makes any activity more desirable, then pleasure also deserves recognition as a good on that basis as well.

Eudoxus' position is largely consistent with Aristotle's own position on pleasure and, Aristotle takes direct issue with those who refuse to recognize something (pleasure) that all creatures seek is good. Aristotle also considers it absurd that both pain and pleasure can be considered evil, for people do not prefer neutral states but instead strive to avoid pain while striving to obtain pleasure.

Aristotle (*NE*, X: iii) then notes that some of those (Plato, *Philebus*, 24e, 31a) who object to pleasure argue that pleasure comes in degrees and thus lacks the purity of other virtues.

Aristotle asks why pleasure, like health, may not exist in degrees rather than absolutes. Aristotle also takes issues with those (Plato, *Philebus*, 53e-54d) who reject pleasure because they say that it is a physical motion or movement as opposed to a virtue. Aristotle says that pleasure is not something in motion because it has neither absolute nor relative velocity. Nor, he states, is pleasure a state of restoration to the body (as in an injury or deprivation), even though relief from pain may be greatly appreciated.

Aristotle also disagrees with those who claim that disreputable or disgraceful activities are not pleasurable. However, when those who disapprove of pleasure argue that some pleasures are more morally virtuous than others, Aristotle (who earlier had adopted this position) leaves this point uncontested.

After reviewing and commenting on these notions of pleasure, Aristotle (*NE*, X: iv) intends to establish his own views.

Aristotle begins by claiming that pleasure is not a specific thing but has a more unified or encompassing quality. Pleasure, thus, cannot be envisioned as a physical motion or a process in itself or even the result of a process. Likewise, while contending that the potential for pleasure is greatest when people's capacities for sensory perception are at their functional best, he wants to emphasize that it is the mind that is stimulated. It is through the mind that people experience pleasure.

However, pleasure is *not* simply a matter of (minded) definition in this respect, nor is pleasure contingent exclusively on action or the sensations that human bodies encounter. Instead, Aristotle contends, people's experiences of pleasure necessarily reflect *the interlinkages of actions, sensations, and minded focusing*.

Continuing, Aristotle (*NE*, X: v) explains that there are affinities between particular kinds of pleasures and particular kinds of activities. Likewise, while noting that activities are supplemented by pleasures associated with them, he also observes that the pleasures that individuals typically associate with an activity are apt to diminish when the participants are distracted by other things of both pleasurable and unpleasant sorts.

Aristotle further alleges that people's pleasures, like other activities, vary in moral value. However, he emphasizes, activities are not the same thing as pleasure and likewise, neither are thoughts or sensations. Instead, pleasure arises, and is sustained, through a composite of activities, thoughts, and sensations.

Then, after noting that all animals have their own realms or modes of pleasure that derive from exercising their functions, Aristotle acknowledges that different people may consider a great variety of things to be pleasurable. Still, he does not justify all pleasures on this relativist base.

Instead, returning to his emphasis on the virtuous person, Aristotle condemns some pleasures saying that they lead to physical harm and moral corruption. Conversely, he intends to place the highest premium on those *pleasures that are more distinctively human* (vs. animalistic) in quality.

Developing this last point more fully, Aristotle (*NE*, X: vi) subsequently differentiates between amusements and more virtuous forms of pleasure. While acknowledging both the popularity of amusements among people in general and the importance of people obtaining relaxation from their labors, Aristotle comments that it would be odd for people to work so hard merely to engage in more frivolous or childish past-times. He also observes that anyone can enjoy sensual pleasure.

Neither of these modes of pleasure (amusement or relaxation), thus, can be seen as enabling or attending to the best, most distinctive essences of humans.

Aristotle (*NE*, X: vii) then proceeds to emphasize the happiness that can be derived from a life of *contemplation* or study. He states that activity accompanied by wisdom is the most pleasant of activities that can be associated with virtue.

Not only is contemplative activity seen as the element that most clearly differentiate people from other animals, but because it also offers people continuous sources of mental stimulation it represents a perpetual source of (minded) pleasure.

As well, contemplative activity can be pursued alone and in conjunction with others. Further, Aristotle contends, insofar as anything better approximates the divine in humans, it would be contemplative activity. Study, thus, is the most virtuous or noble of human qualities. He adds that because the intellect is the best feature of humans, it is in the realm of intellectual activity that one is to find the greatest happiness.

Aristotle (*NE*, X: viii) continues, stating, by comparison, that the life of moral virtue is of secondary importance to contemplative activity. Moral virtues, Aristotle says, are more bound up in people's emotions, physical states, financial circumstances, and relations with others; things that are human in a more mundane sense. The intellect, Aristotle contends, is somewhat more removed from matters of that sort.

The pursuit of intellectual virtues, Aristotle adds, also allows people to more closely approximate the gods as they are presumed to be.^{xxi} Noting that the gods do not need to act or conduct business as people do, and that the gods need not be concerned about being evil, generous temperate, courageous, and the like, the only thing left for the gods is the activity of contemplation. The people who embark on lives of contemplation, then, would more closely approximate the (residual but primary) activities of the gods.^{xxii}

Nevertheless, Aristotle notes that even philosophers (because they too are humans) require external well-being and sources of income. He also observes that it is in the practical accomplishment of human life that the matters he discusses here will be most effectively put to the test, with their ensuing implications for new states of knowledge.

As he moves to the conclusion, Aristotle (*NE*, X: ix) says that if the human sciences are to have practical ends, it is not enough to remain at a theoretical level. One must instead embark on a realm of practice.

Moreover, if one could to generate a community of virtuous people merely through discourses on ethics, Aristotle continues, texts of the sort he develops would be adequate. However, since this is not the case, other modes of regulating human conduct must be considered.

Aristotle notes that while some people credit people's virtues to nature, and others attribute virtues to habit, still others view virtues as qualities to be taught.

In reply, Aristotle says that we have to accept nature as a given, but one can only expect subsequent teaching to be effective where habits conducive to learning have earlier been established.

For those who are less receptive to instruction, Aristotle stresses the importance of legal regulation. He also observes that the law can impinge on people without drawing disfavor of the sorts that would be assigned to individuals assuming similar stances on things. Thus, Aristotle argues for the necessity of a system of public regulation.

Somewhat relatedly, he says that compared to other areas of science, the science of legislation is poorly developed. Noting that people who teach about politics

(i.e., the sophists) do not engage politics and that people who practice politics seldom address the analytical features of politics in written text, Aristotle encourages politicians to assume a more scholarly role.

Were those holding office to write about the affairs of office, Aristotle says, those politicians who could do so could generate an invaluable legacy for their associates and future generations (i.e., a contribution that is much more consequential than their terms of incumbency).

Likewise, Aristotle observes, no one will become an expert in legislation by simply studying collections of laws and constitutions without adopting more discerning analytical stances on these matters.

Recognizing limitations of these sorts Aristotle indicates that he intends to develop a statement that focuses more directly on politics (as in institutions, legislation, constitutions, and transitions of governments) as part of his broader agenda of formulating a philosophy of human affairs.

Conclusion

Attending to human knowing and acting in distinctively comprehensive manners, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* represents an exceptionally intense, compact and insightful analysis of community life. Although some may take issue with Aristotle in certain matters of consistency and clarity, and some others with respect to personal notions of morality, criticisms of these sorts seem particularly petty and small minded when one considers the intellectual resources that Aristotle provides for those who take the time to examine his manuscript in more sustained detail.

As well, although Aristotle attends to people's activities and experiences as "individuals" within the community, he also recognizes that people are to be understood as "interconnected members of the community." Indeed, although people have the capacity for engaging in activity as reflective, purposive agents, the community is the foundational source of all of human knowing and meaningful activity.

It is for this reason, as well, that Aristotle places so much stress on political science as a field of scholarship. His point is that unless the community is reasonably well regulated, matters pertaining to moral order and especially opportunities for intellectual development (i.e., the development of the intellectual virtues) are put in jeopardy.

Still, rather than a "prescriptive science" that stresses particular policies and implementation, Aristotle insists that "the science of the polis," the community, is to be *thoroughly informed by the study of human knowing and acting*. Thus, whereas one may have government, policies, and regulatory agencies of all sorts, *there can be no viable political science without a comprehensive understanding of the more fundamental nature of group life as an ongoing realm of human activity*.

For Aristotle, the community may be seen as constituted in the great variety of associations that people develop with respect to one another as well as the contexts and settings in which human interchanges take place. Thus, he is mindful of the wide range of activities and viewpoints that people may invoke as well as the tendencies of people to both pursue their own activities and deal with others in more habitual manners. As well, while acknowledging a wide range of relationships, Aristotle also is attentive to the enduring centrality of influence, cooperation, and resistance for comprehending human group life.

As readers may now appreciate, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* provides contemporary scholars with a vast array of departure points for subsequent study and analysis. As a result, but it will be necessary to rely on the knowledge, wisdom, and resourcefulness of readers to pursue these matters further.

Still, as but one line of inquiry that may serve as a suggestion of many others that might be developed, I will conclude this paper by briefly indicating how the study of Aristotle's moral virtues might be examined ethnographically by those invoking symbolic interactionist (or kindred constructionist) methodologies.

Toward an Ethnographic Study of Aristotle's Moral Virtues

Defining moral virtues as habitual tendencies or dispositions to do good (as acting in noble, balanced, and just manners), Aristotle characterizes people's moral virtues as nonrational essences because they assume a pronounced, more enduring habitual quality. Thus, even through people's moral virtues become behaviorally, emotionally, cognitively, and socially embedded within people's beings with the acquisition of language and associated capacities for comprehension, these dispositions are developed on early prelinguistic, biological foundations and may represent points of considerable resiliency to subsequent modification.^{xxiii}

As a result, the moral virtues are not as amenable to choice and direct control as are the intellectual virtues. Nevertheless, Aristotle indicates that people's moral virtues may be modified overtime by purposive self-reflection and more sustained, enacted instances of choice.

That is, while moral virtues (and vices) represent dispositions or inclinations to act in certain ways, people may not only adjust their dispositions somewhat over time but they also may more consciously deal with these dispositions when they are deciding how to act or do things. Still, the challenges to changing one's habits can be highly formidable for resistance to change can occur at any point (and within any medium) in which people's activities (and habits) are embedded.

At first glance, Aristotle may appear somewhat presumptive in identifying (and characterizing) the moral virtues and their extremes or vices (denoted by excesses or deficiencies of the same qualities).

However, while one may encounter considerable variation in the emphases and valuing that particular peoples (as well as groups and individuals within specific communities), place on specific moral and intellectual virtues, the moral qualities that Aristotle identifies in *Nicomachean Ethics* seem fairly generic across human groups.^{xxiv} Indeed, the virtues that Aristotle discusses cut across a wide range of human activity and interchange and thus merit extended attention.

In promoting moral standpoints pertinent to both individual virtues and community loyalties and responsibilities, Aristotle also frequently stresses the importance of people doing the *right* or proper things, in the *right* ways, to the *right* people, with the *right* intentions, in the *right* circumstances, at the *right* times, and in the *right* proportions. Still, Aristotle (*NE*, VI: i) recognizes the limitations of this viewpoint and *explicitly states that encouragements to choose the midpoint are little value in themselves*. Thus, Aristotle comments on the ambiguities of the virtues that he discusses (both as dispositions to act and also with respect to the particular features that people commonly associate with different virtues).

Accordingly, if one recasts these notions in *more situated, processual, enacted terms*, Aristotle's notions of virtues and vices become much more amenable to sociological inquiry and analysis.

While acknowledging people's tendencies to develop more habitual viewpoints and activities, one still may ask *when and how people are likely to act* (activity always presumes particular instances) in ways that are more consistent with specific virtues or vices.

For instance, even when researchers attend to the more habituated differences that people may develop, both as representatives of particular groups and as individuals within, one can still ask when and how *anyone* might experience and deal with tendencies toward courage, brashness or cowardice *in the actual instances* in which people consider and implement their activities.

Similarly one could ask when and how people experience and express anger, gentleness, or extended disregard in particular situations. Likewise, one might ask when and how people engage extravagance, liberality, or stinginess in more situated instances as well as more sustained terms.

In these ways, by examining the fuller range of people's activities *in the instances in which they take place*, scholars may begin to better appreciate the processes and problematics of the matters that Aristotle defines as moral virtues--not only as situated choices but in ways that also are mindful of people's more enduring individual tendencies (habits) and their more explicit, situated notions of choice.

Relatedly, mindful of people's abilities to influence, accommodate, and resist one another in the course of everyday life particulars, it is essential to ask when and how people *attend to others* generally and specifically as well as the ways that people *enter into one another's realms of experience* and the ways in which *they work out particular instances of activity in conjunction with these others*.

Whereas Aristotle addresses a great many conceptual issues pertinent to the study of habits, activities, and relationships not only in *Nicomachean Ethics* but also in *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, those interested in pursuing ethnographic inquiry along these lines may find *Subcultural Mosaics and Intersubjective Realities* (Prus, 1997) helpful in outlining the theoretical and methodological standpoints and practices associated with interactionist research and analysis.^{xxv} This latter volume also references many interactionist ethnographies of relevance to a broad assortment of social processes and topical subject matters. Although very consistent with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* on a conceptual pragmatist level, this material is more exclusively focused on research and scholarship of a more pluralist nature.

Indeed, if Aristotle may be faulted as a social scientist, it may be for trying to do too much; for trying to be too helpful.^{xxvi} Thus, while not minimizing the relevance of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a remedial/directive statement that could contribute much to the realization of people's potential as individual members of the community and the articulation of viewpoints and practices that foster a greater good for the community, Aristotle's concerns with fostering personal accomplishments and generating a more viable social order at times obstruct a more sustained analysis of human knowing and acting.

Mindful of Aristotle's unparalleled accomplishments as a scholar, the conceptual dilemmas generated by not maintaining a sharper separation of morality and the study of human knowing and acting may serve as a reminder to other social scientists to focus more exclusively on "what is" rather than what "should" or "could be."

Ironically, by avoiding the prescriptive traps in which Aristotle at times appears to have become ensnared in his analysis of the moral virtues, *a reformulation of emphases along these more completely pluralist lines is consistent on Aristotle's more general insistence on learning about the more fundamental or generic features of things by examining the instances in which things of that sort occur*.

Still, even with this (prescriptive) caveat in mind, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* represents an exceptionally potent set of conceptual reference points.^{xxvii} Not only does *NE* provide an array of highly instructive departure points for inquiry but Aristotle's work on ethics also provides a valuable set of resources for pursuing *comparative analysis* with respect to the interim literature and contemporary research.

Particularly consequential, thus, are matters pertaining to (a) deliberation, choice, practical wisdom, and agency; (b) character as processually formed and dispositional, as well as a deliberatively enacted, alterable phenomenon, (c) happiness, pleasure, pain, and people's experiences with emotionality more generally; (d) relationships (including friends, family, and more fleeting associations) in the making; (e) benevolence, benefactors, and beneficiaries; and (f) morality, justice, law, and regulation.

Approaching *Nicomachean Ethics* in this way, as material to be engaged in more extended, scholarly terms and in ways that are mindful of the potential of ethnographic research for examining things in the instances in which they take place, we may be in position not only to build on the ideas and concepts that Aristotle has bequeathed to us but also to benefit from the more extended sets of comparative analyses that his works enables us to achieve.

In sum, although this paper has focused primarily on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (and this represents only one of several of his texts that address human knowing and acting in more direct and sustained terms), this synoptical presentation of *Nicomachean Ethics* (as does his text more completely) *provides sustained evidence of the fundamental pragmatist features of Aristotle's analysis of the human community.*

Further, not only has Aristotle's work, directly and indirectly, been foundational to virtually all academic considerations of pragmatism in Western social thought but contemporary social scientists who engage Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* will find a great deal of highly instructive and enabling materials in *NE* with which to develop and strengthen their own scholarly considerations of human knowing and acting.

Still, as a concluding caveat, it should be noted that a fuller appreciation of Aristotle's texts, along with other materials from the classical Greek era, will require patience and perseverance as well as an ethnographic openness to learning (i.e., examining these materials in the contexts in which they were produced) and some capacity for engaging a remarkably sophisticated set of conceptual materials. Conversely, this material is not recommended for the impatient, the arrogant, or "the timid of mind."

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Endnotes

- i This statement draws heavily on William David Ross' (1925; *Ethica Nicomachea*) and Harris Rackham's (1934) English translations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. This statement is also informed by Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* (J. Solomon's English translation) and *Magna Moralia* (George Stock's English translation) as well as the more comprehensive collection of Aristotle's works found in Barnes (1984). Although I have not incorporated Thomas Aquinas' *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* directly into the present statement, Aquinas' (two volume) text can be described as truly remarkable in overall care and depth of analysis. Accordingly, the present statement should not be seen as replacing Aristotle's *NE* or Aquinas' commentary on *NE*. The purpose of the present statement, much more modestly, is to examine the relevance of Aristotle's *NE* for contemporary pragmatist scholarship – i.e., the study of human knowing and acting.
- ii For a more focused consideration of causality that has been developed mindfully of the viewpoints of Plato, Aristotle, George Herbert Mead, and Herbert Blumer, see Puddephatt and Prus (forthcoming).
- iii In addition to the more distinctively philosophic emphasis on human knowing and acting that is signified by the present consideration of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the Greek project (as I call it) has taken me into several (interrelated) realms of scholarship. These include poetics, rhetoric, education, ethnohistory, theology, and politics. Although overwhelming in some regards, the more sustained emphasis on the development of pragmatist thought from the classical Greeks to the present time has provided the primary conceptual mechanism for traversing the corridors of time within these realms of scholarship (also see Prus 2004).
- iv More extended discussions of the interactionist tradition (theory, methods, literature, concepts) can be found in Prus (1996, 1997, 1999) and Prus and Grills (2003).
- v Although symbolic interaction (a) builds centrally on American pragmatist philosophy, interactionism also is (b) methodologically and empirically informed by ethnographic examinations of human group life in the making, and (c) attentive to the task of developing process-oriented concepts of more generic or transsituational sorts that are analytically grounded in the study of the instances in which people do things. Whereas very few interactionists have used detailed historical accounts of human group life as data, I have been approaching the classical Greek and Latin literature mindfully of its value as "ethnohistory" (Prus 2003, 2004). This not only allows researchers to examine texts from the past as representations of the life-worlds in which these statements were developed but this approach also enables researchers to ask about the ways that specific authors engaged their roles as scholars of the human condition in their own times.
- vi For a fuller appreciation of Greek developments in the physical sciences, see Sarton (1952, 1959).
- vii Albeit often taken for granted, both an analytical language and more sustained logical reasoning practices are fundamental to the development of more

advanced scholarship, as also is the preservation of written (ideally phonetically-based) text. Given the immense amount of intellectual material and capacity that had been lost in the intervening centuries, the comparatively modest accomplishments of the 8th–13th century academicians still may be seen as monumental in consequence.

- viii In the course of developing this project, I have become aware that many philosophers have rather limited contact with the broader set of Plato's texts. I also have realized that most philosophers tend to adopt Platonist rather than an Aristotelian emphases in their own approaches to scholarship. Accordingly, their exposure to Aristotle (beyond the realm of formal logic) generally is notably restricted. Like many other academics, the philosophers also have tended to focus on more recent, often "trendy" developments within their own times. As well, insofar as people's knowledge of the past is limited, they may not recognize ideas that are recycled but now appear in new attire or guises. French postmodernism or poststructuralism of the late 20th century is very much a case in point. Derived from Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche (who, in turn, had been influenced by some earlier Greek philosophers), postmodernism reflects a synthesis of some aspects of preAristotelian Greek thought.
- ix In *Republic* and *Law*, by contrast, Plato references only four virtues: courage, temperance, justice, and wisdom.
- x Plato (with Socrates as his spokesperson) makes a very similar observation in *Republic* (Book VI: 498-500, Books VI and VII more generally) when he discusses the training and experiential base required for the making of viable philosophers.
- xi It should be appreciated that Aristotle (a) includes people among objects more generally and (b) maintains a unity of body and mind (i.e., as an inseparable entity) that can only be realized through activity.
- xii Aristotle talks about people generally, but he also sees more educated people as having greater potential for virtuous and intellectual life-styles. Even here, however, Aristotle is attentive to habits and preferences that people have developed from early (prelinguistic, then limited understanding) childhood. Because people have to contend with their earlier habits and failings, these could represent limitations and obstacles to the subsequent development of more virtuous styles of doing things.
- xiii In addition to discussing virtues and vices as (a) *character-based* (developmentally acquired habits, emotionalities, preferences) and as (b) *intellectually* achieved (through instruction, study, and practice), Aristotle also discusses virtues as (c) *enacted* (as with people acting in minded terms; i.e., as knowing, deliberating, choosing, monitoring, adjusting agents), (d) subject to *judgment* by others (as in responsibility, and praise or blame), and as matters of (e) *collective* as well individual concern. Unfortunately, these latter three uses and the related shifts of emphases are not always explicit in his text. Defining moral virtues as habitual tendencies or dispositions to do good (as in noble, balanced, and just manners), Aristotle characterizes people's moral (character) virtues as nonrational essences because they are emotionally and behaviorally developed and, thus, are not as amenable to choice and direct control as are the intellectual virtues. Nevertheless, Aristotle indicates that people's moral (character) virtues may be modified overtime by mindful self-reflection as well

as effectively redirected through more sustained instances of choice. That is, while virtues and vices represent moral standpoints or inclinations to act in certain respects, people may not only adjust their (character) dispositions somewhat over time but also more consciously may deal with these dispositions when they are deciding how to act or do things.

- xiv Presumably, Aristotle envisions people as having mixes of virtues; as having characters that are composed of assortments of virtues and vices. Still, some people are depicted as more distinctively (uniformly) good or evil.
- xv This table is a modified version of the chart presented in *NE* (Aristotle 1926: 32). Although Aristotle references a chart of this sort in his text, no actual chart exists in the text. Still, it is a useful device and we can be grateful to Rackham for his attempt to reconstruct this table.
- xvi Aristotle suggests that because of the virtues and vices that people develop as characters (i.e., habits, dispositions, preferences), people are not be able to control or direct their behaviors as fully as they (or others) might like. Given that characters (once established) imply certain tendencies on the part of people, Aristotle takes the position that it would be more pleasurable for people to act in line with their dispositions and, conversely, more painful (if not generally more difficult or demanding) for people to act in ways that are contrary to their dispositions.
- xvii Some may be inclined to envision the virtues that Aristotle lists as unique to his own era. However, when the desirable and undesirable human characteristics that he identifies are contraposed with the array of ethnographic materials developed by the interactionists and anthropologists as well as playwrights, novelists and other authors over the centuries, these virtues appear to have a fairly generic relevance across wide ranges of human groups. Relatedly, many notions of deviance that people invoke appear to reflect their assessments of people's (over or under) participation along dimensions of these very sorts.
- xviii Readers also may appreciate Plato's attempts to examine courage as a humanly known essence in *Laches*.
- xix Readers may appreciate the value of sustaining these distinctions for purposes of inquiry and analysis.
- xx Here, as throughout Aristotle's text more generally, I have assumed the liberty of converting many of Aristotle's (conventionally translated and seemingly intended) references to man /men into a more generic form (i.e., people). When recast in this manner, Aristotle's analysis of friendship seems even more analytically compelling than otherwise might be the case.
- xxi Judging from Aristotle's other works, it is most unlikely that he puts any credence in "the gods" as popularly envisioned (following the writings of Homer and Hesiod). Nevertheless, like Plato in this respect, Aristotle appears highly attentive to the integrative functions and popular appeals of religion.
- xxii Readers familiar with Epicurean notions of the gods may observe more consistencies between this statement of Aristotle and the Epicurean position (on the contemplative activities of the gods) than that of the Stoics. Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods* provides an intellectually engaging account of these viewpoints, as contrasted with Academic (or Platonist) skepticism.

- xxiii For a fuller statement on the relevance of “memory as a socially engaged process” for the study of human knowing and acting as well as the centrality of language for “the pragmatist metamorphosis” that characterizes all meaningful human endeavor, see Prus (2007a,b).
- xxiv Clearly, we may expect considerable variation across human communities (and groups within) as well as within the same groups over more extended time frames. However, this does not deny the value of these moral qualities as comparison points or realms of inquiry.
- xxv For other materials that address symbolic interactionist theory, methodology, and practices, see Blumer (1969) Strauss (1993), Prus (1996, 1997, 1999), and Prus and Grills (2003).
- xxvi Ironically, faulting people for “trying to do too much” may have a counter-productive effect (i.e., effectively destroying scholarship) in some cases. Thus, had Plato, Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas, for instance, been constrained “to do less” (i.e., to develop only this or that emphasis or to pursue topics in some specific form) they may never have developed the many texts nor achieved the wealth of conceptual materials and insights on human knowing and acting that they have left for us. Still, our task as social scientists is to focus on those materials that most directly and pluralistically attend to the study of human knowing and acting.
- xxvii The value of Aristotle’s work on ethics as a conceptual reference point would be further enhanced by closer examinations of Aristotle’s *Eudemian Ethics* and *Magna Moralia* as well as an attentiveness to Plato’s *Republic* and *Laws* as additional points of comparison for comprehending and engaging Aristotle’s works on human knowing and acting.

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Revisiting Trust in Symbolic Interaction: Presentations of Trust Development in University Administration

Abstract

Trust development has been studied from many sociological perspectives. Despite its early ventures, a perspective that lags in its attendance to trust is symbolic interaction. Using data drawn from twenty four semi-structured interviews with Canadian university administrators (UAs), this paper revisits a Goffman-influenced conceptualization proposed by Henslin (1968) to frame the analysis of four trust development tactics: being visible, expressing sincerity and personalization, showing the face and establishing routine activity. Resistance encountered during trust development is also discussed. Findings are compared with previous studies of trust in professional, leadership and everyday life settings. The implications of this paper for future symbolic interactionist forays into the areas of trust and administration are also discussed.

Keywords

Trust; Symbolic Interaction; Erving Goffman; Qualitative Methods; Educational Administration; Leadership

Symbolic interactionism and trust development

Trust development has been explored by symbolic interactionists and ethnographic researchers in a number of contexts. These include studies of service work such as Bigus' (1972) study of milk deliverers, Henslin's (1968, 1976) study of cab drivers and Prus' (1989) study of sales. Symbolic interactionist studies of policing and deviance have also addressed the notion of trust development. In addition to Jacobs' (1992) study of undercover police officers, Prus and Sharper (1991) study trust development among hustlers and thieves. These represent exemplary contributions to understanding trust in everyday life roles and situations. However, this small array of studies also shows how symbolic interactionist attention to trust has lagged in comparison to more recent conceptual and empirical discussions in the area (Hardin 2006). Nevertheless, the perspective can still add much to the study of trust development through its attendance to the meanings, interpretations and actions in everyday life. Using symbolic interaction, this paper presents tactics that university administrators (UAs) report using to develop trust with

others in their everyday interactions. Trust development is conceptualized and analyzed through the re-visitation of Henslin's (1968) conceptualization of trust which is extended by the work Erving Goffman (1959, 1961, 1963, 1967 and 1971) and complemented with the tactician-oriented perspective of Prus (1999).

Symbolic interaction and trust development in educational administration

The development of trust is especially relevant in education (i.e., school districts or boards, colleges and universities) where children, young adults, continuing students, parents, trustees and interested funding bodies such as governments, private businesses and non-profit sponsors desire visibility in areas of budgeting, administration or teacher competence. Trust permeates all interactions in university communities. As Misztal (1996) argues, all communities require trust for the development of a co-operative society. Hence, trust development in university interactions can emerge between students, between students and non-students (e.g., residents of the community in which a university is located), between students and professors, professors and administrators, between administrators and their assistants, between administrators and unions, community politicians or boards of governors and between administrators themselves.

Despite the alleged necessity of trust development in university and other educational contexts, empirical research on trust development is scarce. A few recent studies focus on trust in research activity (Liebeskind and Oliver 1998; Shrum, Chompalov and Genuth 2001). In administration, Baert and Shipman (2005) recently discuss the institutional implications of the "corporate model" of accountability for trust in British universities. Bottery (2003) outlines aforementioned dimensions of trust in a similar discussion about trust between governments and professional educators. Educational administration remains a territory to be explored by sociologists in general and symbolic interactionists in particular (Prus 2004). It provides an untapped subculture in which symbolic interactionism can revisit conceptualizations of trust development so that it once again contributes to the conceptual and empirical understandings of trust in administrative and other contexts.

Conceptualizing trust development in university administration: Revisiting Henslin's "*Trust and the cab driver*"

The symbolic interactionist studies mentioned above include some of the earliest contributions that the perspective has made to understanding trust development. Influential among these studies is Erving Goffman whose concept of impression management (Goffman 1959) is initially applied to the definition and empirical examination of trust. Among the first to apply Goffman to the examination of trust is James Henslin's (1968) study of cab drivers in which he deconstructs Goffman's notion of the "front" (a. the setting; b. appearances; c. manners of the performer; and d. the fit of the actor with the expectations of the audience) to formulate a conceptualization of trust. To Henslin, trust develops where "*an actor has offered a definition of himself and the audience is willing to interact with the actor on the basis of that definition...*" (Henslin *ibidem*: 140). Adopting this conceptualization, Henslin proposes a process of trust development involving the following six elements:

- a. The proffering of a definition of self by an actor;
- b. Such that when the audience perceives fit between the parts of the front of the actor;
- c. And accepts this definition as valid;
- d. The audience is willing, without coercion, to engage in interaction with the actor;
- e. The interaction being based on the accepted definition of the actor, and;
- f. The continuance of this interaction being dependent on the continued acceptance of this definition, or the substitution of a different definition that is also satisfactory to the audience (Henslin *ibidem*: 140)

Revisiting Henslin's work not only acknowledges the continuing value of his conceptualization for understanding trust from a qualitative sociological perspective. It also provides an opportunity to qualify his Goffmanian conceptualization by incorporating later materials from Goffman himself. Doing so, it is hoped this paper repositions symbolic interactionism to a less peripheral location in the conceptualization and empirical study of trust.

Henslin's conceptualization continues to provide an exemplary base from which to interpret the trust development activities of UAs for three reasons. First is his assumption that trust emerges from social interaction. This is a fundamental tenet of symbolic interaction (Blumer 1969). In studying UAs, it is important to note that while offering self definitions to others involves the *visible* presentation of self to others, Henslin's definition remains open to the assertion that trust development *does not* necessarily require that actors be aware of the audiences. Interaction necessarily includes reflective interpretations by actors and audience members alike as they assess the validity of each other's activities and perspectives within and without direct interaction with prospective trustees.

This is supported in Goffman's work through his discussion of the *Umwelt* or the "region around [a person] from within which signs for alarm can come" and where action toward this alarm needs to be taken (Goffman 1971: 252-253). The *Umwelt* does not necessarily include some immediate physical location or visible boundary between alarm and safety. It can also refer to caution about things that are sensed over large distances, so much that the individual or group causing the alarm is not physically observable, and that such threats can be detected through other means such as communication technologies (Goffman *ibidem*). Everyday activities such as driving (Dannefer 1977) highlight how people in non-social or non-visible scenarios (e.g., when drivers are not fully visible behind a windshield) deal with trust development. The observations presented in this paper largely involve accounts where interviewed UAs *are* in the presence of others with whom they are developing trust. However, other accounts provide instances in which the actor is *not* present during the UA's development of trust, especially during moments when the validity of trust development is under assessment. Developing trust is a matter of reflection about the past, present and anticipated activities of others regardless of their actual visibility at a given point in time.

Second, Henslin's definition provides the establishment of routine or normalized trust relations. The notion that trust is a precondition for a stable social order has been articulated by several trust theorists (Garfinkel 1963; Giddens 1990; Luhmann 1988). Recently, Misztal (2001) adds Goffman to the fray by examining how his

concept of normality, informed by his work *Asylums* (1961) and *Stigma* (1963), explains the importance of trust in everyday life. Social order requires predictability and reliability in which everyone is “safe and sound to continue on with the activity at hand with only peripheral attention given to checking on the stability of the environment” (Goffman 1971: 283 in Misztal 2001). The development of trust eventually establishes “normal appearances” that “assure people that nothing around them is out of the ordinary and life is predictable, so in the absence of anything unusual, they can continue their routines” (Misztal 2001: 314). By developing and continuing routine presentations of self, the state of normality reinforces the legitimacy of trust.

Finally, Henslin’s conceptualization supports the notion that trust is a tactical performance. Prus (1999: Ch.6) calls this the “tactical enterprise” whereby people perform activities which enhance, focus, control or stabilize their influence and interests in relations with others. In the tactical enterprise, UAs are reflexive actors who receive and handle information in their everyday situations so as to enhance or secure their own influence and interests in relation to others (Prus 1999:168-169). Considering the conceptualization of trust development offered above, the portrayal of UAs as trust development tacticians fits appropriately with Prus’ own definition of trust which “a quality attributed to persons [...] by others; it denotes an anticipation that these persons will act in manners consistent with the one’s interests” (Prus 1989: 104). A UA is a reflexive trust tactician whose participation in trust development entails the interchangeability of roles between actor and audience in accordance with the meanings and circumstances of an interaction for that administrator.

This paper presents four tactical dimensions of trust development in university administrative contexts which correspond with Henslin’s trust development process. *Being visible* acknowledges how trust first develops through an actor’s presentation to others. *Expressing sincerity and personalizing encounters* represent the middle elements of Henslin’s conceptualization. These actions are used to persuade others that a UA’s presentation is valid. *Showing your face* acknowledges the process of clarifying the expectations that actors and audiences hold with respect to developing stable trust relationships. Finally, *establishing routine activity* describes the need for actors to sustain the acceptance of trust definitions between actors and audiences. It is emphasized that these four dimensions do not address the role that settings and appearances have in the development of trust, but focus exclusively on the manners involved in trust development. This is not to imply that settings and appearances are not essential in the development of trust by UAs. It is simply a matter of scope.

Methodology

The data for this paper come from in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with twenty four Canadian UAs. A diverse sample of universities, administrative positions, faculties and departments are represented in the sample. The UAs in this study have experience in eight universities located between the Atlantic Provinces and Western Canada. These universities range in size and specialization, ranging from small and medium primarily undergraduate universities to medium and large research-intensive institutions. The UAs also represent a range of positions including Provosts, Presidents, Vice Presidents, Principals, Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs and Program Directors. Each position also entails a different degree of duties and responsibilities which makes for insightful variations and commonalities in the experiences of UAs. Several academic areas

are also represented including Biology, Cultural Studies, Education, Engineering, History, Physical Education, Philosophy, Physical Resources, Public Administration, Religious Studies and Sociology.

Participants were recruited through the combination of convenience, snowball and random sampling techniques. Administrators in the researcher's home institution were initially recruited, which led to a snowball sample of additional participants from inside and outside of the institution. To ensure that the sample went beyond the researcher's home institution, an exhaustive list was generated through the analysis of Administrative and Academic Program websites from five Southern Ontario Universities where seventy-eight administrator e-mail addresses were identified. Then, a random sample of thirty UAs was contacted through e-mail. Among those who participated from this pool, further snowballing generated a diverse sample of individuals.

The interviews were conducted in various locations including offices, private library study rooms or off-campus cafés. The interviews lasted between forty five minutes and two and one half hours with the majority lasting between one and one one half hours due to the hectic schedules of UAs. The intensity of the UAs' duties also meant that the researcher focused primarily on the availability of participants rather than on their personal characteristics. Among the five women who participated, their titles ranged from Department Chair to Principal.

Interview questions were organized according to a list of themes adopted from the generic social process of *Performing Activity* proposed by Prus (1996). It requires qualification here that the interviews were not performed with the intent of discovering these generic processes in the development of trust. Rather, they provide conceptual guidelines for the investigation and analysis of activities performed by UAs (Campbell 2003). Consequently, the interviews encouraged highly reflective and flexible discussions which allowed UAs to share their perspectives about administrative work with minimal disruption (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).

The following findings were assembled using open coding procedures derived from Strauss and Corbin (1998). Given the focus of this study on role performance in educational administration (Prus 1997), transcriptions were analyzed for the presence of activity-oriented concepts and supportive dimensions. The analysis of UA accounts subsequently uncovered the importance of trust development in university administration. A deeper analysis of these activities further resulted in the emergence of the dimensions presented here. During the analysis, UA accounts of these dimensions were cut and pasted into appropriately labeled word processor filing folders. The labeling of these activity-based dimensions was decided through a combination of the researcher's own assessment of what the dimensions signified, or "in vivo codes", with a review of the trust literature (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 115). After these dimensions were identified it was ultimately discovered how each of them reflect elements of the trust development process outlined by Henslin (1968, 1976). Hence, the dimensions described below are presented in a manner which reflects the sequence of those elements.

Developing trust in university administration

One UA highlights trust development in his everyday activities when he stresses the important consistency between talk and action. As he states, “there must be congruence between profession and action. If there is not, you have a process in place and you bypass that process, then you generate cynicism. Then of course trust collapses . . . When people become cynical, they don’t believe what’s going on. Then they don’t trust.” Dimensions of trust stress the importance of consistency and visibility of action. To develop trust, an individual must convince and visibly demonstrate to others that they are sincerely acting in their interests. The following sections present four tactics involved in the development of trust among UAs along with a brief discussion of how trust development, assumed to be a desirable in administrative contexts, encounters resistance.

Being visible

Definitions of trust stress the importance of visibility. As actors, UAs gain trust by presenting themselves and their administrative agendas to faculty and other administrative audiences. One UA tells of a contextual transition from a predecessor who worked in a “top-down” manner to his relatively open and consultative style. He describes how visibility, through what he calls his “road shows”, is able to “restore the trust” among UAs and faculty:

It was very patronizing or “Father knows best” kind of thing, and it wasn’t done in conjunction with strategic planning. It was ad hoc. So when I arrived, the whole budgeting process was in disrepute. Nobody trusted it . . . I embarked on what I call base budget reform ... And then I went on “road shows” with my budgets. I went to the faculty ... I did it with the Deans. I was a regular guest at my request ... The process for our budgeting was to try to be open with the process and the documentation got thicker and thicker and the explanations got bigger and bigger ... By the end of my second budget year I was getting verbal acknowledgements and feedback saying, “yeah, this is open. This is transparent. We trust that what you’re telling us is the straight goods” ... We’ve restored the trust.

Of additional interest here is how the UA’s presentation of self is accompanied by the visibility of administrative documentation. Preda (2002) observes the importance of financial documents in presenting and promoting organizational identities. As hinted in the above instance, UAs present documents as illustrations of the “product” being “sold”. Similarly, another UA strongly insists during an interview that she display her portfolio to the interviewer:

Administrator: You asked me about what I do. I’ll tell you my job description. And I can share these things with you because I just put together my portfolio . . . My title is Director and I had to put together this portfolio of what I’ve done as Director for two years here.

Interviewer: I don’t want your job description.

Administrator: But you need to hear my job description!

Using these documents, she shares what has been accomplished during her tenure as Director of an academic unit. This UA’s display of documentation signifies an attempt to present an administrator whose competence, hard work and

commitment is consistent despite what she describes is an overwhelming set of demands resulting from human resources shortages in her unit.

Visibility is readily performed by some UAs, but as the comments of others suggest, visibility in the generation of trust is fraught with uncertainties. As Goffman points out, there are risks to becoming too visible to the point of “obtrusiveness” (Goffman 1963: 49). For one UA, too much administrative visibility is potentially detrimental to the development of trust. His strategy is to allow administrative colleagues to perform their tasks with autonomy while intervening when requested:

You can't have any meaningful subsidiary if you don't trust people at that level. If you don't trust them, or you are suspicious of their motives or you insist on over-vigilance, you actually weaken the fabric and it is impossible to implement subsidiary or anything else. You don't involve yourself in a hands-on operation of an institution. You must trust your officers to work competently in their realm and that they will report to you on all kinds of issues that are important, and if there are particular grievous issues that do not admit of easy resolution by superior officers, then you come in, only then.

How too much visibility negates successful interaction has been seen in other ethnographic accounts. In the same way that too much openness can jeopardize a sale (Prus 1989: 107), too much visibility can jeopardize administrative trust.

Expressing sincerity and personalizing encounters

In addition to being visible, the expressions of sincerity and personalization are essential to trust development in university administration. In their everyday encounters, UAs report using sincerity and personalization to generate trust among their colleagues. While such expressions might seem casual and effortless, these tactics are not always easy to perform. One UA discusses the obstacles involved in the expression of sincerity, especially when it is certain that the audience does not fully understand the complexities associated with university issues or activities. For UAs, sincerity entails being sensitive to the views of others despite the vagueness of their understandings or intentions. Despite these difficulties, the UA recognizes the importance of sincerity:

The first thing you have to do to foster it is you have to try to be very receptive to suggestions and proposals that people make. On the one hand, that's a very difficult thing to do because . . . the truth is from certain points of view, most proposals seem off the wall because some people make proposals without having to deal with the institutional or budget constraints that you have to deal with in the day-to-day . . . But one of the things that I found is that you need to try as much as possible to find that grain of truth in their suggestions, and you really do need to create a context in which people feel like they can institute change.

Another difficulty facing UAs is the notion that they are outsiders to the everyday “in-the-trenches” dilemmas faced by staff, faculty or students. Administrators recount how they are either assumed to be unsympathetic to faculty needs, wants and visions or they insensitively withhold the resources required for those initiatives. To generate trust, UAs strengthen their sincerity by accentuating the personal ties they have with their colleagues. They attempt to convince others that they are genuinely “on their side”. One UA describes how he overcomes this outsider label by identifying faculty problems as “shared” problems:

I am dealing with faculty perceptions that the Dean is sitting on bags of money ... Part of being a Dean is convincing others that the Dean's role is that of an advocate for faculty and that the Dean feels the same frustrations. The board [of Governors] requires a decrease in the operating budget of five percent. When I have to decrease the operating budget by five percent, all faculty also have to decrease the budget by five percent. It is not me who reduced the Faculty of Arts operating budget by five percent. I either do that or I have to resign. The problem of finding that five percent to cut becomes a shared problem.

Sincerity and personalization are expressed as separate tactics in trust development, but the above accounts also show how trust development involves their concurrent enactment.

In addition to convincing the audience of their inside status, UAs mention the need to disassociate themselves from those contextual elements that UA audiences consider suspicious. While UAs will avoid people whom their audiences regard as untrustworthy, interesting is how they also avoid expressions of socially or institutionally litigious language and activities that potentially jeopardize the development of trust. It is not only those untrustworthy others who UAs need to avoid. They also need to be aware of the contextual-sensitivities possessed by their audience so that expressions of inappropriate words or actions can be avoided. In their study of door-to-door salespeople, Schweingruber and Berns (2003: 456) observe how a salesperson's fixation on the money made from sales "causes dealers to mismanage their presentation of self", leading prospects to "see dollar signs in the eyes of the dealers and thus to reject the dealers and their product." This encourages the salespeople to adopt a "nonmonetary self" orientation to their work which enables the company to develop a more collective definition of success (Schweingruber and Berns *ibidem*: 460).

The expression of this nonmonetary self is observed among UAs as something to avoid during trust development. Like all budgets, university budgets generate uncertainty among UAs, staff, faculty and students. Two UAs convey the importance of displaying this "nonmonetary self" with others:

You should be able to deal with your people on the good things, the bad things and the ugly things. That way they feel like they are being dealt with fairly. If you are only interested with people on money issues then it creates an uneasy work environment. I make money issues a part of other things so they don't seem so exceptional.

I think that consultation and collegial participation has to be a twelve month activity. The budget process cannot be seen as exempt from the general governance pattern. If it is, its exceptionality gives it more credit than it deserves. And not only that, it isolates it as the most important thing. It's important, but our teaching, our ability to function as a community and our serving our students; they are easily as important as the budget. So if all of a sudden the administration only becomes interested when the budget comes around, what message does that send to the faculty and staff?

The above UA accounts highlight how interaction with faculty goes beyond the essential discussions of budget estimates and resources. Monetary concerns permeate all university issues, but as the UAs imply, trust is developed when they are able to downplay or set aside the monetary aspect and deal with other community concerns from a diversity of perspectives.

Trust development as “showing your face”

Trust can be a relational activity wherein UAs and their audiences mutually develop trust. As the implications of *Being Visible* indicate, UAs need to be mindful of the trust expectations held by their audiences. In their daily interactions with audiences however, it is also necessary for a UA to be mindful of how these “others” act because it is not always certain that they are upholding the UA’s expectations of trust. Here, the actors become the audience where the affirmation of trust involves making others aware that the UA, in fact, also have trust expectations. This is accomplished through what Goffman (1967) calls showing the face.

The “face” refers to “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (Goffman 1967 in Meehan 1992: 460). In the context of police patrols, Meehan (1992) describes the showing of face as the act of negotiating and maintaining a consistent array of rules and conventions between officers and juveniles in a defined patrol area. A single area is patrolled by several officers, each with different expectations about how the juveniles should act. Every officer therefore must show their expectations to juveniles if the officers want the youths to conform. The consistency of the officer’s expectations of action demonstrates the maintenance of face. A loss of face occurs when these established expectations are violated by the officer with a subsequent challenging of the officer’s authority by the youths. For officers, face involves the consistency of their authority but also the maintenance of good order within their sectors. A loss of consistency or order in the patrolled sector signifies loss of face (Meehan *ibidem*).

Just as the patrol officers show their face to the public, the development of trust in university contexts entails the showing of face by UAs to others in the university community. Included here is the necessity that UAs consistently demonstrate their expectations to others. For one university Dean, consistency in the dissemination of information is foundational to the development of trust between him and his departmental Chairs:

Currently, I’m in discussions with each department Chair about their plans and how much money they need. Once I make my decisions, all of them will know who is getting what. They all know what the plans are. We share all of that stuff. So [Named Chair] would know what [Another Named Chair] is getting.

In this instance the Dean not only displays his resource distribution method individually to each Chair. He shows his values and expectations to everyone so that all Chairs know that resource allocation has been consistent with the UA’s stated rules and expectations.

As part of developing consistent rules and expectations, UAs need to trust that others are willing to abide by them. Administrators develop trust by maintaining a presence. Not maintaining this presence potentially jeopardizes the trust since others, in the absence of an audience, are more likely to deviate from presumed consistencies. In administration, this patrol-like activity can occur, as is the case of a UA who notices inconsistencies between the actions of an out-sourced snow removal service and the weather:

Generally you can’t get a snowplow contract that is “pay as you go” or a lump sum. It is usually a combination of the two. If you don’t monitor what is actually going on with the weather, when you get a bill from the contractor it could be way out of whack [overcharged]. You may have a Salter on site

for half an hour whipping through the parking lots dumping salt down for half an hour and charge you for two hours . . . You've got to monitor it, just letting him know that you are monitoring it, and giving the odd indication that you are monitoring it, keeps them honest.

By maintaining a presence, it is assumed that some physical visibility is occurring between the actor and audience. However, in this instance the UA shows his face to the snow removal contractor without having visible contact with either the company or the snow plow operator whose plowing and salting quality is in doubt. To Goffman, the UA is managing his *Umwelt*, that area around the UA from within which signs of uncertainty emerge and where the alleviation of uncertainties are handled (1971: 252-253). As suggested earlier, the *Umwelt* is not limited to a visible space around an individual. Nonvisible threats can also be felt within the *Umwelt*. The UA's distrust is based on the snow remover's previous actions. Based on these, trust is gained through the UA's reduction of uncertainty for future snow removals, not through direct interaction with the snow plow remover, but through his use of information technologies to anticipate the future activities of the snow remover (e.g., weather information from radio, television and internet). This information allows the UA to generate trust by ensuring that the activities of the snow removal operator is consistent with his informed expectation about how much snow removal activity is required. Trust is developed when uncertainties are neutralized.

Establishing routine activity

Strauss (1993: 193) highlights the importance of routine activity in everyday life when he states that as activities are repeated, "they become over time so routinized as to fall mostly out of consciousness until something happens to call attention to them." For an organization to achieve defined goals it has to develop and maintain "a patterning of action" or routine action (Strauss *ibidem*: 194). Routines contribute to administrative trust development since it is easy to "see" stable activities and decisions, but routine also allows people the stability to observe oncoming change. Goffman offers a similar argument. Trust can be developed when actors and audiences alike are displaying normality. The establishment of normality among UAs provides a stable context in which other individuals or groups in a university can easily observe and understand UA activities. Trust is developed when activities are routine. If activities are too complex then UAs risk the losing trust with their colleagues.

The interview data with UAs uncover an explicit linkage between routine activity and trust. In one interview, a UA goes so far as to say that:

Transparency means that you explain why you do things, follow a pattern that is open to everybody's understanding but not so you disclose confidential information that may be of exclusive preserve of senior administrators . . . But where we are transparent is the process. That's where it's transparent. It's transparent in that it is consistent . . . If the policy is so labyrinthine and nobody knows how it works or there are exceptions to the rules, or if people can bypass the process, then that's where cynicism enters in.

Other UAs echo this view. However, the consistencies of policies or processes are complemented with a need for ongoing consultation while another UA promotes the benefits of a consistent receptiveness to others' views:

I think the key to maintaining and defending is working in a much sustained manner with your peers and your colleagues and all of the people who report to you, and making sure that everybody knows why you are doing what you are doing.

My way of doing things has been very consultative because people hate surprises. People like to be consulted . . . When people get up in the morning and see a new program that has been talked about, and they haven't been consulted about, they get very upset.

This second instance also acknowledges the emotionally-charged undercurrents that exist in the event of negated routines. Strauss discusses how the upsetting of routines consequently generate excited responses from individuals whose abilities to predict and hold administrative activities into account are suddenly breached. As he states, "let them [routines] be challenged and you cannot but notice annoyance, anger, indignation, and other signs of passion" (Strauss 1993: 197). The study of routine activity is often overlooked because of its uninspiring presence in everyday life. However, the above instances reinforce the importance of routine activity in the generation of trust.

Encountering resistance in trust development

Trust appears to be a desirable state of affairs in administration, and so when trust is promoted, it is thought that others would be consensual to its development. The above instances thus far have implied how trust is a desirable part of interaction between UAs, faculty and university staff. In the everyday life of administration however, even when UAs encourage trust, it is difficult to develop since colleagues and subordinates are not always willing to reciprocate with the actions or responsibilities necessary for its success. This discrepancy makes it difficult for UAs to accomplish the trust they want from others. This is addressed by one UA who explains that while university faculty and staff want to be openly informed about administrative matters, they also do not wish to take on the extra activities that such consultations may involve. As he states, "I think people want to be consulted. I don't think people want to do your job. I think they are actually fearful of doing it. But they don't want to think that they've been left out of any decision-making process at no matter what level." For UAs, trust signifies the presence of sincerity, visibility, expectation consistency and routine. For faculty and staff it may also imply this, but it can also entail additional responsibilities that may not be feasible or desirable given the levels of responsibilities already required in their own positions. This can be particularly frustrating for UAs who even consider discontinuing their trust development activities, opting instead for arbitrary decision-making and problem-solving tactics. A frustration with the discrepancy between administrative openness and subordinates' lack of initiation is conveyed by one UA who states:

They want to know but they don't want to know . . . Everyone has reached a point where they resent not being consulted. They resent not knowing what is going on. If there is a decision made that they didn't quite like then they say "How come this wasn't raised with us?" But if you call a Department meeting about a third of the faculty will show up. If you circulate an e-mail that you've spent three-quarters of an hour formulating how you say things, you get a response from four people. So everyone wants to be consulted but nobody actually wants to take the time to have meetings or really provide feedback. So you're constantly stuck. You have

to maintain the appearance of being consultative, and sometimes you genuinely do want the consultation, but you constantly deal with the frustration from a lack of participation.

The UA becomes weary of trust development since the principle is not being reciprocated with the interactionist practice required for its achievement. Despite his reservations, the UA feels compelled to maintain his philosophy since a sudden discontinuation could be met with protest and the subsequential development of distrust. The everyday resistance to trust development highlights how the accomplishment of trust is fraught with obstacles and uncertainties.

Discussion and conclusion

Like other contestable concepts in the social sciences trust is a concept with many meanings, theoretical perspectives, typological frameworks and methodological approaches. Theoretical explanations of trust are differentiated by their scope (i.e., trust in societies, social institutions and interpersonal interactions) and assumptions about human nature (i.e., trust as rational, behavioral, cognitive, value-based or contextual), while attempts by scholars to organize these offerings into general categories have generated multiple and overlapping typologies (den Hartog 2003; Lewicki and Bunker 1996; McAllister 1995; Nooteboom 2003). For instance, Lane (1998) defines and summarizes trust theories into three types: calculated-trust (Coleman 1990, Williamson 1975, 1993), value-based trust (Barber 1983; Fukuyama 1995; Parsons 1971) and cognition theories (Garfinkel 1963, 1967; Giddens 1990; Luhmann 1979, 1988; Simmel 1990; Zucker 1986). However, not all theorists can easily fit into a single category. A theorist like Sztompka (1999) for instance is difficult to locate given his overarching consideration for each of Lane's dimensions (Sztompka 1999, 2005).

Methodologically, the study of trust is dominated by the application of quantitative approaches, namely experimental designs and social surveys, which reflects the predominance of behavioral, rational and social capital studies (Hardin 2006). Recent illustrations of experimental work on trust include Buchan, Croson and Dawe's (2002) study of cross-cultural differences in trust and Buskens and Weesie's (2000) study of trust in the used car buying experience. Recent examples of survey research include Robinson and Jackson's (2001) use of General Social Surveys from 1972 to 1998 and Van de Rit and Busken's (2006) application of the Chicago Health and Social Life Survey. The former study assesses social capital and trust. The latter examines trust in intimate relationships. Trust research has become methodologically diverse in recent years with the recognition of qualitative methods. Qualitative methods are still regarded as supportive mechanisms in the formulation of quantitative hypotheses and measures in some fields, but they are also providing legitimate insights into trust in their own right (Goudge and Gilson 2005).

Common qualitative dimensions of trust and trust development have been identified across several professional, occupational and leadership contexts. Arguably, the question arises about whether the study of trust requires the addition of yet another perspective in yet another scarcely explored context. Given its crucial role in the stability of interpersonal relationships, value systems and social institutions, it makes sense that existing perspectives be examined in as many diverse situations as possible so that their explanatory powers be confirmed and contested. Amidst the abundance of theoretical and methodological agendas

available to explain trust development, one sociological perspective whose explanatory potential has been neglected is symbolic interaction. Despite offering pioneering investigations of the concept, the study of trust by symbolic interactionists currently lags behind other sociological and social scientific approaches.

To illustrate how even the earliest interactionist contributions continue to offer valid and alternative framings of trust, this paper revisits the conceptualization of trust offered in James Henslin's study "*Trust and the cab driver*" to understand how university administrators (UAs) develop trust in their everyday interactions. Henslin's conceptualization provides a six element process of trust development that acknowledges how trust is a) developed in interaction, b) decided through an interpretive process wherein actors and audiences assess the validity of each other's expectations, and c) how trust is eventually sustained through the establishment of consistent expectations and presentations of self.

The revisiting of Henslin's conceptualization also provides the opportunity for some refinement, namely how the development of trust occurs regardless of the literal presence of either an actor or audience. Goffman's notion of the *Umwelt* provides an outlet for how uncertainties in the assessment of trust occur in the absence of prospective actors or audience with whom trust is being developed and how these uncertainties are resolved despite the vast distances between, or absences of, their audiences. A recent revisiting of Goffman's concept of normality by Misztal (2001) directs this paper to the importance of routine in the development and stability of trust. Henslin's trust development process is also framed within the tactician-oriented perspective of Prus which clarifies how Henslin's actor and audience roles are interchangeable according to the individual's situation in an interaction. Administrators are trust tacticians who assess whether trust is to be developed with others and who also persuade their audiences that trust is indeed possible and desirable.

This paper also contributes sociologically to the study of educational administration and other areas of professional, occupational and social life by offering an interpretive perspective for studying trust development which emphasizes an activity-based qualitative understanding of everyday administrative life. Using this approach, this paper also provides four tactical dimensions that UAs themselves report using in the development of trust. The tactic of *being visible* supports previous observations regarding the value of self presentations to others. In particular is the displaying of competence. Cook, Kramer, Thom, Stephanikova, Mollborn and Cooper (2004) find how the demonstration of competence assists trust development. These dimensions are also observed by Mechanic and Meyer (2000) where patients mention interpersonal competence and technical competence as important in the development of physician trust.

Sincerity and personalization are also found in the literature as common dimensions of trust development in sales, service and professional-client relationships (Bigus 1972; Cook et al. 2004; and Prus 1989). In his study of alternative health care users, Semmes (1991) observes how the demonstration of genuine caring for patients by the health care providers encourages trust. Here, trust is developed through "emotional commitment" which includes the demonstration of "empathy for the patient's condition, respect for the patient's intelligence . . . shared information and familiarity . . . and sincerity" (Semmes *ibidem*: 458). The observed separation that UAs make from untrustworthy outsiders also supports the findings of Elsbach (2004) who finds that professionals, who display similar emotions and vulnerabilities as their audience, or "in-group" characteristics, help develop trust (Elsbach *ibidem*: 279).

The consistent keeping of trust expectations between the self and others, or *showing the face*, is not observed to the same extent in the literature. One exception is the study by Weber and Carter (1998:14) who apply Garfinkel's conceptualization of trust to the examination of interpersonal relationships to find how "disclosing the self" is essential to trust generation. The parallel between Goffman and Garfinkel is not surprising given their emphases on everyday life activity. The "showing of face" accentuates the unique contributions that symbolic interactionist concepts make to the study of trust development. Finally, the *establishment of routine activity* supports findings for how dimensions such as availability, time management and an appropriate length of encounters assist in the development of trust (Cook et al. 2004; Jacobs 1992; Semmes 1991).

This study of trust development among UAs is not without its limitations or suggestions for future inquiry. One limitation is that the outcomes of the trust development tactics reported by UAs are not empirically known. Any success implied or described by the UAs is based on the beliefs that they have, in fact, developed trust with their audiences. Discrepancy between the perceptions and realities about trust development is discussed by Dirks (2000) who observes how leaders, believing that they have developed high levels of trust, learned how they developed less trust with others than actually believed. Future research could include qualitative observations of administrator and audience interchanges that confirm just how these tactics succeed, fail, are recast or rejected, hence permitting an even more rigorous analysis of construction and reconstruction processes involved in trust development.

While the data collected from UAs admittedly focus on trust development from the actor's perspective, it does however offer one instance of how trust development, assumed to be desirable for all individuals given its importance to the development and maintenance of stable interaction, encounters audience resistance. This is seen in the frustrations of the Department Chair whose efforts to be visible and sincere to faculty fail to generate the commitment and involvement needed for him to successfully complete departmental tasks. Weber and Carter (2003) note the importance of such reciprocity in constructing trustful dyadic relationships while Dirks and Skarlicki (2004: 34) suggest how trust dilemmas exist for leaders wherein the successful development of trust with one party potentially involves the loss of trust with others. Under these circumstances UAs who develop trust with certain individuals or groups run the risk of losing trust with other competing third party individuals or groups. The achievement of reciprocity with one party entails jeopardizing reciprocity with others.

It is uncertain whether this dilemma is an explanation for this Department Chair's situation, but the complexities involved in the resistance to, and failures in, trust development require further exploration. It would also be fruitful to pursue how trust is reconstructed following its failure; the construction of forgiveness is of particular interest here (Weber and Carter 1997). Trust development is not a linear set of stages or steps. It is a process that entails success, failure and reformulation over time. Given the assumptions that human group life is processual and that individuals are reflexive beings capable of diverse sets of actions and meanings in their everyday lives, symbolic interactionists are in an ideal position to offer understandings for these and other activities in the study of trust.

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On Cooling the Tourist Out Notes on the Management of Spoiled Expectations

Abstract

This article focuses on the social world of the commercial whale watch cruise. It draws on several years of participant observation research with marine field scientists, particularly field scientists who serve as naturalists on commercial whale watch cruises. Using Erving Goffman's work, the essay details how the naturalist's narration is an example of "cooling the mark out" that Goffman conceptually outlined and others have explored. In the social world of the commercial whale watch, the naturalist is the "operator and the tourist the mark". It is argued that the naturalist's narration is the principal means for cooling the tourists' out. This is done within a context of the operator anticipating a set of spoiled expectations the tourist is likely to experience. While this essay extends the work of Goffman and others who have explored different settings of the cooling out process, it substantially differs from them. Past studies have focused on the cooling out process primarily within a context of individual face-to-face interaction. This essay looks at the commercial whale watch as a social setting of cooling out the mark not on a face-to-face basis but as a process of a "group of individuals who are being "cooled". Most importantly, this is viewed as occurring not after they have been conned or duped but in anticipation of their likely experiencing a set of spoiled expectations.

Keywords

Cooling out; Eco-tourism; Goffman; Science studies; Social construction of experience; Tour guides; Tourism; Narrative; Whale watching; Naturalists

In his classic article, "On Cooling the Mark Out," Goffman (1952) describes the "cooling out" process that attempts to smooth over or avoid adverse, hostile reactions of a "mark." That is, cooling out refers to persons whose self-image has been tarnished or shattered in realizing that they have been duped, suckered, or conned. In essence, "cooling out" is an interaction process designed to maintain routine practices of a social order by managing a specific perception of self and reality within social relations.

At first, Goffman entices us to think about "cooling out" by way of a sting or con game. However, he promptly draws our attention to consider other social arenas,

such as an intimate relationship or bureaucratic organization, which may also involve a “*mark* to be cooled”. Goffman (1952) notes:

Persons who participate in what is recognized as a confidence game are found in only a few social settings, but persons who have to be cooled out are found in many. Cooling the mark out is one theme in a very basic social story.¹ (pp. 452-453)

Indeed, other researchers have looked at a variety of social settings where persons have to be cooled out, or prevented from feeling conned or abused, as Goffman suggests. Each of these settings will have an individual operator whose role it is to cool a mark out. Clark (1960: 569) observed this phenomenon within higher education where educators must manage the discrepancy between encouraging students to achieve and within a context of limited opportunities. Pasko (2002, 49) studied the strip tease act in which “strippers maintain control of their customers”. Snow, Robinson, and McCall (1991) carefully observed the strategic cooling out methods women use in singles bars to avoid or extricate themselves from potential threats to body and self, while Miller and Robins (2004, 50) determined that OP or Out Placement in work environments parallels Goffman’s cooling out the mark metaphor. Miller and Robinson (2004: 50 and 55) see OP as “shifting clients’ attention (and smoothing the transition) from lost jobs to reemployment”. Walton and Warwick (1973: 682, 686, 687), on the other hand, consider the cooling out process entailed in situations facing external Organization Development Practitioners when they attempt both to improve organization capacity in reaching goals and improve the quality of work life for organization members. These studies collectively point to the idea that there are many social settings, other than a con or sting, which may well include a cooling out process, as Goffman earlier noted.

Most empirical studies of “cooling out a mark” look at individual face-to-face interaction. Pasko’s (2002) study specifically looks at a social situation of a group (with a focus on an individual, however) and notes the attempt to anticipate and control audiences. It is primarily social settings which entail audiences or a group of individuals (such as in live performances, eco-tourism, airline boarding rooms, etc.) who have come to the social occasion with an understanding of what that occasion should be experienced as and whose attention is focused on a individual leader (for example, guides of all manner of description, coordinators, actors, stand up comics and so forth) where anticipatory cooling out of a group would occur. The cooling out process would be handled in a manner discussed below whereby the group’s leader must verbally construct the “nature” of the experience the audience needs to grasp.

The commercial whale watch cruise affords another opportunity to observe the “cooling-out,” process where the “tourist” is the mark and the narrator or “naturalist” is the operator. The naturalist anticipates and is responsible for managing what is likely to be tourists’ spoiled expectations. Spoiled expectations may arise for several reasons including; not seeing whales, dramatic and nasty weather and sea conditions, and especially not seeing a spectacular or in close encounter with whales.

Tourists’ expectations appear to emerge from a number of experiences, including the attention media have given to marine mammals, especially endangered species of whales, from visitations to marine parks, and, of course, from advertisements created and distributed by commercial whale watch companies.

Tourists, however, may dramatically differ in their expectations as well as their perceptions of their experiences. From my experience in observing tourists on

commercial carriers I have noticed that the more trips they have taken, the more their expectations are, obviously, aligned with their experiences of a whale watch cruise.

In anticipation of tourists' expectations not being met the naturalist attempts to manage the discrepancy between expectation and experience by verbally framing and directing tourists' perceptions of their whale watch experiences. That is, the naturalist must assuage the tourists' sense of being conned, that is, must cool the tourist out, when their experiences "appear" to pale in comparison to their expectations. The naturalist attempts to manage the likely discrepancies between expectations and outcomes. The key issue here revolves around the confluence of *perception* (cf. Goffman 1963) and *expectation*.

Drawing freely on Goffman's conceptual contributions (1952, 1959, 1961, 1963, and 1966) and on nearly two decades of my own field research, this article looks at the relationship between the narrator/naturalist and the tourists in terms of "operator and mark". It articulates the nature of the cooling out process used by the naturalist to handle tourists' spoiled expectations.

This essay then follows Goffman and other researchers and extends the social domains within which the social processes entailed in cooling out a mark may be observed, specifically the commercial whale watch cruise. Like these studies, there is a detailing of the verbal face to face interactional exchanges operators use in cooling the mark out. However, unlike most studies that detail these face to face individual processes, this essay details the cooling process carried out not with an individual but toward a group and from a physically separated distance. In addition, it is being done not after the con has been experienced but in anticipation of the mark believing that their "self" has been compromised.

Observing whale watchers

My research is grounded within the sociology of science and scientific knowledge (see, for example, Clarke and Fujimura 1992; Collins 1983; Collins and Evans 2002; Lynch 1997; Mulkey 1983). It has been primarily devoted to the study of the everyday life-world of field scientists "doing science," especially the life-world of marine field scientists studying cetacea in their natural habitats. Within that context, I specifically focused on scientists who contributed to the emergence, development, and routine use of "photographic identification" of cetacea.

Data for this article are derived primarily from observing field scientists in their "natural settings." For more than two decades I have observed scientists in the field, in their laboratories,ⁱⁱ and on board field research and commercial whale watch vessels. I have formally and informally interviewed more than sixty research scientists in these settings. Many of my interviews and observations of scientists were with those scientists who were/are involved with photographic identification of humpback and killer whales. A number of observations occurred as I accompanied field scientists who were collecting data while they served as *tour guides* or *naturalists* on commercial whale watch cruises.

In accompanying scientists serving as naturalists, I had access to parts of the ship that are not accessible to tourists. I was, thereby, in a position to observe most of the "back region" of the commercial whale watch cruise (Goffman 1959 and MacCannell 1973). Being behind the scenes was often awkward because I was trying to be close enough to observe scientists at work while simultaneously trying to keep my distance in order to not get in their way.

While observing scientists who were serving as “naturalists” I became interested in and paid specific attention to the nature, content, and meaning of their narration on the commercial cruise. Eventually, I abandoned my role as researcher accompanying scientists and joined other passengers as a *fellow whale watching tourist* to observe the ways in which naturalists, be they scientist or not, narrated the voyage. I spent several summer seasons on whale watch cruises based in New England, noting and recording the naturalists’ narrative. I also used a video camera to record a whale’s surface behaviors, as many tourists would. In this way, I was able to capture the naturalist’s narrative while simultaneously “shooting whales”.

It is this part of my fieldwork that the following analysis of the naturalist on a commercial whale watch cruise is based. While it is my fieldwork during this period that primarily informs this essay, it is, however, also informed by all of my research with marine field scientists.ⁱⁱⁱ

The commercial whale watch

There is a range of “tourist outfitted” vessels varying in size, luxury, and expense. In terms of size, there are small open Zodiacs that can carry nine to twelve passengers and are primarily used for tourism purposes. There are also small “research vessels” equipped to carry four or five tourists. In terms of these small research vessels, the primary “objective” is to enable tourists to observe whales and to “participate” in scientific research. These small research vessels will be at sea for four to eight hours. One research group in Gloucester, Massachusetts regularly operated such voyages during the summer season. At the other extreme, I have also worked on enormous, luxurious ships such as the Navatek or Star of Honolulu. These ships have at least two tourist decks and can carry up to three hundred tourists.

While I have been on both small and large ships, the commercial ships I have been on most often are between 65 and 100 ft long, carrying approximately 100 passengers and charging each adult tourist about \$20-30 (US). Normally, most commercial cruises are two to five hours long depending on the company, geographic location, and the embarkation port’s proximity to whales. For example, when whales are relatively close to shore and are seen relatively soon after embarkation, as in Hawaii or British Columbia, a whale watch may only take two hours. Commercial whale watching trips embarking from Gloucester or Provincetown, Massachusetts will usually take four to five hours. Much of that time is spent traveling to and from the day’s designated whale watching site. For such an extensive sea time excursion, tourists must be properly prepared, handled, and, indeed, entertained. Keeping tourists occupied and “entertained” is the responsibility of the ship’s “naturalist” (also, see Davis 1997).

The social worlds of a commercial whale watch cruise

The commercial whale watch cruise is a “traveling gathering” of intersecting social worlds (Goffman 1966). There are four relatively distinct social worlds, each with their specific social types (cf. Becker 1976), that one can observe: (I) the captain and crew, (II) the tour guide, narrator or naturalist, (III) research assistants, when there is a scientist serving as the naturalist, and (IV) the tourists.

While the captain and crew, the researcher and assistants, and, of course, the tourists all want to see whales on every voyage, these different groups have varied

and often contradictory interests, needs, desires, temporal agendas, and perspectives toward the cruise, whales, and watching whales.

The captain and crew are on a relatively rigid schedule that must be kept regardless of how good or bad a day's trip may be. The captain, who may also be the owner or part owner of the company, needs to keep to a scheduled time at sea and produce the best possible sightings for tourists within that schedule without breaching harassment regulations.^{iv}

Each company attempts to maintain cooperative relationships with all other whale watch companies in the sighting arena. Since there are many carriers seeking to observe the whales in the same oceanic region, and because the ocean is vast, it is to the advantage of all captains and operators to cooperate with each other in locating whales and in "taking turns" at observing them. Captains regularly exchange information with each other, by radio, regarding types, location, and number of whales and synchronize their movement into and out of "sighting areas." When I asked a naturalist about these procedures, he informed me that, "it is in everyone's best interest to be cooperative since it is a big ocean and in helping each other, everyone benefits".

In addition, within the context of temporal agendas of and coordinated action with other ships, the captain and crew, in conjunction with the naturalist, try to have the trip appear as an (authentic) adventure in biological observation—an adventure not bound by rigid schedules. In other words, the trip becomes an instance of "staged authenticity" (cf., MacCannell 1973 and Davis 1997, 87-88) and if handled well, the tourist may lose sight of the imposed temporal parameters.

In sum, the captain has a schedule to meet and needs to synchronize this with other ships, travel time and distances, and viewing whales. The captain wants to get to the best site as soon as possible, have the longest viewing times in synchronization with other commercial carriers, and return to port on schedule either to end the day or to take out another group of tourists.

Each commercial whale watch cruise will have a tour guide or narrator. On commercial carriers they are nominally referred to and refer to themselves as naturalists. The naturalist is the *voice and representative of authority* of the coast guard, the captain, and when the naturalist is a scientist, science.

Naturalists, however, come in different hues and there are, sociologically speaking, significant differences between naturalists in terms of the prestige they can command, the educational background, experience, training they possess, and their involvement in or connections to science and scientific research. In this regard, naturalists are (a) *narrators*, (b) *naturalists* (per se) or (c) *scientists*.

- (a) The narrator/naturalist is an individual who is trained or asked to do the narrating of the voyage. Usually, they are neither formally trained in the sciences nor are they active, scientific researchers. They are doing a job, often filling in for other naturalists.
- (b) The naturalist/naturalist is someone serving as a narrator who will normally have some degree of formal scientific training and/or extensive scientific fieldwork. Their scientific knowledge is well grounded in formal training, often through internships with senior marine scientists. These naturalists are individuals who are likely considering a scientific career.
- (c) There is also the scientist/naturalist who is usually a field scientist serving as a narrator/naturalist for the commercial carrier. In this service, there is a markedly symbiotic relationship between the scientist-naturalist and the commercial whale watch company. The company gains prestige and competitive advantage in having an "authentic" research scientist as their

naturalist. A commercial carrier not having such a scientist is at a disadvantage. Most of the commercial cruises I took did have a scientist serving as the naturalist^v and made a point of informing tourists of this fact.

On the other hand, from a research position, the scientist gains research, sea time with no financial outlay. For scientists to do photographic identification/behavioral studies of cetacean requires an inordinate amount of time at sea. The commercial cruise enables free sea time in addition to the research vessels scientists may also have at their disposal. In addition, scientists whose financial research resources are derived in part or full from public donations gain the opportunity to inform tourists on commercial carriers of their scientific, conservation efforts, and financial needs.

In their narration, the scientist/naturalist will clearly identify themselves as such in their opening comments: "Good morning I am Dr. (or Sarah) Jones from the Cetacean Science Center. I will be your naturalist today."

Neither of the two other types of naturalists (i.e., narrators and naturalists, *per se*) will introduce themselves in this manner. Normally, they will introduce themselves by saying, "Good morning I am Sarah Jones and I will be your naturalist today."

When the naturalist is an active, research scientist they are most often engaged in studying cetacea using photographic identification,^{vi} and usually they will have one or more research assistants working with them collecting data. The scientists normally engage in research while carrying out their narrator/naturalist duties. In this regard, the scientist/naturalist ideally wants to see as much as possible and to get as many photo/observational opportunities as they can. The scientist characteristically prefers temporal latitude and would prefer not to be hampered by rigid commercial schedules and extraneous demands tourists may impose.

In addition, it is the responsibility of the naturalist to verbally construct, reconstruct, and document "the whale watch experience." When the naturalist is a scientist, the naturalist's construction of reality (or definition of the situation) commands a greater authoritative, authentic voice than it would were a non-scientist articulating the same thing. This is due in part because of the research evidence that the scientist is able to bring forward as part of their personal repertoire of intimate knowledge and direct experience with marine mammals. As well, the perceived status by the tourist of the scientist and the particular scientific field contributes to the acceptability of the scientist's social construction of reality, the status of science within a hierarchy of the social constructions of realities.

Meeting their role demands as both scientist and naturalist is inherently difficult in that these demands often entail a creative balance of contradictory interests, desires, and temporal agendas characteristic of the different social types on board. It is the mandate of the naturalist to mollify these conflicting social worlds. Further, the scientist, in this capacity, must balance tourists' desires with the demands of operating a commercial vessel, within the confines of harassment codes while also attempting to simultaneously carry out scientific field research.

The *tourist*, on the other hand, appears impervious to commercial schedules and, understandably, would like to see as much as possible---the more spectacular, the better. Under good weather and sea conditions, the tourist wants to view whales for as long as possible.^{vii} Although tourists differ in this regard, they generally desire *the spectacular*; the greater the spectacle they actually see on a cruise, the more fully their *expectations* of whale watching are fulfilled.

Tourists' expectations and their fulfillment are quite variable. Christopher Hamilton, scientist, instructor, and documentary producer reminded me (19 February

2005 Honolulu, Hawaii) that “just seeing a whale’s dorsal fin in the distance would be ecstasy for some tourists, while others need the spectacular to be excited.” He also noted that “tourists may think that their trip to see whales in their natural habitats will be like the whales they saw on nature documentaries or at marine park shows (cf. Davis, 1997) where animals perform on demand.”

The tourist, while seeking and expecting a spectacular experience, wants what MacCannell (1973 and 1976) has referred to as an “authentic experience.” Given that this is the case, then an authentic experience, whether spectacular or not, must be carefully managed by a coterie of performers---performers who are in the “know” or as Goffman (1963) has characterized, the “wise.” It is the wise who are in the social position to “define the situation as authentic experience”. The weight of this construction of experience rests squarely on the shoulders of the naturalist.

The “tourist industry’s” underlying credo is to provide the appearance of an authentic experience (MacCannell 1973). “The Industry” (sic) is organized to provide a “sense” of an authentic experience within a *zone of comfort*. Or as Holyfield (1999, 5) has noted “today commercial companies compete to provide a desirable (and profitable) mixture of perceived risk and organizational constraint for novice consumers because not everyone demands truly fateful action. Instead, many of us want only the *appearance* of fatefulness.”

This entails (borrowing from Simmel) a balance of “nearness” to the everyday home experiences and “distance” from those very same routines. For the most part, tourists seek the exotic within a range of “tolerated differences.” For example, tourists attending Hawaiian luaus will likely try an authentic Hawaiian dish of kalua pig. Kalua pig is distant and authentic enough but near enough to Western culinary tastes to be tolerable. Tourists are unlikely, however, to consume other “authentic” Hawaiian dishes such as poki, aged poi, and sea vegetables. These foods are far too “exotic” for most tourists, even some of the more culturally adventuresome.

Similarly, the tourist’s desire for an authentic, scientific research experience and the desire for the spectacular are equally contradictory, even where the naturalist attempts to support and promote the idea that the tourist can be part of a scientific adventure. Scientific field research and the spectacular are, nonetheless, contradictory in that seeing the spectacular normally requires an inordinate number of hours of *mundane* research observations. Thus, for the tourist to have an authentic scientific experience while part of a commercial whale watch cruise, the tourist must be willing to “suspend belief” regarding the actual nature of “scientific research.”

The industry is sensitive in supporting this fragile suspension of belief. The tourist must be nurtured, gingerly cared for, and whale watching performances carefully choreographed. As is true in other social stages, any number of events may occur to disrupt or undermine this performance. It is incumbent upon the naturalists, however, to maintain the performance and most importantly, as well as, to anticipate its breakdown and be prepared to handle this.

Searching for authentic experience leaves the tourist in a precarious position. It puts pressure on the managers of social reality to not only *not* let the performance fail, but, more importantly, to have strategies at their disposal to *cool the tourist out* in anticipation of the choreographed reality going awry.

Marks and Operators: Tourists and Naturals

For Goffman, the mark can be a victim of a scam or any individual caught in a social situation in which his/her sense of self has been compromised and their perception of self shattered. A “mark” emerges when the self has been threatened, or diminished. As Goffman (1952) states:

The mark is a person who has compromised himself, in his own eyes if not in the eyes of others. Although the term, mark, is commonly applied to a person who is given short-lived expectations by operators who have intentionally mis-represented the facts, a less restricted definition is desirable in analyzing the larger social scene. An expectation may finally prove false, even though it has been possible to sustain it for a long time and even though the operators acted in good faith. So, too, the disappointment of reasonable expectations, as well as misguided ones, creates a need for consolation. (p. 452)

And, as Goffman (1952: 452) notes, the mark is a “person whose expectations and self-conceptions have been built up and then shattered.”

The commercial whale watch nearly always demands consolation for at least some of the tourists on board because of the tourists’ spoiled expectations—specifically, tourists’ expectations of the spectacular performances by whales are rarely met for several reasons. It is the possibility and likelihood of spoiled expectations that correspondingly produces the confluence of the *tourist as mark* and the *naturalist as operator*.

Expectations of the spectacular are spawned in the tourists’ imagination from three principle sources; (1) video footage of whales tourists have seen, (2) captive, performing cetacea as witnessed in marine parks (cf. Davis 1997)^{viii} and (3) advertisements promoted by tour companies and tourist bureaus - advertisements primarily geared toward enticing tourists into taking a cruise by promoting the image that it will be a spectacular nature experience. It is, however, an experience in “nature” guided by a narrator (see next section below).

Furthermore, and especially when the naturalist is a scientist, tourists are lead to believe they are on a scientific adventure and that their participation *vis-à-vis* the whale watch supports scientific research, conservation efforts, and educational projects. Indeed, images or perceptions of the spectacular overlap with beliefs that scientific research is always an exciting adventure. Rarely are nonscientists (tourists) aware that scientific field research normally entails tedious and often “boring” time spent doing observational research that demands a high degree of disciplined dedication to long -term study.

Spectacular expectations are rarely met and tourists’ expectations of comfort are often thwarted. In addition, it is not a single individual who is the mark but a group of individuals with different interpretive perspectives of their whale watch experience. Because of these factors, the naturalist treats the entire voyage, from start to finish as a cooling out process. Actually this is an instance of “blowing off the mark” (Goffman 1952) or avoiding having to treat a disgruntled mark after the fact.

Clark (1960 569) argues, for example, that junior colleges in the US are structurally situated to cool the student out by lessening the impact of the “inconsistency between encouragement to achieve and the realities of limited opportunity.” Similarly, the naturalist attempts to cool tourists out by framing their perceive experiences with their taken-for-granted ideas of what those experiences should be.

“Cooling the tourist out” entails constructing and reconstructing tourists’ perceptions of their whale watch experience. Such reality construction is, in essence, an attempt to mollify the “success” of advertisements, inducements, and enticements by way of a denial of the spectacular as an everyday occurrence. This does not mean that the spectacular does not occur, but the likelihood of the spectacular occurring on any given voyage is low. For example, documentary film producer Christopher Hamilton informed this author that it takes about 3,000 hours of video recordings to produce approximately two hours of excellent footage.

Cooling the tourist out is an attempt to produce the perception of satisfaction. Cooling the tourist out is done to defuse perceptions by tourists that they have perhaps been sold a “bill goods” - that is, that the cruise company did not deliver what they implicitly promised by way of their promotional advertising. It is designed to assuage the perception that the tourist was taken for a “ride” because they did not see the spectacular or on the occasion that they did not see whales, at all. It is, of course, in the interest of both crew and naturalist not to have to cope with a “heated mark.” Attempts must be made to avoid having disgruntled and disappointed tourists.

In sum, the captain, crew, naturalist, and tourists have contradictory interests, expectations, and temporal agendas. As such it is reasonable to assume that tourists’ expectations are likely not to be realized. It is, nonetheless the case that the tourist’s perception of satisfaction needs to be nurtured for business, research, and conservation support and that the tourist should not walk away as dissatisfied, disgruntled tourists. It is the naturalist that attends to cooling the tourist out.

On cooling the tourist out

Attention now turns to the scientist as naturalist and operator and the means by which the naturalist attempts to cool the tourist out.

The naturalist who is a scientist is characteristically perceived to be in a position of high social status, particularly in terms of knowledge claims about the *natural world*. This being the case, the tourist has little difficulty accepting and submitting to the narrator’s construction and reconstruction of the occasion, of what has happened, and of *what has been seen*. Indeed, having a scientist serving as the naturalist helps to establish the cruise as an authentic nature experience. The tourist can easily accept seeing nature “through the eyes” of a nature expert. Indeed, in terms of the “operator,” Goffman (1952: 457) notes: “give the task to someone whose status relative to the mark will serve to ease the situation in some way...frequently, someone who is two or three levels above the mark in line of command.”

In cooling out the tourist, the naturalist, overall, mediates the interests, needs, and desires of the captain/crew, coast guard, their own research, and the tourists. The naturalist is expected to maintain social order by mollifying actual and perceived differences between three distinct and intersecting social worlds. Furthermore, naturalists must carry out this work under the vagaries of cetacean behavior (spectacular or mundane), weather and sea conditions, travel time to and from the observational site, and maximization of tourists’ pleasure.

Naturalists help to maintain social order, create a veil of authentic experience, and negotiate between intersecting temporal agendas by way of their narration of the entire cruise. In accomplishing such a feat, naturalists are in effect cooling the tourist out. There are four distinct phases to the cooling out process on a commercial whale watch. Each phase entails the management of a specific set of likely or actually spoiled expectations.

The first phase entails opening comments about the ship, whales, and maritime safety. These also include “opening endings”. The second phase begins by shifting the tourists’ gaze (Urry 1990) from whales to the return to port. This happens just prior to actually turning about to head to port and normally includes a “final look” at whales before moving away from the observational site (s). The third phase is the journey back to port which is especially highlighted by the naturalist’s construction and reconstruction of the day’s experience, including what was sighted and what had happened. The fourth phase involves the naturalist, research assistants, and, usually, available crew moving freely about the ship mingling with tourists, and the setting up a kiosk inside the main cabin.

The first phase is the most important. It sets the stage for and is the backdrop to the cooling out process for the entire journey. What is said by the naturalist in this phase serves as an explanation for different events and experiences of the voyage.

In this first stage, the naturalist’s opening statements normally include the statement, “we will be seeing whales in their natural habitats”. At first, I was puzzled by this comment. Why would he/she say something so obvious? We are, after all, on a ship and will be several miles out to sea. The comment turns out to be a device to end opening comments and especially to open “ending” comments (see below). It serves as both an *account* of (Scott and Lyman 1968) and *disclaimer* for (Hewitt and Stokes 1975) the day’s experiences.

The naturalist, at this point, is in the first stage of *cooling-out the tourist* by attempting to manage spoiled expectations before they occur, especially expectations of the spectacular. In other words, the naturalist by making the natural habitat statement is in essence preparing for the very likely event that on this trip the probability of seeing the spectacular is remote and in all likelihood tourists’ expectations will be spoiled. In the language of Hewitt and Stokes (1975: 2) the naturalist is providing a *disclaimer*; that is, “defining the future in the present, creating interpretations of potentially problematic events intended to make them unproblematic when they occur.”

On the returning leg of the journey, depending on events and conditions, the naturalist may evoke the natural habitat comment as an *account* of what happened. As Scott and Lyman (1968) note:

An account is a linguistic device employed whenever action is subjected to evaluative inquiry. Such devices are a crucial element in the social order since they prevent conflicts from arising by verbally bridging the gap between action and expectation. Moreover, accounts are situated according to the statuses of the interactants, and are standardized within cultures so that certain accounts are terminologically stabilized and routinely expected when activity falls outside the domain of expectations. (p. 46)

Unlike cooling out an individual mark who has come to realize his/her situation as a mark, the naturalist is cooling out a group in anticipation of those who may actually need to be cooled.

For example, when the naturalist claims that whales will be seen in their natural habitat, the naturalist is attempting to cool the tourist out because of two possible ways that tourist expectations may be spoiled. First, there is always the possibility that no whales will be seen. I have only been on one cruise where “nothing,” literally not one whale was spotted until the return to port. On the return, the captain took a “detour” and did manage to have tourists “see a whale.” Tourists are normally notified at the outset that if no whales are sighted, they will receive a coupon for a free voyage

to be used by a specified date.^{ix} In so doing, the tourist can be made to feel less disappointed should they not see a whale.

Second, naturalists are well aware (as noted earlier) that tourists have seen a plethora of photographic and cinema graphic images of the magnificent, indeed, spectacular acts of whales in their natural habitat - especially the spectacular display of a fifty foot humpback whales "breaching."^x While breaching is a common behavior by humpbacks, it is not a common sight.

Not only must the naturalist struggle to deal with the spectacular images of whales that tourists have seen, the naturalist must also contend with promotional images companies display around their ships and ticketing offices. Some of the more spectacular images can be found on brochures promoting the commercial carrier. Ironically, scientists took many of the brochure photographs as part of their photographic identification research. In addition, the naturalist must also contend with the stage performance of dolphins and whales tourists have seen at marine parks.

By intentionally locating the voyage within the context of a "natural habitat" the naturalist is indirectly alerting tourists to the fact that they are at the mercy of nature. In this way, the naturalist and the captain are, to a great extent, relieved of responsibility for the lack of spectacle or, for that matter, a sighting. A very disappointing aspect to this, however, is even if there are spectacular occurrences tourists may nevertheless not see what they have grown accustomed to seeing on TV or at marine parks. I recall one trip that was indeed spectacular where I overheard tourists lament the fact that not much had happened. It is an astonishingly sad commentary on the impact of popular media on perceptions of nature (see Davis 1997).

Furthermore, pointing to the fact that "we will be observing whales in their natural habitat" suggests and allows for the ending of a voyage regardless of the sort of day it had been. It serves to open the ending of the voyage without the onus resting solely on the shoulders of the naturalist and/or captain.

Another indirect means in cooling out the tourist at this first stage of the voyage is to invite tourists to participate in the adventure of spotting whales. Their assistance is solicited for two reasons; (1) for the enhancement of everyone's experience and (2) to help, when the naturalist is a scientist, carryout photographic identification research. Many, though not all, tourists readily participate in the search for whales and will make an effort to point out whales to the crew or naturalist. As best as I can ascertain from my research study, it is the scientific aspect of the whale watch that is attractive but mainly in passing and rarely does it captivate, or appear to captivate as well as hold that captivation after whales are actually sighted for most tourists.

What this sense of participation does do, however, is to add to the tourists' sense of an authentic experience, provide a sense of participation in scientific and conservation work and help generate a sense of group cohesion around scientific field study. The sense of participating in scientific research for those tourists who are interested also helps to offset disappointing dimensions of the trip such as bad seas and weather and adds a sense of feeling good over contributing to conservation efforts. In addition, participating in field research helps facilitate support for and donations to scientific research. Nonetheless, the main event is still watching whales, not engaging in scientific research.

Generally, in terms of contributing to research by spotting whales for researchers the tourist does not realize that usually there are several trained individuals on board looking in all directions from high above the tourists where they have greater visibility. Although it does on occasion happen, the likelihood that a

tourist would spot a whale that was missed by the captain, crew, naturalist or research team is very slim. In addition, the narrator and other crew will, on occasion, spot a whale but wait for a tourist to “spot” it before announcing the whale’s location.^{xi} This in itself engages the tourist as a “partner” with the scientist.

What the tourist is not normally aware of is that ships from different whale watch companies are in continuous radio communication with each other. Although companies are competitors, it is in their best interest to support each other by sharing information regarding the locations, headings, dive patterns, and types of whales. In addition, the tourist is usually unaware of the fact that each commercial whale watch carrier is located within an oceanic, informal queue with other ships each of which will patiently await their opportunity to get a closer, better look at a whale or group of whales.

The second phase in cooling out the tourist begins when the naturalist attempts to shift the “tourist’s gaze” away from watching whales and to begin the journey back to port. This shift is normally accomplished by the naturalist indicating that it is time to return and we will take a last look at whales on site or where whales had not been seen, to look at a different site on the way back to port.

In beginning the journey back to port at its appointed time, the temporal agendas of the tourist, the captain, and the naturalist are likely to be in conflict. If it is a “good day,” the tourist and the scientist will undoubtedly want to stay as long as possible. The ship is, however, on a tight commercial schedule and the ship’s captain is mindful to respect the queuing norms informally established by commercial operators. To stay too long or to jump the queue breaks with normative expectations.

This turning point of the tourist’s gaze away from the “site” and toward the trip home or back to port demands a high degree of finesse on the part of the naturalist. The naturalist attempts to have a smooth transition from observing whales to moving off the site and returning to port. This is especially difficult to accomplish under ideal weather and sea conditions combined with a spectacular whale performance. In a very different context but nonetheless similar vein in shifting focus, Miller and Robinson (2004: 55) noted; “Minimizing retaliation and severance are both accomplished through OP (Outplacement Program) microprocess by shifting clients’ attention from lost jobs to reemployment.” Similarly, the naturalist needs to create a new focal point for the tourists.

When conditions are not so ideal, however, turning to port can be met with a delightful sigh of relief and joyous applause. Once that is accomplished, the naturalist begins their reconstruction of the day’s voyage.

In the excitement of their journey, it is fairly easy to understand that the tourists are likely to forget that they are on a choreographed and scheduled performance, indeed, a performance of staged authenticity. It is up to the naturalist to shake the tourists from their suspension of belief by shifting attention to ending observing whales with an announcement that it is time to return to port. Given, however, that tourists are likely to live their everyday lives in the industrial time/task framework, and that coupled with appeals to authority, the naturalist’s task in gently shifting the tourists’ gaze (from whales to the journey to port) is much less arduous than it might at first appear.

The naturalist will normally frame moving off site by announcing something like, “the captain has informed me that we must return to port”. Following this comment the naturalist will likely state, “we have time to take one more look.” The hope here is to get a “spectacular,” or at least, a very “good finish” before moving out of queue and returning to port. On occasion if timelines are “tight” and there is need to move off the site rapidly, the naturalist will state; “we will try another site on the way into

port.” In both announcements, a person of higher status utters the directive and also refers to a higher authority, the ship’s captain.

If luck has it, a “good” sighting will occur on the way to port. When this does occur, it is a blessing that can cap the day. If it is an exceptional sighting, it can highlight the entire cruise and will be duly reported in the naturalist’s reconstruction of the day within the third phase narration. On one occasion, for example, an entangled northern “right whale” was spotted. Right whales are an endangered species and seeing one is extremely rare.^{xii} Seeing one entangled is even more so. In addition, it was our ship’s captain who radioed the location of the whale to a whale rescue team. That evening, the story broke on Boston news. Regardless of the events of the day, this sort of “real” adventure in eco-tourism would likely satisfy even the most disappointed tourist.

If on the other hand, it is a “*bad day*” then the naturalist must try to smooth over the impact on tourists. There are three types of bad days that the naturalist handles. First, there is always the chance of bad seas and weather conditions. Second, there is the possibility of not seeing whales. In both types of bad days, there is the repeated appeal to the unpredictability when venturing into natural habitat. The naturalist will make clear that in attempting to see whales in “nature” one must be prepared for unpredictable outcomes and possible disappointment. The third and more difficult type of bad day for the naturalist to handle is where whales sighted did not perform in ways that would satiate tourists’ expectations. While a more complex situation, this is also similarly handled by reminding everyone on board that the cruise is an adventure in nature. This last scenario directly informs a major aspect of the naturalist’s job in cooling out the tourist; that is, dealing with the complex connections between expectations and perceived experience.

The third phase begins once it is clear that the ship has gained speed and is heading away from the site, and toward port. During this leg of the journey, the naturalist takes time constructing and reconstructing the day’s voyage. The extent of this narrative depends on the character of the naturalist and on the nature of the day’s events. The naturalist will selectively note what has been ‘seen’ and what the tourist “actually” saw. Davis (1997: 19) highlights this dimension of the narrator’s construction of events within the context of a commercial “adventure”.

“The present-day surge of commercial nature imagery is not a transparent matter of bringing the previously unseen into focus, but a case of selecting natural things to see and inventing ways to see them.”

A key feature of the naturalist’s *reality construction* consists in highlighting whatever was spectacular and where there was nothing particularly spectacular, highlighting the most dramatic event of the day and pointing out what was unique or rare. The naturalist in these reconstructions will normally remind tourists of the unpredictability of whales’ behaviors in natural habitats. They will also indicate how much is and is not known about cetacea in the “wild” and how much more research, and, of course, research funding is needed to answer a number of scientific questions. These specific comments set the stage for the fourth phase of the cooling out process that is advantageous to the receipt of support, financial and otherwise, for continued research, conservation, and educational efforts.

The fourth phase has two separate but related dimensions. Unlike the other three stages where the naturalist’s effort is directed to all tourists, in this phase the naturalist, research assistants, and crew will interact face-to-face with individual tourists, especially those who may be in need of direct, individualized consolation. This is also an opportunity for tourists to distance themselves from being interpreted

by the naturalist, crew, and staff as a “novice whale watcher.” (cf., MacCannell 1973).

One aspect of this fourth stage entails setting up and managing a “kiosk” in the inside cabin. Normally, research assistants manage the kiosk. The kiosk provides an opportunity for tourists to talk about whales and to talk about that day’s whale watch to research assistants and often the naturalist. The kiosk also facilitates the distribution of literature informing tourists of nonprofit, conservation, educational, and scientific research organizations which the tourist are encouraged to join. It will also have the standard tourism paraphernalia of tee- shirts, postcards, photos, and other relevant souvenirs.

In addition, the kiosk enables research organizations that sponsor adopt-a-whale programs to bring their programs directly to tourists and to encourage them to join the program and as such contribute to saving whales and be informed on the fate of “their adopted whale.”^{xiii}

In joining and making contributions to nonprofit organizations and in purchasing various paraphernalia, the tourist can get the sense of making a contribution to “righteous” causes. In this regard, the tourist is subtly encouraged to see that they have participated in and had contributed to scientific research, education, and conservation simply by being on the commercial whale watch in the first place. These venues of participation contribute to the tourist ending the tour with a sense of well being even where other expectations may have been foiled.

The other aspect of phase four involves the naturalist and research assistants freely mingling with tourists after they have invited tourists to discuss the day’s voyage. Researchers stress that they are open to discuss any issue related to whales and to answer any questions tourists may have in this regard.

Having the opportunity to meet face-to-face with research/scientist/naturalist allows for several different things to occur. Minimally, it allows the tourist to have direct contact with the “voice” of science they heard throughout their journey. It personalizes and enhances their over all experience. It also allows the tourist to demonstrate expertise or knowledge about cetacean and to establish their identity, if they can, as experienced in whale watch. Normally, the scientist and/or assistants will listen and exchange comments with the tourist without challenging the credibility of the tourist’s claims of expertise and experience. In addition, the face-to-face social contact between staff and tourist enables the tourist to vent any misgivings he or she may have had about the trip. In response, the naturalist is provided the opportunity to mollify any “rough edges” the tourist might display. Further, this contact facilitates detailed discussion about the reconstruction of the day’s journey. In this interactional context, the tourist is directly consoled before disembarking. The face-to-face experience provides one last opportunity for the naturalist to cool the tourist out.

Concluding comments

In the above, the commercial whale watch cruise has been considered as another social situation in which “cooling out a mark” can take place. In this specific case, it is a group of tourists, and not an isolated individual, who are collectively considered the “mark”, except for parts of the fourth phase of the cruise, and it is the naturalist who is considered the “operator.”

It was argued that most of the cooling out work is done by the naturalist in anticipation of the possibility of having disgruntled, disappointed, or dissatisfied tourists—tourists whose expectations may have been spoiled. It was also argued that

this is anticipated because of the expectations tourists are very likely to carry over from their media exposures to “whale watching” in contrast to the experiences they are likely to encounter on any single voyage.

In their narratives, naturalists attempt to realign expectations with experience. What is central in helping the naturalist achieve this is to define and locate the entire voyage/experience as an outing in nature and an adventure in natural habitats. From their opening comments, naturalists lay the groundwork for their ending the journey and ending the journey on a “up note.”

In analyzing the cooling out process as part of the nature of a commercial whale watch, I have identified four distinct phases of the cruise and articulated tourist expectations that are likely to be spoiled. I also outlined the cooling out techniques naturalists use in managing these spoiled expectation. In sum, these spoiled expectations include, but are not limited to: (1) not seeing whales, (2) poor sightings or poor weather and sea conditions, (3) not being able to get close to whales; (4) not seeing a spectacular performance; (5) overall “poor days” within the tourist’s expectations and (6) contradictory temporal frames—wanting more or less time in the field.

In addition, the key ways spoiled expectations are managed include: (1) evoking the disclaimer and account of “nature and natural habitat” within which all things submit; (2) appeals to authority—that is, science, the coast guard, captain’s demands, and the authority of national and international law; (3) appeals to lofty ideals---implicitly science, education, and conservation; (4) reliance on and appeal to a temporal/task industrial model of work and activity; (5) awarding of a free trip, and (6) particularly important, the construction and reconstruction of the day’s experiences by a voice of authority—the naturalist.

Goffman is here revisited because of the conceptual richness and insights into everyday life that he has offered. His essay “On Cooling The Mark Out” provides rich insight to a number of social situations beyond the con game or sting. In this case, it can be used in understanding dimensions of tourism, specifically eco-tourism within the context of the commercial whale watch. By constructing the naturalist as an operator in cooling out a group of tourists as the mark, it helped to clarify what at first appeared to me as a puzzling situation and provided a conceptual framework for understanding an important component and social dynamics of a commercial whale watch cruise. To date, tourism research appears to have little to say in understanding the “tour guide.” This article represents a contribution to that research and literature.

Endnotes

- i With this claim, Goffman conceptually ties together superficially distinct social settings. Further, Goffman characteristically links different and seemingly disparate social arenas under one conceptual umbrella. *Stigma and total institutions* are especially good examples of this trait. (see Goffman 1963 and Goffman 1961).
- ii Over the course of six years, I carried out a participant observation study of marine field scientists at a research laboratory in the Caribbean. This study involved living at the laboratory, participating in the day-to-day activities of scientists at the facility, as well as serving as a “dive buddy” and research assistant to several scientists and one doctoral student. It is worth noting that research scientists coming to the laboratory to carry out a research project

would often find themselves without a dive partner, referred to as a dive buddy. The rules of the laboratory forbade diving alone. Given that I was a certified and experienced diver and known at the laboratory, I had the opportunity to serve in a dive buddy capacity with scientists while they carried out their underwater research work. Serving as a dive buddy to visiting scientists provided a unique opportunity to observe scientists at work in a very different setting.

- iii Nearly all of the contemporary, observational social studies of science are, however, studies of scientists at work in laboratory research settings. Indeed, there are very few participant observational studies of scientific field research (cf., Roth and Bowen 1999, McKegny 1980, Nutch 1996).
- iv Harassment (Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972) means getting closer than 300 feet by sea and 1,000 feet with aircraft. Taken from a telephone interview with Dr. J. Mobley, Cetacean Researcher - Honolulu, Hawaii (February 2005).
- v The few occasions when this was not the case were interesting in themselves. There were two instances of narrators not being scientists that I observed. One was a crew member trained to simply do a routine narrative of the salient features of the cruise. The second involved a person who in her presentation led us (tourists) to believe, in the way she used the pronoun "we" within her narrative, that she was an active research scientist studying cetacea. After the cruise I mentioned to her that I was interviewing scientists studying cetacea and I was curious about her research. She responded by saying that she was "thinking about applying to graduate school and for a research grant to study cetacea." There are good reasons for this deception.
- vi Photographic identification (photo-id) of cetacea emerged as a research technique in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Photo id relies on photographing and cataloguing individual cetacea on the basis of their unique natural markings, for example, the dorsal fin of a humpback whale. This is similar to identifying humans on the basis of fingerprinting.
- vii On the other hand, I have been on many cruises where most tourists simply wanted to get back to port and off the ship as soon as possible because of poor viewing possibilities, terrible seas and weather conditions. Indeed, on two occasions, the seas were so rough that most passengers were sea sick and vomiting for most of the voyage, not a pretty sight.
- viii Davis (1997: 19) highlights this: "Sea World parks are popular culture...more than 11 million (*people*) a year enthusiastically enjoy them.
- ix I do not have data on how many times there were no sightings nor how many tourists were actually able to take advantage of such an offer. Given the likelihood that most would have a tight vacation schedule, I doubt if many could take advantage of such an offer.
- x A term used by field scientists and commercial operators, breaching means that a whale has literally jumped out of the water. It is a spectacular sight to see a 40-50 foot whale weighing about 40-50 tons break the water surface and display its entire body prior to splashing back into the water.
- xi This may be done for a number of reasons, including attempts to control the movement of tourists on the main deck. Tourists will naturally move to the side of the ship with the best visibility of the whale. It can be particularly chaotic when this is the very first whale sighted.
- xii Canada Fisheries and Oceans estimates that there are between 250-300 North Atlantic Right Whales. A recently aired (July 2005) documentary "The Nature of Things" hosted by Dr. David Suzuki and focusing on the research of Dr. Scott

Kraus reported an estimated right whale population of 350. Right whales are so named because they were considered the right whale to kill by whalers and were hunted to near extinction by the 19th century.

- xiii According to one scientist I interviewed, "Adopt-a-Whale Programs" are a major funding source for cetacean field research programs.

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Telling Tales of Oppression and Dysfunction: Narratives of Class Identity Reformation

Abstract

I compare experiences and class identity formation of working-class college students in college. I find that all working-class students experience college as culturally different from their home cultures and have different understandings and interpretations of this difference based on race, class, and gender positions. I find that students develop fundamentally different strategies for navigating these cultural differences based on the strength or weakness of their structural understandings of class and inequality in US society. Students with strong structural understandings develop Loyalist strategies by which they retain close ties to their home culture. Students with more individual understandings of poverty and inequality develop Renegade strategies by which they actively seek immersion in the middle-class culture of the college. These strategic orientations are logical responses to the classed nature of our educational system and have very significant implications for the value and experience of social mobility in an allegedly meritocratic society.

Keywords

Working Class; Identity; Narrative; Social Mobility; Higher Education

This is a story about class identities and their reconstruction. It draws from accounts of working-class college students who variously resist assimilation into the middle class and embrace it. The experience of being working-class in the academic world has been ably described by several who have made the journey themselves, from bell hooks (1993; 1994) to Victor Villanueva (1993), Richard Rodriguez (1988), Richard Hoggart (1957), and the many academics who contributed to the collections edited by Ryan & Sackrey (1984); Tokarczyk and Fay (1993), Dews and Law (1995), Mahony & Zmrocek (1997), Welsch (2005), Adair and Dahlberg (2003), and Muzzatti and Samarco (2006). Feelings of alienation, “being an impostor,” and having to choose sides abounds in this literature. Common emotional reactions variously include anger, shame, sorrow, and intimidation (Jensen 2004: 171). Munoz (1986) reports high levels of psychological stress. “To say I felt like a fish out of water hardly describes my overwhelming feelings of confusion, depression, inadequacy, and shame,” says one academic (Kadi 1996: 41-42) “Students from poor backgrounds who attend predominantly middle-class or elite schools can easily doubt their right to be there. Peers with similar experiences are rare. Intellectual and social codes are

foreign. Fellow students talk differently, wear different clothes, cite different cultural references, take distant vacations. Day-to-day discussions remind these students, by their simple unfamiliarity, that their right to belong is tenuous” (Loeb 1994: 64). Annas (1993: 171) has described this experience as feeling like “an immigrant.”

Working-class students must also deal with the “schizophrenia” of moving between home and school. As the director of Exeter once explained, “When black kids come to a school like this, it’s very difficult for them. They don’t feel fully a part of this place, and yet they are different from the kids back home. They have one foot in each camp and both feet in neither” (Anson 1997: 113). Alfred Lubrano (2004: 194), who calls himself a “straddler,” claims that he and others like him hold within ourselves worlds that can never be brought together. I often feel inhabited by two people who can’t speak to one another.”

This schizophrenia is at the heart of the accounts I have included here. I argue that those moving between the working class and the middle class through participation in higher education are faced with making a *choice* between loyalty to the working class or socially recognized success through bourgeois assimilation. Although this choice is exercised along a continuum, I focus on two central and opposing responses to this situation, what I have named Loyalist and Renegade responses.ⁱ Loyalists confront the choice by redefining and committing themselves to the working class. In many ways, their working-class identities become strengthened through their academic experience. Their notions of class are deeply materialist and rooted in past experiences of oppression and collectivity. Renegades, on the other hand, embrace assimilation as the only possible path out of poverty. They transform their class identities in the process – understanding class to be more about cultural orientations (adopting middle-class norms and behaviors) than about structural barriers. Whereas Loyalists tell stories of oppression to explain class, Renegades tell stories of dysfunction.

Janet Zandy (1995:1) has noted that, “according to the book of success, a working-class identity is intended for disposal.” By many accounts of class, having a college education defines one as middle class. But not all of the working-class students have felt that way. Thus, this is also a work addressing how and why working-class identities persist, even through and against the experience of social mobility.

Previous Studies

Many other theorists, researchers, and those “educated out of their own class” have reported on responses towards social mobility through education. To some extent, this issue goes to the core of Social Reproduction Theory, a body of research and theory that can be said to deal with the question of why working-class kids fail academically.ⁱⁱ Those working in this area have pointed out the “costs” of academic success to working-class children. Sometimes this is understood and explained through the lens of race – as in the “burden of acting White” that students of color are said to operate under. I would argue that there is a more general “burden of acting bourgeois” that is experienced by all working-class children. How they respond to this burden, and what it means for purposes of class identity reformation, is the subject of this article.

Hoggart’s (1957) description of the “scholarship boy” remains eerily relevant today, even though it originally described the psychic unmooring of academically successful working-class youth in mid-20th century England. In order to succeed, the scholarship boy “will have to have opposed the ethos of the hearth...the intense

gregariousness of the working-class family group;” he will have learned how to separate himself from his working-class peer groups in childhood; he will become aware, if not fully comfortable, with the different literacies between home and school; he will see life as a ladder, moving up sometimes in the spirit of “the blinkered pony;” and he will live in fear of “the shame of slipping back “ (Hoggart. 1957: 240-45). This is certainly one reaction that is amply described in the literature, but it is only one. Some students react quite differently – with anger rather than shame, and with a renewed commitment to the “ethos of the hearth” rather than its rejection. Hoggart (ibidem: 239) himself later amended his description to include a tripartite typology consisting of

- (1) those who “go into their own spheres after the long scholarship climb” and who “find themselves thoroughly at home”
- (2) those “who are at ease in their new group without any ostentatious adoption of the protective coloring of that group, and who have an easy relationship with their working-class relatives”; and
- (3) those “for whom the uprooting is particularly troublesome” (who are “self-conscious and yet not self-aware in any full sense, who are as a result uncertain, dissatisfied, and gnawed by self-doubt”).

The choice between assimilation and resistance (and sometimes, simple accommodation) has been amply described in studies of working-class academics and other “class-straddlers,” and “border-crossers.” Lubrano (1997: 193) asks, “Do you cross the border and try to pass for white collar, until you totally assimilate? Do you stay true blue and risk alienation and career stagnation among the middle class? Or do you blend town and gown, creating a hybrid who is, at the end of the day, at home in neither world?” An earlier study found that about half of those “educated out of their class” whom they interviewed spontaneously expressed strong identification with their school and middle-class culture whereas about a quarter declared themselves as long-time rebels who actively resisted the schools’ attempts to disentangle them from their families and working-class peer groups (Jackson & Marsden 1962: 167). Skip forward many years and across the pond and we have Hairston’s (2004: 158) finding that a quarter of the working-class college students he interviewed severed all relations with their families as a precondition to academic success while an equal number became more active advocates and mentors to their families.

Being a rebel and still managing to be academically successful is not an easy task, and may explain why there appear to be many more assimilators than resisters (again, this goes to the heart of social reproduction theory). Fine (1991: 134) found that low-income students dropped out of high school not so much because they were less intelligent or capable as that they identified more strongly with the working poor and recognized the barriers confronting them. “The graduates, in contrast, were basically unquestioning and unchallenging of current labor market arrangements. They believed deeply in a meritocracy and in the linear relationship of advanced education to advanced economic status” (Fine ibidem). Indeed, students who succeed seem particularly vulnerable to internalizing the dominant society’s views of the poor as dysfunctional individuals. In Brantlinger’s (1993: 41) study, low-income students had more negative views of the poor than high-income students. The majority of low-income students wanted to be different from their parents and negatively evaluated their family relationships, attributing poverty to individual choices and behaviors (Brantlinger ibidem: 149, 35-37).

Success read as betrayal has been ably documented in the case of racial minorities. As Patrick Finn (1999) has explained:

For involuntary minorities, the dominant group is not only different, it is the enemy. Because cultural differences between them and the mainstream are oppositional rather than simply different, accommodation is difficult if not impossible. Cultural differences become cultural boundaries. Once a cultural identification is established *in opposition* to another, a border is established that people cross at their peril. 'Border crossers' are likely to be censured by their own as traitors and they are not likely to be fully accepted by the dominant group. (pp. 46-47)

This has been characterized as "the burden of acting white" (Ogbu 2003; Fordham 1996). I argue that class is a border as well, and that those crossing the class border are as likely to be censured by their own as traitors as involuntary minorities crossing the same divide. At least, this is the *understanding* and the *perception* of many working-class students. For, just as "the paradox of racial identity is that it is simultaneously an utter illusion and an obvious truth, (Winant 1994: 37), so is this true of the paradox of class identity. That is why this is a *story* of class identity and transformation. And just as "the psychological costs of academic success for African-American adolescents constitute the jugular vein" of Fordham (1996: 11-12)'s analysis, so, too, do I see the potential psychological cost of academic success for all working-class students. How they deal with this, what stories they tell to make sense of the potential shift in class identities and positions, is the subject of this article.

School alters and negates the values and beliefs of subordinate cultural groups. The working class can be understood (as it understands itself to be) as a subordinate cultural group. The working class is multi-racial, but it shares *as a class* a position of oppression through low wages, economic insecurity, and cultural stigma (largely through the devaluation of manual labor and its supposed lack of intelligence) (Kadi. 1996). Interestingly, Fordham (1996) documented the same responses of high-achieving African-American students as Hoggart did in his description of the scholarship boy – isolation, having to juggle multiple personalities between home and school; loneliness "at the top," a tendency to blame the poor (including their own parents) for their poverty. Low achievers, on the other hand, were similar to the drop-outs of Fine's (1991) study in that they were more likely to imagine themselves as part of an "imagined community," perceived the demands of the core curriculum as threatening to their core identities, actively refused to learn what was taught (rather than being incapable), and were *more likely to recognize that their parents had tried but still failed to achieve the American Dream* (emphasis added).

What happens when students who resist assimilation and who reject the dominant explanation for their parents' poverty, do actually "make it"? We have less solid information here, although there are many who have personally testified to this possibility. Bell hooks, Victor Villanueva, Janet Zandy are but three examples. All three were academic successes who refused to assimilate into a middle-class belief system. Janet Zandy (2001) has written movingly of the importance of not committing "class amnesia." Villanueva (1993) has passionately called for more "organic intellectuals" from the working class who stay true to their roots and core values even as they move and operate in a field dominated by the middle class. bell hooks (1993; 1994) has encouraged those of us from the working class to add our own voices to the academy in order to destroy the false dichotomy between "lack of intelligence" and working class (or academy and middle class) and to subvert the tendency of the

academy to see all of us as bourgeois. For class is not just a position – although it is always that. It is also a choice – a choice of stories, of allegiances, of identity.

Theoretical Approach and Understandings

The theoretical approach I have adopted here is one that first, recognizes the reality and importance of class identities and that, second, acknowledges the power of narratives in framing and reframing identities. Class identities, like all identities, are fluid rather than fixed, forever in the process of becoming, even as they are linked, however vicariously, to real positions of power, inequality, and oppression. “How one comes to some kind of personal and political consciousness, some sense of identity as a member of a group, is an odd underground kind of process” (Annas 1993: 169). Class identities are theoretically distinct from class consciousness. Whereas class consciousness can be best understood as the understanding by people within a class of their class interests (Wright 1997: 4), a class identity does not necessarily carry a political or oppositional content. Identities in general can be defined as “an individual’s understanding, interpretation, and presentation of self as shaped within a complex web of continually changing social relations” (Weiler 2000: 4-5). Sometimes class identities are constructed in ways that severely limit the development of a class consciousness, as is the case with Renegades.

Class identities are fashioned through the stories we tell about the lives we lead. Two people may share a similar class location and experience, but understand that location and experience in very different ways. This understanding comes through in the stories they tell about who they are and who they are in relationship to others of different classes. The stories we tell about our lives form the bedrock of identity construction and reconstruction (Linde 1993; Rosenwald and Ochberg 1992). “Our stories are partly determined by the real circumstances of our lives – by family, class, gender, culture, and the historical moment into which we are thrown. But we also make choices, narrative choices. The challenge of narrative identity calls upon our deepest sources of imagination and creativity” (MacAdams 2006: 99).

Narratives are especially important in explaining *changes* in people’s lives. “All profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives” (Anderson 1991: 204). Narratives are particularly useful for an examination of people engaged in crossing (cultural, racial, class) borders because narratives serve a key function in helping to define identities,

The story is a net in which we try to capture experience. This gives narratives an almost sacred role; our sense of self and wider existence is made by these stories. Stories about ourselves and the world exist within the stories and are the building blocks of consciousness...The narrative is above all an interpretation. Interpretation is an effort to find meaning. Understanding always comes before interpretation, and without it there is no interpretation...The stories of others provide us with a means to develop meaning as we assimilate experiences into our own narrative of self. This makes narrative a ubiquitous and powerful tool in the construction of identity. (Belton 2005: 114-115)

Moving between class cultures, ostensibly gaining access to the middle class through tertiary education, creates a profound change in consciousness. People use stories to explain this change. What becomes part of this story and what is left out of

this story become important questions for analysis. “Identity, personal and social, depends on memory – which is to say, identity depends on what we forget as well as what we remember” (Taylor 2005: 7). Or, as a memorable character from an Irvine Welsh novel puts it, “You have tae try tae work out who is and isnae you. That’s our quest in life. There’s what you leave behind when you come away, and what you always take with ye” (Welsh 2002: 133).

Narrative is thus a perfect tool for understanding identities in the process of becoming. “Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact...we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production,’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (Stuart Hall 1990: 222; Belton 2005: 130). This approach “allows room for explaining not only how identities come into being, but also how identities change over time. At the same time, the approach is helpful in explaining how identities and the interests that flow from them become gendered, raced, and classed” (Price 2000: 19). Although the primary focus is on class identity (and working-class identities in particular), class identity is only separable from identities of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in the abstract sense, and never as lived by individuals. For this reason I pay particular attention to how other identities intersect with class identities in the narratives of these students. I focus on class primarily “not because it is the predominant identity but because in recent scholarship it is, in practical terms and use, the missing identifying principle. Like a ghost, it is there but not there, mentioned but not really welcomed into the multicultural conversation” (Zandy 1995: 10).

There are real material conditions of relative privilege and oppression in which people are located. But that is only the beginning of the story, as anyone who has struggled with issues of class consciousness (and false consciousness) can attest. The meanings people give to their class (and race and gender) locations are various, and an examination of these meanings, as relayed through stories and incorporated into identities, is crucial to an understanding of how the class system actually operates and perpetuates itself. If “identity formation and struggles are about the personal choices people make, the doubts they express, the strategies they devise, and the efforts towards self-transformation that they take” (Luttrell 1997: 118), these personal choices have greater repercussions on the class system, its persistence and/or eventual demise. We must recognize that the stories we tell matter, they have both personal and political implications. Some stories are “bad” and some stories are “good” relative to particular goals and outcomes (Rosenwald & Ochberg 1992: 6).

Methodological Orientation

The following accounts are derived from a two-year ethnographic study of twenty-one working-class college students at a large, moderately-selective public university. Because educational credentials play such a large part in defining class boundaries, I thought it would be instructive to ask working-class college students about their experiences at college and their perceptions and understandings of class. In particular, I was interested in how their class identities were being constructed or reconstructed in the process of becoming college-educated. All of the students interviewed for this study were academically successful studentsⁱⁱⁱ with expectations of graduation and high hopes based upon what that might mean to their economic futures.

Because I was primarily interested in the meanings that these students ascribed to both their educations and their class identities (and how these two intertwined) it was appropriate to construct a qualitative study. Qualitative methods can “illuminate the meanings people attach to their words and actions in a way not possible with other methodologies” (Lareau 2003: 219). I am here not interested in the frequency of behavior but in the *meaning* of behavior (Lareau and Schultz 1996: 4). This approach can also be described as phenomenological, in that it “is concerned to provide insight into how, through the human situation, phenomena come to have personal meaning, a lived-through significance that may not always be transparent to consciousness. The focus is upon involvement in a natural-cultural-historical milieu within which individuals discover themselves as subject to meaning. This tradition stresses that we can only understand human phenomena, such as language, in practice, or use” (Charlesworth 2000: 3).

Each student was interviewed extensively about his or her experiences both in and outside of college. All were asked about their earliest experiences with schools and how schooling affected their relationships with family and friends. They were also asked questions about identity and class in general, the particular values of their families, and whether they saw conflicts between these values and those endorsed by educational authorities. Most interviews took place over more than one setting, and ranged from 90 minutes to four hours. In addition, I interacted with most of these students outside of the interview process, as I was a member of the same campus community (all six of the students included here were at one time or another students of mine).^{iv}

The research took place at a University with which I was very familiar. I supplemented my primary interview research by taking extensive field notes during this research period, from classes I sat in on to campus conferences on issues of diversity. In short, I lived the same campus experiences as many of the students I interviewed. I sometimes interviewed students at their place of work on and off campus. Being from the working class myself helped me see and experience much of the campus culture in ways similar to my respondents. Additionally, I engaged a few institutional interviews with administrators and coordinators who dealt with the working-class college population. These institutional interviews gave me insights into the social context of the experiences and realities described by the students. Finally, I collected all documentary forms of data pertaining to policies and practices affecting working-class college students at this particular campus.

I began transcribing, coding, and analyzing data before all of the interviews were collected. At first, my only goal was to record the experiences of a unique subject group too often ignored or silenced in official literature on college students. I expected this group to have interesting things to say about class, mobility, and the relationship of both to education, but I had no clearly defined focus. It was not until the sixth interview that a pattern of differing and opposing navigational strategies clearly emerged. This became the core of my analysis. To ensure the reliability of my analysis, particularly the tripartite typology that I was theorizing, I took several steps. First, I made detailed plots and graphs comparing and contrasting navigational strategies on various indices. One of these, for example, plotted affectivity. I made a list of emotional buzzwords – “love,” “hate,” “envy,” “shame,” “guilt,” and “intimidated,” to name just a few. I further subdivided some according to object - “loved middle-class parents of my best friend” vs. “hated the way my parents lived their lives.” What I found was a clear correlation between navigational strategy and a particular configuration of affectivity. Whereas Loyalists expressed pride and love toward the working class and a lot of anger toward the middle class, Renegades

expressed admiration toward the middle class, dislike/hatred toward the working class, and much intimidation and embarrassment at school. I also compared my findings with as many other studies of marginalized groups in college as I could reasonably find, ranging from novels and journalistic accounts to theoretical approaches. Finally, I solicited feedback from working-class academics, the small but growing number of academics who have publicly admitted they were raised in working-class and poverty-class situations. All of them recognized the dilemmas of divided loyalty I was seeing emerge in my interviews, as well as the responses I here theorize. In the next section of the paper I present a few of the stories that emerged in the interviews that highlight the very real differences of the Loyalist and Renegade approaches. Keep in mind that these approaches are tendencies, and reflect choices working-class students at some point must make when experiencing potential social mobility.

The Stories

For purposes of highlighting the contrasting stories told by “Loyalists” and “Renegades,” I have chosen three “pairs” of stories, each with a slightly different racial and gender configuration. Thus, the first pairing includes one White woman, Talia, who narrates a Renegade account and one Latina, Amy, who narrates a Loyalist account. In the second pairing, I have kept the same racial and gender configuration but the strategic orientations are switched – here I compare Bethany, a White woman adopting a Loyalist account to Isabel, a Latina adopting a Renegade account. Finally, I include a pairing of two men - John, a Latino Renegade, and Calder, a Native American Loyalist. What I hope becomes apparent is how the Loyalist and Renegade stories, although distinct in nature and content, are variously filtered through a gendered and raced lens. The Loyalist and Renegade stories are stories of identity reconstruction and reformation in light of potential social mobility. Each of the three pairs was chosen because it captured the contrasts between the Loyalist and Renegade accounts in response to key recurrent themes – (1) explaining subordinate class location and inequality; (2) responding to families in need; and (3) resisting racial oppression.

“It’s not that people are lazy. It’s that they’re oppressed!”

The quote that opens this section was Amy’s explanation for subordinate class location and inequality. In contrast, Talia’s explanation mirrored that of the dominant society and policymakers – people are poor because they are dysfunctional. More specifically, working-class people lack the cultural capital to succeed. In this explanation, working-class people must assimilate to the norms and behaviors of the middle class. In Amy’s explanation, in contrast, there is, first, no call for assimilation and second, no recognition that assimilation would do much to “cure” the problem anyway. These are radically different stories.

Talia and Amy are both the first in their families to attend college. They both experienced sharp poverty while growing up. Talia’s father worked at a gas station for several years, and then at an auto parts store. Her mother, as most of the mothers in this study, cleaned houses and provided childcare in addition to being the “homemaker” of the family. Talia began cleaning houses with her mother as a young teenager. When Talia was 15, she left home and “adopted” a middle-class family,

whose father was her high school track coach. Her understanding of “cultural capital” and the differences between working-class culture and the middle-class culture were, I think, heightened during this period, although she seemed very aware of these differences even before that household change. For example, she spoke of the embarrassment she experienced when she was caught wearing someone else’s boots that she had raided from the Lost and Found box in elementary school. Her desire to “fit in” and wear clothes that her family could not afford had motivated this raid.

Throughout the interview, Talia expressed a great deal of hostility towards her biological family. She was bitter that her parents had not been able to afford Christmas presents for her and her siblings and resentful that they had, in fact, given presents to the even less fortunate instead. She was frustrated at what she perceived as her family’s religiosity, and could not understand why they couldn’t have “succeeded” in the more conventional sense. She thought it was wrong of her parents to allow others down on their luck to “crash” at their house without paying rent, as this kept them poor. Throughout the interview, Talia made frequent references to the fact that her family, and the working class in general, did not plan for the future. For example, when describing her adoptive family, she says, “It was just interesting to join that family when I did and it was definitely different conversations – the conversations were more intelligent, they talked about what the future held, they talked about the possibilities that life as to offer, and that was never something that we talked about in the other household.”

The middle class, according to Talia had earned their privileged position because they made plans and followed through. They did not allow themselves to be diverted by poor neighbors or friends. Talia believes she can become part of this middle class through imitation. Jettisoning her family, not allowing them to pull her down with them, is both a priority and a moral imperative. This is key to the Renegade strategy. In addition, Talia must adopt the behaviors and speech patterns of the middle class if she wants to be successful. She avidly read books about improving one’s diction and self-presentation. Her life story becomes a quest to “access the middle class” and to drop old habits and the working-class “mindset” that would keep her from achieving this. In response to a question about what is *valuable* about the working class and her family in particular, she grew very confused, “That’s really hard. I pride myself on divorcing a lot of the ideologies of that family...I am just so proud to be away from them!”

The story Talia tells is one of shame at her roots and a constant movement away from the source of that shame. Angry and frustrated at fundamental inequalities she saw at school, she directed this anger towards her family rather than any sense of a social structure. In elementary school, she reports wanting to be like the middle-class kids because, “they could focus on things like school. They didn’t have to go home and take care of their brothers and sisters because the babysitter was there. I always wanted to access that and I always wanted to be part of that...for a long time I felt ashamed of myself like there was something wrong with me...so I just have to work it through and to make myself take on a different mindset.” Talia’s understanding of what it takes to “access the middle class,” having to do exclusively with issues of cultural capital, does not allow her to feel any sympathy towards working-class people. On the contrary, the Renegade story of success is predicated on moving away from working-class people and their ways of life.

The life story Amy tells is quite different. Amy is the youngest of three, daughter of immigrants from Mexico, and, like Talia, the first in her family to go to college. Also

like Talia, Amy experienced sharp poverty in her childhood. She began working at age ten, picking strawberries along with other family members. At age fifteen, she worked a full-time job at a grocery store in addition to going to high school. She has continued to work full-time jobs ever since. At one point she has had to drop out of college so that she could help her mother make the rent payments. She never really planned on going to college, but both her mother and her older sister encouraged her to think about it. One of Amy's biggest issues, she explains, is dealing with the fact that she has chosen a life path that is different from others in her community – "I try to stay real to where I came from. We've all come from the same struggle, and I try to say that their life path is not worse, and no *better* than my life path."

Whereas Talia struggled to distinguish herself from her family and home community, Amy struggles to "keep it real." She directs her frustrations not at her family, but at her middle-class peers. She says "not a day goes by" that she doesn't think about the ways in which she is different from other college students, "Classwise I'm different, racewise I'm different...priorities I'm different. I have to balance getting my work done and going to work." After a bad experience with a more privileged roommate, Amy is very cautious about getting too close to her peers. She does not want to waste time on people who do not share her political and cultural understandings – "if you're uncomfortable with racial issues, if you're not even open to hear about them, we're not going to work out!" When asked why this was so important to her, Amy explained, "Because it makes me more comfortable with myself. I'm able to be myself, you know...I don't want to have to explain everything, like why I can't afford to go to the movies." Notice that Amy's real "self" is rooted in her home community, and is not reflected by her college participation.

Amy's purpose in going to college is not to "get away" or "access the middle class." Rather, "the purpose for me to get through school is, I think, by bettering myself I'm able to bring back something to my family." This is a common theme of the Loyalist story. Going to school is another way of continuing the struggle against oppression; it is not a way to reinvent the self. Amy also has a fairly sophisticated understanding of the intersectionality of her class and race identities, and how they operate in a nexus of inequality. First and foremost, she argues, she identifies as *Chicana*, but she concedes that she cannot separate race and class in practice, only in theory because "on a day to day basis, my class has so much to do with what I identify with. They kind of go hand in hand, you know." Rather than feeling shame, Amy is "deeply appreciative" of her working-class *Chicana* identity – "I appreciate the struggle, you know. Some people I know get disempowered by how *hard* it is, but I gain strength from that...You just keep fighting. And that has so much to do with class! Not just race, or anything else."

Like Talia, Amy suffered bias and ostracism in elementary school because of her subaltern position, "If you don't have the nice shoes, if you don't have the nice clothes, and the cute hair, then you're gonna be made fun of and ostracized." In her case, she got the brunt of the double stigma of being "a poor Mexican." She refuses to let this affect her identity, however. Rather than internalize these classist and racist biases, Amy ignores them. She knows that these are biases and she knows where they come from – they are attacks in an on-going war between the haves and the have-nots ("it's not that people are lazy, it's that they are oppressed"). She also knows where she stands, where she wants to stand, in this war – "It's always a fine line to walk. I'm always remembering where I stand and, you know? I'm just constantly questioned. But that's the best thing about school; it keeps me humble." Thus, rather than using school as a way to climb out of the working class, Amy uses school to remind her of the fault lines of US society, and to keep her cognizant of

where she needs to be. As for her future, Amy does not want to become part of the middle class and she does not want a middle class job. She would like to teach in her home community or be a coordinator at a non-profit organization.

Responding to families in trouble

Renegades may want to climb out of the working class, and they may hold unflattering pictures of their families and their home communities, but this does not mean that they sever all ties with their families. Talia, for example, kept in close contact with her younger brother and sister. In fact, the issue of younger siblings sheds further light on these accounts. Whereas Loyalists like Amy, and Miriam below, were careful to use college as a way to bring back specific knowledge and material resources to their home communities and families, Renegades like Talia, and Isabel below, were more likely to engage in a form of cultural patronage (to which their families were often greatly resistant). Both Miriam and Isabel had younger siblings in need. How they dealt with these brothers and sisters is instructive.

Like Talia and Amy, Miriam and Isabel faced both relative and absolute poverty in their childhoods, although the particular form of the experience operated in a racial field. I have chosen to compare Miriam and Isabel to tease out the racial component in what are otherwise remarkably similar stories. Miriam, who is White, grew up in the country in a very patriarchal family, with eight younger siblings. Isabel, who is Latina, grew up in the city in a family with strong traditional gender norms, the oldest of four children. Both families went through incredibly difficult times. Both families were very religious. Miriam's father, a boilermaker by trade and sometime salvage man, held very strict rules about the proper place of women in society. Miriam and her sisters were expected to do all of the domestic work alongside their long-suffering mother. Since they often lived off the grid, without electricity or running water, these domestic chores were onerous and time-consuming. Miriam left home when she was sixteen when a neighbor notified Child Protective Services of the ways in which the children were being raised. The youngest siblings were all in foster care at the time of the interview, Miriam's oldest sister, now an adult, chose to return to her parents.

Isabel's father was not a strong presence in her family, although she too grew up among traditional gendered expectations (which she understands as reflecting Mexican culture). Her parents both came to the United States as seasonal laborers. Isabel herself began working at a very young age, under the table when necessary. Isabel at first rebelled against the strict morality of her family, joining a Latina gang while in junior high. But she turned her life when she began a new school and made a decision to become a success. She had always known she was poor, and felt like a second-class citizen (because of her race), and wanted to erase the feelings of shame and embarrassment that had haunted her throughout her childhood. In this, she is strikingly similar to Talia. Isabel's Renegade story is different than Talia's, however, in that she must deal with the contradiction of wanting to leave behind people whom she finds dysfunctional (for the same reasons as Talia) but without "acting White" or leaving behind her cultural heritage. She often blames the *machismo* of Mexican culture for her mother's subordinate status, deftly linking dysfunctionality to race without seeming to embrace Whiteness. Sometimes, she ascribes her family's continuing struggles with their adoption of a hedonistic present-orientated American value system.

Both Miriam and Isabel have younger siblings. How do Loyalist and Renegade narratives explain the proper relationship between the upwardly mobile and those that are still living the life that has now become the past? Loyalists tend to reject the way I framed this issue in the first place. Although Miriam has “left” her family for the moment, she has surely not “left them behind,” although she struggles on a daily basis with the guilt of her good fortune. Renegades, on the other hand, have a peculiar narrative of patronage. Having discovered the key to success, they are eager to pass this knowledge on to younger siblings, who often resist being cast as the returning native’s charity case.

The most frustrating aspect of Isabel’s life, as narrated, was this resistance. At an early age, Isabel defied gender expectations (her rejection of *machismo* culture) and took on a leading role in the household, shepherding her mother through relief agencies and confrontations with English-speaking authorities. Despite her brief adolescent rebellion, Isabel sees herself as the backbone, counsellor, and moral exemplar to her family. Isabel is sad that her younger siblings do not share her ambitions – “they don’t have that in them, they have nothing in them, that little seed I always had.” She understands that her going away to college may appear as betrayal, but she insists that that type of “selfishness” is admirable. Sometimes she wonders if she should even continue trying to help “if every time I try to help they end up stepping on me – they don’t care about my happiness at all.” Extremely self-disciplined (Isabel juggles not only a full-time education and full-time job, but plans for law school and a new husband), Isabel sometimes fears she may have to move away from all those who have a bad influence on her, including her mother and siblings. “I guess college has made me a better person – not one that my family necessarily likes, but I like it, I love it.”

Miriam does not see herself as a role model. She has struggled with the decision to stay in college or work enough so that she can “adopt” her four youngest siblings who are in foster care together. She understands that, by going to college now, she may be in a better position to take care of them in the long run. This has not been an easy decision to make, however, and she continues to struggle with it. The fact that the foster mother is kind and allows Miriam frequent visits has allayed some of her fears.

Although Miriam suffered many of the same embarrassments as a child as Isabel (remembering the shame of using food stamps, for example), and she harbors resentment towards her father for his bullying ways, she does not read dysfunction into the script. She is proud of the fact that she knows how to survive with few resources – “I really like the fact that I can do the dirty jobs. Does that make sense? I’m really proud of that. I cut firewood, and we made a living from it! That fact that I’ve washed clothes in a creek...the fact that I can do that, even though I know a lot of other people would look down on that.” Because Miriam has not adopted the dominant society’s value system, she can retain pride in aspects of her culture in ways that Isabel cannot. There was no discussion in Miriam’s story of encouraging her siblings to go to college. That decision is not tied up with one’s moral worth, and so is not something that Miriam finds essential in the same way as Isabel does. Besides, she acknowledges, she was lucky to have gone. Very bright, and a great autodidact (Miriam read all the greats of English Literature as a teenager when she found a stack of discarded books), Miriam knows that not everyone (younger siblings included) will have the same chances as she did. The fact that there are still people out there who must live without indoor plumbing bothers Miriam on a societal level, not a personal one. Like all Loyalists, Miriam understands this as an issue of social stratification, inequality, and oppression, not individual choice or dysfunction.

Responding to Racial Oppression and the Politics of Skin

John and Calder are both charming, courteous young men. Both come from very large families – John was the middle of seven children, Calder had three siblings and several very close cousins. John’s parents emigrated from Mexico in the 1970s while Calder is both Native American and Mexican, and he strongly identifies as Indian. Both young men were acutely aware of racial oppression in the US, but they handled it quite differently. John, a Renegade, and “the darkest-skinned” of his “mother’s children”, believed that moving up in class would erase the impact of racism. He believed that becoming middle class would act as a whitener, giving examples of popular and powerful men of color whom he believed have literally escaped their skin by becoming successful. Calder, a Loyalist, was fiercely proud of his ethnic heritage and had the greatest resistance to the hidden curriculum of assimilation operating in the educational system. Their contrasting stories give us the final insight into the dilemmas of education for the working class, as played out in the politics of skin.

A constant theme for John was overcoming racial stigma through social and financial success. This appears to be a long-standing story in his personal development. For example, he stressed that he was to be called by the Anglo name of John, not the Spanish *Juan*. His grandfather gave him the name John, specifically to distinguish him from the many *Juans* of his community. As the darkest-skinned of his many siblings, John felt the internalized racism of his mother, believing that she held the lowest expectations for him. John’s dark skin marked him from an early age, “and so my whole thing was to prove to my Mom that I was smarter than her children.” Note that John did not say “her other children,” but rather “her children.” John often stressed how isolated and overlooked he felt in his family. Perhaps some of this has to do with being a middle child, but the account given by John used skin color as an explanation. At another point, he goes further:

I wanted to prove to my mom that, and it's stupid, but to prove to her that I was better than her other kids, that I was smarter than them, that I could do more things than they could, you know, because, I don't know, they were always like, like my older brother he always got everything, he's lighter than me, he's very light skinned, he's almost white, you know? He always got everything -- so for me it was always to prove myself to people. Of my worth, you know? And now, now my brother tries to give me words of wisdom and it's just like, it goes in one ear and out the other, because a lot of stuff he tells me -- it's almost sad. Now a lot of people are proud of me and I think that's cool but I really don't, it's almost like, I don't know, it's kinda frustrating to hear them, they're always like, well, if you ever need anything just tell us, you know, we are so proud of you and I was so rejected when I was younger so it's like where were you when I needed you? And I don't really need you now.

John was angry and bitter towards his family when I interviewed him. He was angry that his mother claimed pride in him once he began college, “My mom used to tell her friends, ‘my kid is in college’. Like she was putting them through school. Like she had helped me get here and all that! I used to tell her not to tell anyone I was her son. Tell them about your other kids, huh? Tell them he is over their smoking weed with his friends.” It is impossible to tell, without much more extensive interviewing with parents and siblings, whether Renegades reject their families in reaction, or whether family rejection to Renegades results from prior attitudes of Renegades. Many Renegades I encountered have felt rejected by their families, but it is likely that

rejection, if this is not too strong a word, is mutually reinforcing, as well as the result of many misunderstandings. Having this feeling, however, makes it much easier to “get educated out” of one’s class and community.

Throughout the interview John expressed disdain and contempt for the working class, adopting as his motto, “*tell me who you hang out with and I’ll tell you who you are.*” In college, John was quick to pledge a fraternity. The particular fraternity that he joined was predominantly White and well-heeled. John preferred hanging out with his brothers, even though they engaged in a great deal of racist stereotyping and offensive behavior, because these were scions of the elite. Although comments about “dumb Mexicans” and illegal immigrants bothered him, he was happy to play the token minority if it would help him climb up the social ladder.

How John dealt with the racism he experienced at college and among his fraternity brothers is enlightening. For John, any amount of discomfort he experienced now was offset by his expectations of future gain. John believed in the American Dream. He believed very strongly that he would eventually surpass (measured financially and socially) his fraternity brothers in the same way he had already surpassed his brothers by blood. In the process of social mobility, his dark skin would lose its meaning. This was, in many ways, the entire point of social mobility for John. Note the consonance of color and class in the following narration: “See, the way I talk to my friends... yeah, White boy, you are wealthier than I am, you have more money than I do, but I guarantee you that I will make more money than you, you know like what I am saying? I will have made more than they will and that is just a matter of fact and they know it.”

John did not expect this success to come easy – he was willing to work at it, as he had been doing ever since he could remember. John blamed his parents and other working-class people, especially working-class Latino/as for not getting ahead. Like Talia, he understood poverty to be a result of indecision, fatalism, and simply “not wanting it enough.” Like Isabel, he saw himself as a role model for younger siblings, even as he simultaneously viewed them in a condescending and patronizing manner. For John, the politics of class and social mobility were inextricably tied up with the politics of skin. The only way to overcome racial stereotypes, to make his dark skin *not matter*, was to become part of the establishment. How different really is this story from that found in the myriad “pulled himself up by his bootstraps” accounts of American culture? The idea that if you dream it, you can achieve it? That success goes to the willing? John’s story illustrates, I believe, the unspoken costs of the American Dream.

If John does succeed, he will be cut off from his roots. Whether White society will ever fully recognize him as one of its own remains an open question. Calder’s story illustrates the opposite pitfall for working-class college students – the possible dangers inherent in choosing *not to succeed*. Calder, a Loyalist, is most concerned with resisting assimilation. The very path that John eagerly embraces is the path Calder fears the most.

When I first encountered Calder I was struck by the fact that, although exceptionally friendly and courteous, he chose to remove himself from the rest of the class, preferring to sit in the back rows with a baseball cap pulled down over his eyes. Often I would catch him staring out the window. But I quickly learned that this was not because of disinterest, as he would raise insightful (and quite critical) points seemingly out of nowhere. As I got to know Calder better I came to see this as a metaphor for his entire relationship with academia – his extreme caution towards being drawn into what he perceived as a White bourgeois community.

From the very beginning of our interview, Calder identified as poor and Indian, and expressed a great deal of pride in both. Within the first five minutes, Calder had managed to raise issues of race, class, government policies of genocide, and the criminal justice system (Calder's father died of a heroin overdose). He was also quick to give a reason why he was in college – because he was good in sports, happened to be smart, and figured he could keep playing sports if he stayed in school. Besides, he had firsthand experience of the types of bad jobs available to him otherwise. The determined linearity of John's story had no parallel in Calder's account. Nor was there any parallel with John's story of moving out and away from family and community. On the contrary, Calder had managed to pull in several relatives with him – although only one, a younger brother, was also attending college, five brothers and cousins were living on the same street (or in the same house) in the town in which his college was located. Unlike John who eschewed Latino/a clubs and joined a White fraternity instead, Calder remained aloof from everyone except members of the Native American Students' Alliance.

Calder tries to present college as “no big deal.” It is, in some ways, just another job, another way to pass the time until something better comes along. When he first went away his mother drove him to campus, dropped him off and his mattress, and quickly left. There were no emotional farewells because, in many ways, Calder never really left. Even though he acknowledges that several of his friends from before college are in jail, working bad jobs, “in the ghetto or on crack,” he seems to pass no judgments on them, nor does he see himself as doing anything special or more admirable than they. In this, he is very similar to Amy and Miriam who made the same point. Where people end up is as much a matter of luck (especially in evading the disciplinary side of the class/race system) than it is to hard work or desire.

In no way did Calder try to deny any of his identities. His biggest criticism of college was the lack of diversity and the silence around issues of race and class – “I was just thinking it would be better if everybody could at least just put it out there because if higher education isn't going to confront racism then what is?” he asks. Calder would prefer to hear people's racist comments and stereotypes rather than pretend they don't exist. He continues,

If you're going to lead, then lead! If people don't want to talk about race, make them talk about it! Grab one of them and ask them what do you think of this? Don't just ask a Black guy or me about slavery or me about, you know, reservations, or the barrio because they think I'm Mexican or something like that - everyone thinks that only these three people can answer those questions, but you need to hear everything from everyone. If illusions are going to be broken then they need to be addressed. We need people to talk about them. Ain't no other way around it.

Notice that Calder, like Amy and Miriam before him, has a systemic understanding of race and class and the connections between the two. I wondered where this came from. For Calder, it may have been his grandfather who sat him down when he was a young child and explained to him the facts about White expansionism and genocide. He realized that the stories he learned at home were not the stories he was told in school and this has made him deeply suspicious ever since of official knowledge. Calder's school career, as he presented it, was one long struggle balancing the need for education with the need to remain skeptical and aloof. At one point he had considered dropping out because he felt to continue would be a betrayal:

I was getting all this history about westward expansion and it was eating at me and eating at me, and I was just thinking, “why am I even part of this institution? Why do I even want to be a part of it?” Part of it is just like me joining in and being a traitor and I just wanted to go back and be among my people, and drink some beer.

The question about the function and necessity of college continued to plague Calder throughout this educational career. He adamantly rejected training for any type of managerial position, as did all of the Loyalists I encountered. He did not want to become better than anyone else, he rejected the idea of “being educated out” of his class, and he certainly did not want to erase his racial identity. Thus, although he participated in college, Calder, like other Loyalists, may end up not benefiting materially from his college degree. In point of fact, Calder chose to work with Native Americans as a teacher’s aide on a reservation – a job with little prestige or recompense, but inwardly gratifying to a person like Calder.

You only get to the head of an institution as much as the institution gets into your head. (Newman 2004: 219)

A few points can be drawn from the preceding accounts. First, the stories confirm the “divided loyalties” and “dilemmas of class” that pervade the accounts of working-class academics and findings of educational researchers. Second, the stories reflect fundamentally different strategies for dealing with the dilemmas of class. The rest of this discussion will focus on the implications of these different strategies for the students and for society.

I have entitled this article “telling stories of oppression and dysfunction” to stress the dichotomous response to potential social mobility of working-class college students. Renegades, as typified by Talia, Isabel, and John, tell stories that mirror society’s prejudices and beliefs about the poor. “We live, in America, with so many platitudes about motivation and self-reliance and individualism – and myths spun from them, like those of Horatio Alger – that we find it hard to accept the fact that they are serious nonsense” (Rose 1989: 47). Like the students in Brantlinger’s (1993) study, Renegades blame their own families and communities for being “dysfunctional” – i.e., for not clearly embracing middle-class values, norms and behaviors. This does not make them “traitors” to their class, however. As Isabel’s story illustrates, Renegades very much want their families to succeed, they just believe the best way to do this is to become something else. In one sense, Renegades are idealists - “Often their earnestness for improvement shows itself as an urge to act like some people in the middle-classes; but this is not a political betrayal: it is much nearer to a mistaken idealism” (Hoggart 1957: 246).

Why do Renegades tell a story of dysfunction? Unlike many of the Loyalists I encountered, Renegades have not developed systemic understandings. “Unable to relate analytically the macropolitical to the micropolitical, I, like many young people, blamed my family for everything, believing that they were deliberately holding me back in life” (Morley 1997: 110). Renegades are more likely to believe in the reality of the American Dream. They are, as Hoggart (1957: 240) eloquently notes, “self-conscious and yet not self-aware.” The invisibility of a class discourse, particularly in the United States, makes personal problems, like family “dysfunction”, much more salient (Jensen 2004: 172). This salience means that dysfunction is *relatable* – it can be told as a convincing story, that most people, including middle-class people, will understand. Furthermore, the studied linearity of these narratives mirror the types of

stories middle-class people tell about their own occupational choices and careers (Linde 1993:129).

Interestingly, even though Renegades lack a discourse of class (in a political sense), they may be more likely to recognize (even over-recognize?) the existence of other structural barriers like racism. Indeed, John's story hints that Renegade strategies may be an immediately effective means of responding to racism ("the only way I can succeed is to become like them"). In Price's (2000: 186) study, a young Black man named Jeff seems engaged in a very similar response, "If it takes me to change my culture, to change my speech, to get ahead in life, to get that big house with that white picket fence, I'm going to do it."

Implications

How do we evaluate these stories of desired assimilation? We might call them "bad stories" if we measure them against a standard of political viability – if, that is, we are looking for organic intellectuals from the working class (Villanueva, 1993). But they may also be "bad stories" from a non-political, individual standpoint. Renegade stories fail to provide a convincing explanation for inequality; lead the narrator to uproot him or herself (psychologically, emotionally, and physically); and provide no basis for understanding future "failures." In other words, Renegades who succeed often lose their families in the process and Renegades who fail (believe they) have only themselves to blame. This is exactly what comes through in accounts of other working-class academics. Irvin Peckham (in Jensen 2004: 179) has called the price of success "erasure" –

A few of us manage to break with our origins, denying our 'incorrectness' or the 'incorrect' class into which we were born. I do not know how others manage the break but I erased my incorrectness by infrequently going home. In time, I more or less forgot who my parents and siblings were. Although I hesitate to admit it, I have to tell you that the only time my parents and I and my brother and my sister have all been together since I left home was for my parents' silver wedding anniversary. I suspect the next occasion will be a funeral. That's called erasure.

In the earlier British study discussed above, Jackson and Marsden (1962) found that most of the educated children of the working class never went home again and switched their political allegiances from the Labor Party to the Tory Party. Compared to their parents (with whom they were not in much contact), they were also more likely to blame the poor themselves for their poverty (Jackson and Marsden *ibidem*: 184).

This would not be true for Loyalists, however. Loyalists tell a fundamentally different story that is rooted in a systemic understanding of class oppression and its connections with race. Loyalists embrace a working-class identity as a matter of pride and political defiance. Theirs is a "good" story if measured for political viability, working-class solidarity, and individual cohesion, although it is arguably a tough story to maintain in the light of the dominant ideology of social mobility and American classlessness. It is also a story unlikely to yield worldly success.

The Loyalist story requires a delicate balancing act – how do you stay true to your roots at the same time you are going to college, a recognized path of upward social mobility? How to reconcile the two? "Together, my father and mother amalgamated seven years of education in Mexico and worked at minimum-wage jobs here in the United States. They experienced degradation on a daily basis. I with my

books and my cap and gown, represented the same people who oppressed them” (Almanza 2003: 160). One way is to disentangle cultural values from occupation and class position. “My family, my friends who are poor, and my children and I are families of love and support. It is hunger and exhaustion and pain that I want to leave behind, not the people I treasure so much” (Mitchell 2003: 118). But how is this possible over time, and over generations? At some point, the educated working-class person either will have to face the fact that he or she has entered the middle class or will have had to willfully choose working-class jobs, in spite of educational credentials. A great deal of concern of working-class academics today is the disconnect their children feel from the working class. In some ways, then, the Loyalist story may only be a postponement of a larger political question. Namely, what side are you on in the class struggle? And where does the middle class fit in? Historically, the middle class has been supportive agents of capital. But this need not be true. There is no reason that the more privileged cadre of workers we call the middle class cannot align with the working class. So here is the second option for working-class college students. Loyalist stories may be the beginning of this realignment.

What needs to be recognized by educators, theorists, and policymakers, is the dilemma success poses for some working-class students. Not only are they in danger of becoming alienated from their roots, but they must also deal with the possibility of being perceived as “tokenistic proof of meritocracy” and the American Dream, the fact that their academic success “serves to underscore the unworthiness of those who fail” (Reay 1998). On the other hand, there is potential for radical realignments. If Loyalists can succeed academically and socially, and at the same time continue to tell stories that enact working-class identities and politics, academia itself has the potential to be transformed from a training ground for capital’s agents to a true “practice of freedom” (Hooks 1994).

Listening to the different accounts working-class people tell of their experiences in and reactions to college and the promise of upward social mobility tells us a great deal about how the trope of meritocracy functions in our society as well as how class continues to matter. The different accounts mark out the importance of stories and meaning-making to the project of class formation and reconstruction. They show us that working-class people are under great pressure to assimilate in order to succeed, that this assimilation in practice means conforming to certain bourgeois cultural norms, behaviors and expectations, as well as “leaving behind” those who do not share these norms, behaviors, and expectations. Assimilation also requires a particular kind of story, one in which the working class is vilified as a dysfunctional other and education is understood as a path *out* of one’s original class location. Poverty and class inequality generally are then justified as the results of a properly functioning meritocratic system, whereby all those with the “right stuff” (right values, right commitment to hard work and planning for the future, right level of intelligence) get ahead and those without do not. Those who do not get ahead have only themselves to blame and should be properly ashamed. This is the dominant story told of those who “pulled themselves up by their bootstraps.” If it sounds uncharitable, it is. Retelling this story to explain their own lives and those of their families, as Renegades do, is an act of internalized classism. But we should not fault those who tell this story – it is hard to resist, it is everywhere, it is in every aspirational poster proclaiming “anyone can be president!”, and every exhortation to “not be a dummy; stay in school!” It is in every show depicting the “ignorant redneck,” every story of the “welfare queen”, every “rags to riches” film about the kid who made it out of the ghetto. It is our American story. Generally, we do not pause to look at what

effect this story has on those who get left behind. Listening to Renegade accounts gives us a good glimpse of the psychic costs of this story.

Against the weight of this cultural juggernaut we call the story of the American Dream, there is an alternative story being told. Loyalist accounts also acknowledge the call to assimilation but they strenuously reject it. Their stories describe the obstacles placed in the way of poor people and people of color. Their stories celebrate working-class values of solidarity and acknowledge that the bourgeoisie does not have a monopoly on intelligence. Although educationally successful themselves, they resist the siren call of believing themselves somehow “special” and gifted, more intelligent and thus more deserving of success than their families and communities. Instead, they describe themselves as lucky, the few that the system overlooked and who were let through. Along with this luck comes a special responsibility to those who were not so fortunate. I want to leave this section with some words spoken by Tillie Olsen (Edwards 1995: 357) to a first-generation Chicana professor who regretted no longer being working class:

You are the working class that your working-class parents fought into being, believed could be. To call education a privilege, to call development of self, of capacity – to call those the province of the middle class is a distortion of history. You are the first generation of your family to be able to claim this birthright. You have not left your family behind, you carry them with you. You are committed to the true potentiality of your students. You are doing your work serving and honoring the working class.

Conclusion

In this article, I have presented the experiences and class identity formation of working-class college students in college. Although all working-class students experience college as culturally different from their home cultures, I have demonstrated that students develop fundamentally different strategies for navigating these cultural differences based on the strength or weakness of their structural understandings of class and inequality in US society. I have presented three sets of paired stories showing the opposing strategic orientations of what I call *Loyalists* and *Renegades*. These orientations exist across race and gender, although their articulations are often inflected by race and gender positions. Students with strong structural understandings develop Loyalist strategies by which they retain close ties to their home culture. Students with more individual understandings of poverty and inequality develop Renegade strategies by which they actively seek immersion in the middle-class culture of the college. In the first paired story I show how Loyalists understand poverty in structural terms (here, Amy describes through the lens of race and racism) whereas Renegades tend to blame the poor themselves. The lesson of the second set of paired stories is that Renegades respond to families in trouble in ways that reinforce the distance and alienation between them, whereas Loyalists are heavily invested in “keeping it real” and remaining tied in to the family, despite individual success. The final story focuses on the discourse of race and how Loyalists and Renegades engage in fundamentally different stories about the relationship between skin color, racial identity, and inequality. Whereas Renegades may see upward social mobility as a way of escaping racism, Loyalists shift the focus to inequality and cultural identity. Finally, I have argued that Renegade strategies for navigating class cultures come at a high a risk for the individuals engaged in them, their families, and our dreams for a more just and equitable society.

Endnotes

- i I am not suggesting the existence of “pure” Loyalists or Renegades. In fact, I have also uncovered a third “Double Agent” response, which manifests itself in a chameleon-like ability to freely move between cultures, and a general resistance to making any choices that will impinge upon this freedom. As I believe that all the Double Agents I encountered were (a) unusually charismatic; and (b) tending towards the Loyalist or Renegade pole when pushed, I do not include their fairly unique stories here. Furthermore, I believe that one’s orientation can and often does shift over time, depending on one’s access to particular stories, role models, and explanations, and in response to particular experiences.
- ii For general discussions of Social Reproduction Theory, see Foley (1990) and MacLeod (1995).
- iii Not necessarily the top of their class (although some were), but at least average and without fears of being placed on academic probation.
- iv These particular examples are fairly typical of the accounts I collected although, in many ways, they were also the most personal and sometimes emotional. I believe this was a function of these students’ greater familiarity with me. Other students interviewed were found through snowball sampling and flyers posted around campus.

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Grounded Theory and Autopoietic Social Systems: Are They Methodologically Compatible?

Abstract

The paper offers a secondary analysis from a grounded theory doctoral study that reconsiders its “grounded systemic design” (Mitchell, 2005, 2007). While theorists across multiple disciplines fiercely debate the ontological implications of Niklas Luhmann’s autopoietic systems theory (Deflem 1998; Graber and Teubner 1998; King and Thornhill 2003; Mingers 2002; Neves 2001; O’Byrne 2003; Verschraegen 2002, for example), few investigators have yet to adopt his core constructs empirically (see Gregory, Gibson and Robinson 2005 for an exception). Glaser’s (1992, 2005) repeated concerns for grounded theorists to elucidate a “theoretical code” has provided an additional entry point into this project of integrating grounded theory with Luhmann’s abstract conceptual thinking about how global society operates. The author argues that this integration of methodology and systems thinking provides an evolution of grounded theory - rather than its ongoing “erosion” as Greckhamer and Koro-Ljungberg (2005) have feared - and a transportable set of methodological and analytical constructs is presented as a basis for further grounded study.

Keywords

Autopoietic theory; Grounded systemic theory; Theoretical codes; Transdisciplinarity

This paper presents a secondary, transdisciplinary analysis from a grounded theory doctoral study focusing upon the methodological nexus between the inductive methods articulated by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), and Niklas Luhmann’s autopoietic systems theory (1982, 1997). The rationale for re-theorizing the research emerged subsequent to the initial cross-national policy study concerning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child originally framed by the “sociology of human rights” (Mitchell 2005, 2007; see also O’Byrne 2003; Turner 1993; Verschraegen 2002). Results from the study have also published within the “transdisciplinary” discourse (Mitchell 2007; see also Nicolescu 2002; Russell 2000; Somerville and Rapport 2000). Transdisciplinary research generally creates its own criteria and standards due to its unique, emergent qualities. In both the present and earlier analyses it was found that theory - implicitly or explicitly expressed - is deeply implicated in how, when and where the human rights of young people are politically and institutionally respected.

Somerville and Rapport (2000) emphasize how transdisciplinary approaches to scholarship are in sharp contrast with multi- or even interdisciplinary methodologies, and are fundamentally associated with critique. In describing peace research and education, for example, they cite Eckhardt (1974) who spoke of “‘breaking through disciplinary barriers, disobeying the rules of disciplinary etiquette.’ In contrast to disciplinarity... transcendence is heretical. It is a generic rebel pushing beyond orthodoxy...the term connotes transformation”. In this regard, they further contend that “Michel Foucault, not Aristotle or Plato...is the paradigmatic figure of transdisciplinary studies” (cited in Somerville and Rapport 2000: 6-7). Thus, the paper aims to transcend, transform, and ultimately contribute new insights within the discourse of grounded theory in a tradition fully in accord with the project and aims of theory development highlighted by qualitative theorists Denzin and Lincoln (2003):

The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent cocreate understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures. Findings are usually presented in terms of the criteria of *grounded theory* or pattern theories. (p. 35, emphasis added)

As Mirchandani (2005: 86) contends, after decades of cross-disciplinary rumination on post-modernism it is time to move “from the epistemological to the empirical”. To that end, the interpretive, contingent nature of both Luhmann and grounded theory offers a common foundation.

In their astute analysis of the distinctions between the originators of grounded theory, Schreiber and Stern (2001: 142) identify Glaser’s approach towards the congruence of theory with data a “fit, workability, relevance and modifiability” of emergent theories. In contrast, Corbin and Strauss (1990) outline a set of evaluative criteria with a decidedly more positivist tenor. As Glaser points out, “one source of staying open to emerging TC’s [theoretical codes] is the GT does not have an epistemology with an attached theoretical perspective that provides one set of TCs to the exclusion of all others” (Glaser 2005: 17). Following on with both Glaser’s recent thinking and his earlier criteria, and after reflecting on the study’s “grounded systemic theoretical approach” (Mitchell 2005: 325, 2007), it became apparent that few social scientists have applied Luhmann’s radical constructivist thinking from any tradition, paradigm or perspective (for exceptions see Gregory 2003; Gregory, Gibson and Robinson 2005). Nevertheless, some important speculation has begun regarding its relevance for grounded theorists.

Glaser (2005: 105) reflects upon how it might be that autopoietic (literally self-replicating) systems thinking may be methodologically linked and effectively utilized. As always, however, he cautions investigators to avoid forcing data into pre-conceived frameworks described as “pet theoretical codes” rather than allowing theories to naturally emerge. Citing Gibson he elaborates further:

The similarity between GT and systems theory is evident...knowing is contingent, emergent and reduces complexity... knowledge is instead verified through comparison and goodness of fit. Like Luhmann’s theory chain of connections, or related distinctions, Glaser’s theoretical coding families emerge as connections between categories and properties. Both theories insist they have no pre-set directional objective ontological state. (cited in Glaser 2005: 119)

This final comment regarding ontological perspective was also one that this author considered repeatedly throughout the investigation and with regard to its

emergent, inductive methodology - particularly after reviewing contentious literature from both discourses. Notwithstanding his tentative imprimatur, Glaser cautions one further: "This TC [theoretical code] is complex and burdensome to understand and to use...in sum, self organizing or self-regenerating systems is [sic] a worthy abstract model to place on the list with other TCs...[but] it is more advisable to have no TC rather than to force it" (Glaser: *ibidem*). Hence, the central thesis of this paper considers how grounded theory offers a systematic approach for social scientists to methodologically integrate autopoietic systems thinking. The paper moves now to explore these potentials in the following sections.

Social Systems and Autopoietic Theory

Doubtless one of the 20th century's most important sociologists was Germany's Niklas Luhmann - deceased in 1998 - who considered the central role of the discipline "is to clarify the original insights of the Enlightenment [and] to refine the methodological means by which these are obtained" (cited in King and Thornhill 2003: 133). Also central to unlocking such refinements during the author's study were Verschraegen's (2002) arguments that Luhmann's analysis of human rights is very much part of sociology's concern. Though not as well-known in the Anglo-American academy as in most European settings, Luhmann's approach to conceptualizing the social sciences has thus far precluded a great deal of empirical study since "theory was his passion" (Hornung 1999). Perhaps this outcome conforms more closely to "world society" as he came to elucidate the notion. Luhmann contends that "world society" can no longer simply be limited by national identities such as English, French, Arab or American since all states form part of a much larger, constantly integrating communicative whole that relate to one another strategically, politically and economically (King and Schütz 1994: 267). Luhmann acknowledged that "society" is the most difficult concept sociology has inherited from its past, but he rejected his doctoral supervisor Talcott Parsons' earlier notion of a system of societies by declaring that global society represents one system in and of itself (Luhmann 1997: 67). Clearly then, in its present constellation world society and human rights are very much a topical concern, and Luhmann's (1965) early work supports this contention.

His central concept of autopoiesis is a word formed from two Greek words "auto" meaning self, and "poiesis" meaning creation or production, and was coined by Chilean neuro-biologists Maturana and Varela (1980) to describe living systems. Adopted by Luhmann (1982, 1990: 72-73, 1997) to explain sociological systems theory, a system is said to be "autopoietic" when its inherent components interact to continually reproduce the same components, as well as the inter-relationships between themselves, as forms of systemic communication aimed primarily at stabilizing and sustaining its own boundaries (see also Glaser 2005: 26; King and Thornhill 2003). Within Luhmann's approach, exchanges of information are possible, but take place only as meaningful communication between systems, and thus, the interference of any one system in the autonomous operation of another is precluded (Deflem 1998). In order to begin to understand Luhmann, we must go beyond social constructionist and even linguistic accounts of social reality "while at the same time retaining the notion of the phenomenal nature of society and the possibility that many versions of social reality may exist alongside of each other at any one time" (King and Schütz 1994: 267).

Mingers (2002: 279-280) notes further that employing autopoiesis to describe world society has “radical implications” since a closed autopoietic system does not transform inputs into outputs, as earlier systems theorists had claimed, but “instead it transforms *itself into itself*” (emphasis in original). This does not mean that society or its constituent systems are isolated since they continually adopt resources from their environment to accomplish reproduction through “structural coupling” and “perturbation”. Structural coupling is the central explanatory construct given by Maturana and Varela (1980) within autopoietic theory to describe ongoing interactions with the environment and interactivity among systems that result in, or create conditions favourable to, systemic change. Within Luhmann’s sociological theory, structural coupling between co-evolving systems denotes both coordination and co-evolution claim King and Thornhill (2003). Perturbation on the other hand literally denotes interference from an “irritation”, and according to Luhmann’s description, systemic changes depend upon such irritants being triggered from the outside world. His adoption of Spencer Brown’s (1969) laws of form also proved pivotal for analytically integrating grounded and autopoietic thinking within a single investigation, and to make new meaning from the study’s thematic findings. His code for the legal system, for example, was legal/illegal; for politics, those in power/out of power; for education, knowledge/no knowledge, or pass/failure (see also King and Thornhill 2003: 25).

In fact, Luhmann’s method of conceptually re-deploying theoretical and epistemological constructs from diverse, transdisciplinary fields proved integral to the design of the author’s study. His notion of systemic binary coding offered numerous analytical entry points, and is argued herein to offer similar potential to other grounded theorists interested in adopting autopoietic thinking. Furthermore, this construct of binary coding provides guidance for understanding whole systems without which their self-referential operations could neither function nor be fully explained. While any systemic program may change and evolve, its code remains quite constant observes Mingers (2002: 288).

Citing one of Luhmann’s (1965) earliest discussions, Verschraegen (2002: 262) observes how “sociological systems theory phrases the issue of human rights neither as an ethical question of finding fundamental principles...nor as a question of consolidating and implementing human rights law”. While no fan of Luhmann O’Byrne (2003: 43) similarly observes time spent debating “metatheoretical questions concerning the foundations of human rights in natural law...is time wasted”. Nevertheless, an explosion of monitoring, research and theorizing young people’s human rights within and across disciplines has occurred over recent decades with surprisingly few investigators traveling to United Nations sites for data collection. Due to initial comparisons of data with the theoretical literature, the author chose not to frame findings on the existence of any universalized expressions of childhood or human rights in law or the social sciences, but simply upon how one might obtain new knowledge. In addition, adoption of inductive, grounded methods proved workable in avoiding the sharper critics of Luhmann’s ontology as anti-humanist while implicitly addressing Glaser’s (2005: 119) contention that social autopoiesis may be too “complex and burdensome to understand and use”. Before presenting and discussing the study’s thematic findings, the following section notes how and where “Glaserian” grounded theory was taken up, and key arguments in the discourse about the various “right” ways to conduct grounded theory research.

Methodologically Integrating Grounded and Autopoietic Theories

Adopting inductive methods during fieldwork were first described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to lead to the “discovery of grounded theory”, a process by which data are coded, and through theoretical sampling, guide further data collection, coding, literature reviews and integration into a theoretical statement. The study was guided by the constant comparative analysis that Hallberg (2006) contends is common to all grounded theory research. Theoretical sampling took place utilizing Glaser’s ‘all is data’ invitation with policy documents, human rights and theoretical literature, in-depth interviewing, memoing, and a number of participant observations during UN human rights sessions in 2002-2004 being obtained and analyzed until theoretical saturation occurred. Applying Luhmannian constructs during the final stages of grounded coding and analysis - post core category - also fit congruently with Glaser’s criteria for judging grounded theories (see Schreiber and Stern 2001: 138; also Mitchell 2003a, b, 2005, 2007).

Initially, Glaser and Strauss (1967: 31) agreed that grounded theory studies can be presented either as “a well-codified set of propositions” or in a theoretical discussion “using conceptual categories and their properties” - a standpoint which suits the empirical claims of this paper. Most, though certainly not all, contemporary grounded theorists note how Glaser and Strauss began their work as colleagues who eventually came to disagree sharply on the canons of grounded theory (see particularly Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Glaser 1978, 1992, and 2005 for the contours of this debate). Glaser (1978, 1992) repeatedly set out to ‘correct’ errors he felt his former colleague Strauss had introduced into the methodology; authors such as Schreiber and Stern (2001) and Hallberg (2006) have closely followed the extent of these frequently heated exchanges. In a review of grounded theory educational research, Babchuk (1997) contends that Glaser’s stance is “more deeply committed to principles ...described as the qualitative paradigm” while Strauss leaned more towards the prescriptive, detailed methods in keeping with the “canons of good science.” In a rather convoluted analysis, Greckhamer and Koro-Ljungberg (2005: 729) decry “the erosion of...grounded theory” noting that “much of the current popularization of grounded theory is based upon power, privilege and authority”. However, they do not identify any potential sites where these prerequisites may be found.

Kathy Charmaz (2000) took the dichotomized nature of grounded theory debate in the 1980s and 1990s into a new dimension described as constructivist grounded theory. Nevertheless, Glaser (2002) cautions novice investigators not to let constructivist thinking “remodel grounded theory in manifest and subtle ways” (see also Glaser 2005; Schreiber and Stern 2001 for discussion). Hallberg (2006: 146) contends her views are “an approach between positivism and post-modernism. Constructivism assumes that there are multiple social realities simultaneously rather than the one and only “real reality”...She asserts that in qualitative research we have to enter the world we are studying”.

Similar to a number of grounded theorists, Krentz, Chew and Arthur (2005: 120) apparently seek to avoid these debates entirely by observing when investigators utilize grounded methods “sampling decisions are guided by the emergence of the grounded theory”. The researcher systematically and “simultaneously collects, codes and analyses the data...moving from one participant to the next while developing categories and building theory”. Greckhamer and Koro-Ljungberg (2005: 729) choose to overlook the epistemological debate as well. They do note that “grounded theory has enjoyed a prominent position in the realm of qualitative analyses methods [sic]

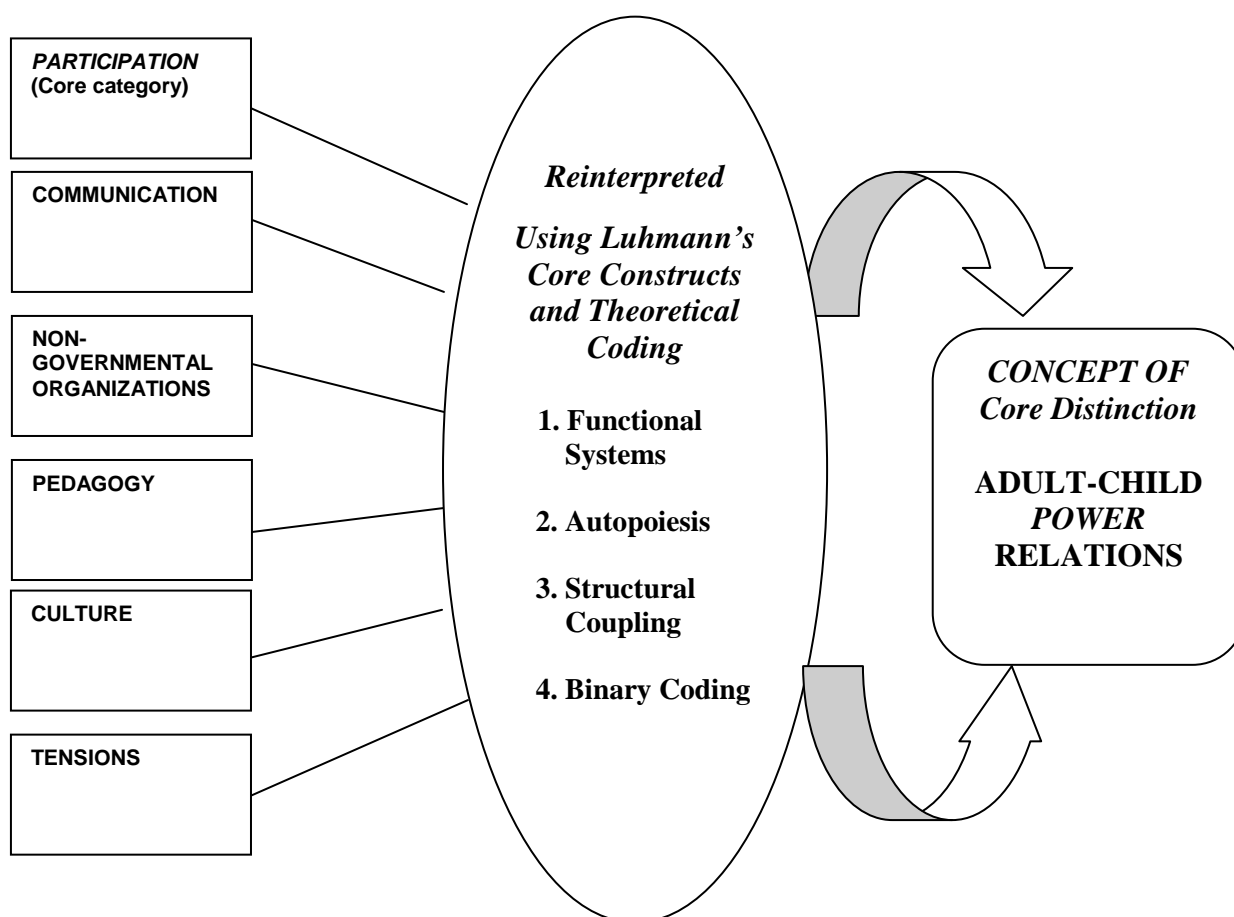
since its original inception by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and has since then been developed further”.

However, Wolcott (1994: 181) robustly criticizes all grounded theory approaches while arguing for qualitative studies to be profoundly “anticomparativist” and for novice researchers never to engage in the potentially mindless activity of simply cataloguing similarities and differences. He states his preference for case study methods, and in contrast to the “much touted ‘constant comparative method’ suggested by Glaser and Strauss, for comparison only to the count of one.” A further shortcoming within many studies is noted by Strauss and Corbin (1998b: 171-172) who contend that many grounded researchers simply do not aim to develop theory at all yet still claim to use the approach based upon constant comparison of data while overlooking better-suited alternatives. Theories, they maintain, are not discovered from pre-existing realities but are always interpretations offered from a given ontological and epistemological perspective. As such, these perspectives are always provisional though “researchers are not gods, but men and women living in certain eras...subject to current ideas and ideologies.” Like Glaser, Strauss and Corbin (1998b: 169-170) argue theories are always traceable to the data through which they arise, and “within the interactive context of data collecting and analyzing in which the analyst is also a significant interactant...grounded theories are very fluid” (see also Corbin and Strauss 1990).

Thus, within the author’s study attempts were made by the author to integrate and develop a common set of grounded procedures that drew deeply from both of the originators’ and others’ theoretical literature, but admittedly, have been primarily influenced by Glaser’s concerns. While also attempting to avoid as much of the contentious contradiction as possible, the most salient critical concerns were taken forward within the study’s design, its sampling strategies and integrated epistemology. Hence, as Glaser contends, comparative literature and policy documents were repeatedly accessed after fieldwork had begun to re-interpret coded and thematic findings. Indeed, this process of returning to the comparative literature again and again led directly to the “discovery” of Luhmannian systems analysis. This re-interpretation of human rights communications transmitted from UN policy sites to local legislative and practice arenas helped create new theoretical and applied meaning. Thus, the “grounded systems theoretical approach” argued for by the author (Mitchell 2005, 2007) integrates grounded theory coding with Luhmann’s core constructs while developing an epistemological clarity argued as lacking within many grounded studies (see Babchuk 1997; Silverman 2001 for such critiques).

Findings and Discussion from the Study

Figure 1 – Grounded Systemic Theoretical Model



By integrating grounded theory with Luhmann's binary coding the study's *core distinction* was revealed in contrast to its *core category* since each theme has the *same* underlying theoretical code - that of power/less power. This analysis expands upon a similar integration found in the social science literature described as "a grounded systems approach" (Gregory, Gibson, and Robinson 2005: 1860-1861; see also Mitchell 2005: 325).

As noted previously, by re-deploying concepts from Maturana and Varela (1980) Luhmann argued that autopoietic theorists see transformation, evolution and systemic change to involve matters of "structural coupling" and "perturbation". Since Luhmann was foremost a legal sociologist, the former is sociologically defined as "the point at which general social expectations intersect with legal expectations" (in King, 1994: 393). This analytical dimension was useful to make greater meaning of thematic categories as they emerged from participants' and investigator's observations. It became evident that new human rights structural and societal expectations are being shaped into new jurisprudence, and then autopoietically replicated, for example, when they are "reconstructed within the legal system as law. From that moment the two systems are structurally coupled by synchronisation and coevolution" observes King (1994: 394). This process appears similar to that noted

by Charmaz (2006) where it is assumed “that action and meaning are dialectical; meaning shapes action and action affects meaning” (cited in Hallberg, 2006: 146). These two systemic activities were observed frequently during fieldwork with regard to child and youth human rights education, and from the study's 50 key informant interviews conducted at UN sites in New York, Geneva, and numerous cities and towns across Canada and Scotland.

Through open and selective coding of interview data six thematic categories emerged along with a core category. As shown in Figure 1, the key importance of UN human rights *communications*; the growing influence of *non-governmental organizations* in education and monitoring of human rights; local and national *pedagogies* for all learning levels; *cultural* peculiarities with regard to both human rights and childhood; and the resultant *tensions* with others' rights were repeated themes in all forms of data. In addition, the core category of rights-based *participation* of young people in new relationships in education, politics, research and related discourses was readily observable across disciplines and cultures.

While cognizant of Glaser's argument that axial coding is “entirely unnecessary” (see Schreiber and Stern 2001: 149) the author took the additional step of binary coding to allow emergence of a theoretical code. It should be re-emphasized that epistemological arguments for the evolution of grounded theory (Greckhamer and Koro-Ljungberg 2005) may well be found within such transdisciplinary approaches that take into account sociological thinkers such as Luhmann, quantum physicists such as Nicolescu (2002), feminist scholars such as Russell (2000), or medical scientists such as Koizumi (2002) - each of whom have contributed theoretically and methodologically to this emergent, non-modernist perspective.

Once new theoretical constructs have been uncovered in the data and are built into an explanatory framework, the research moves beyond conceptual ordering to legitimate theoretical development contend Strauss and Corbin (1998b). They further emphasize that grounded theorists must take responsibility for their interpretive roles, and that building theory allows the demarcation of a well-developed set of thematic categories systematically and empirically inter-related that forms a theoretical framework. They do not believe it sufficient to simply report the viewpoints of people or organizations studied, but contend that “researchers assume the further responsibility of interpreting what is observed, heard, or read” (Strauss and Corbin 1998b: 160-161). In the original study, by integrating Luhmann's systemic coding during the final stages of grounded theoretical coding, the analysis facilitated “discovery” of a *core distinction* from its six themes. This key Luhmannian construct facilitated, and indeed completed, the integration of the two approaches and included Spencer Brown's (1969) contention that “*a form without another side dissolves...and as such it cannot be observed....This capacity for observation and for being observed is a necessary precondition for the existence of any society consisting of communications*” (Luhmann 2000 cited in King and Thornhill 2003: 14, emphasis in original).

Regarding this author's main argument for integration of systems thinking to guide theoretical coding of grounded themes, it is useful to highlight again that grounded theory coding is distinct from Luhmann's binary codes. Identification of the binary code of *those with power/those with less power* within each thematic category as the core distinction helped to clarify how it is that various systems like education, domestic and international law, and politics differentiate themselves through self-referential human rights communications. In the author's study as is the case for all grounded theory research, during fieldwork and data analysis the form taken by each thematic category was accurately observed and repeatedly described by informants

until theoretical saturation occurred. However, the core distinction, which also allows for systemic replication argued by Luhmann as a prerequisite for functional differentiation, remained hidden until theoretical coding was applied.

Attempting to circumscribe disagreements among various camps espousing grounded theory as a full-on methodology, as a set of procedures, or simply as a method, this author has re-configured some common ground amongst and between Glaser and Strauss (1967) and later developments by Strauss and Corbin (1998a, b), Charmaz (2000), and Glaser himself (1992, 2002, 2005) by using autopoiesis as a “theoretical code”. This has been identified as a “grounded systemic approach” (Mitchell 2005; also Gregory, Gibson and Robinson 2005) and includes the following core constructs.

- *Constant comparative method* of analyzing data, relevant literature and policy documents, during *theoretical sampling* as well as during all stages of in-depth interviewing, participant observations, interview coding and at all levels of analysis
- *Open, selective and (axial or) theoretical coding* of data (see also Hallberg 2006: 143 and his “fundamental characteristics”). While Glaser strenuously argues against *axial* coding, researchers may nonetheless utilize this approach to illuminate *theoretical codes* and allow a more gradual emergence of themes while avoiding forcing data into preconceived frameworks - an ongoing concern of Glaser’s (2005: 119)
- Relying on an inductive design, the author stopped short of developing a “theoretical matrix” argued for by Strauss and Corbin (1998a), and Glaser’s *theoretical coding* was applied by deploying Luhmannian constructs of *autopoietic social systems, structural coupling and perturbation*
- In addition to the grounded theory *core category*, the integration allowed a binary code - which operationally closes all systems - to emerge as the *core distinction* (see Figure 1).

Conclusions

It is useful to re-emphasize the aims of the study as well as this paper’s main argument were to discover emerging grounded theory within a substantive field of study - the international human rights legal and educational policy arenas (Mitchell 2003a, b, 2005, 2007). As Hallberg (2006: 143) observes “the constant comparative method...can be seen as the ‘core category’ of grounded theory... [and] both Glaser and Strauss talk about guidelines rather than about fixed and constant rules” which may then be adopted in a “flexible and creative way”. Using Luhmann’s closed systems criteria during selective and/or theoretical coding allows for this kind of creativity through a comparison of the core category to its core distinction, as well as for the fullest integration of two significantly different approaches to social science. For their part, Strauss and Corbin (1998a: 161) claim that selective coding is the final integration of theory within grounded studies, but similar to Glaser, they argue that validating any grounded theory is not about testing in the quantitative sense since theory emerging from data emerges as well from interpretation (see also Charmaz 2000). They contend that when theoretical integration occurs “it represents an abstract rendition of that raw data” (Strauss and Corbin 1998a: 159). Luhmann (1986) himself contends that seen from a deductive point of view his theoretical formulations “are rather fruitless” though he also believed “they have a heuristic value

because they stimulate and define the search for other possibilities” (cited in King and Thornhill 2003: 209). Critiquing Luhmann’s approach, Lechner (2000: 129) asks: “what makes world society a system?” and furthermore “how does the world, as a system, produce its own structures?”

Utilizing a secondary analysis from a 2001-2005 doctoral study (Mitchell 2003a, b, 2005, 2007), this paper argues that its “grounded systemic theoretical approach” (Mitchell 2005: 325) provides some heuristic value in answering these questions with a set of transportable constructs. Particularly in light of complaints about Luhmann’s inaccessibility, his notion of how systemic autopoiesis occurs offers a useful interpretive construct during grounded theoretical coding. It may be further argued that due to his conceptualization of “world society” Luhmann’s core constructs and systemic characteristics could potentially be applicable for innumerable grounded theory investigations occurring within local or international healthcare, educational and political arenas.

It is readily apprehended that within Niklas Luhmann’s sociological writings we have a systems theory that makes sense of both the historical and the continuing evolution of society. His theory provides both a means to analyse specific events as well as their inter-relationships. Luhmann (1997) argues that we can no longer dispute the emergence of a complex, radicalized global system and innumerable subsystems as we watch events unfold simultaneously in Buenos Aires, Baghdad, Boston, Brisbane and Bangkok on our electronic news screens. As a ceaseless feature within modern (and post-modern) society, social systems evolve in response to this complexity through both differentiation and functional specification. Based upon the study’s human rights findings, this differentiation contrasts with previously stratified forms of power wielded within tribal, ecclesiastical, feudal or monarchical societies wherein “rights as a protected sphere of individual action are unthinkable” (Luhmann 1965, translated in Graber and Teubner 1998: 64). Graber and Teubner (1998) argue further that through Luhmann’s sociological gaze we see “human rights” as individual entitlements have actually come about only through differentiated communicative systems.

King and Thornhill (2003: 44-45) note how law autopoietically serves world society through two interconnected but discrete processes: the first by new legislation within the political system and the second through reconstructing these statutes within the courts as issues of legality/illegality. In the study, this interconnectedness was readily observed through structural coupling among law, politics and education, but was most clearly observable within its thematic categories – particularly the core category (Mitchell 2005, 2007). Luhmann’s (1982) autopoietic thinking represents a new epistemology for investigating various structural or post-structural aspects of society, although admittedly, has been presented here in a rudimentary discussion. As highlighted, Luhmann’s binary codes are distinct from grounded theory procedures of open, selective, and theoretical coding adopted to discover substantive themes and their underlying conceptual properties.

Re-interpreting grounded research problems as systemic problems, and grounded research themes as systemic events allows for empirical application of Luhmann’s autopoietic social systems theory to be brought into any number of discourses. In describing the conceptual gaps for social scientists who have attempted to re-interpret Luhmann, King (1994: 394) notes that “a system is structurally coupled to its environment when it uses events in the environment as perturbations”. An example of this process is illustrated by recalling how anti-pollution measures have entered the law and ongoing scientific and technical developments. While initially outside the legal system, these measures have nonetheless facilitated

development of new regulations across most of the industrialized world. In this illustration, perturbation may be understood as a process of irritation that instigates social change while structural coupling manifests between and among clearly differentiated systems. Interpreting and applying Luhmann's core thinking allows appreciation of how "in different locations different systems are likely to enter characteristic structural couplings" (King and Thornhill 2003: 210).

In apparent support of this paper and its underlying grounded systemic approach, Glaser (2005: 12) maintains that while the substantive categories within grounded theory studies have recognizable conceptual properties and patterns, "theoretical codes" such as autopoiesis "denote abstract models, which are usually implicit in the theory, but unconsciously used, and which are seldom explicitly mentioned". While he also argues that such theoretical codes are analytically unnecessary, "a grounded theory is best when they are used" and appears "more plausible, more relevant and more enhanced when integrated and modeled by an emergent theoretical code" (Glaser *ibidem*: 14).

In light of the paper's thesis, this emergence hinged upon integrating theoretical coding with Luhmann's binary coding and the resultant theoretical code which is "seldom explicitly mentioned" within grounded theory studies was then "discovered" (Glaser 2005: 12). This integration of Luhmannian and Glaserian coding also facilitated a departure from a previous "grounded systems" social science investigation found within the reference literature (Gregory 2003; Gibson, Gregory and Robinson 2005). In contrast, after theoretically coding thematic categories this author found a new code identified as a core distinction *emerging as the same from within all themes* rather than being related to other themes in the fashion of the study's core category. This position is also wholly quite congruent with Luhmannian practices of re-deploying others' conceptual properties and his argument that systems autopoietically replicate through use of the same binary code (for further discussion see Glaser 2005: 26-27, 118-119 and comments on using autopoiesis as a theoretical code).

Within a transdisciplinary integration of grounded and autopoietic theories such as this, empirical application of social autopoiesis also represents a congruence in "fit" and "workability" for a grounded systemic approach that is posited for future application and modifiability. While numerous grounded theorists fail to fully explicate how it is that constant comparative analysis actually works, adapting Luhmann's approach to show how distinctions occur from first- and second-order observations appears as a reasonable methodological stance to take.

To Luhmann (and likely to many grounded theorists) any theory could just simply be a selective construction, but his particular construction has remained so internally closed to date that ordinary criticism has had little bearing (Lechner 2000). While Lechner castigates Luhmann for not advancing much beyond the description of functional differentiation, this author argues that such a perceived shortcoming allowed the utility of an inductive, grounded theory methodology to enter into theoretical play.

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Creating the Client Who Can Create Himself and His Own Fate – the Tragedy of the Citizens' Contract

Abstract

This article is about the emergence of new forms of active citizenry, empowerment, and self-help that meet in the so-called citizens' contract. Based on Danish social policy, the article shows how the articulation of the citizen as 'fellow citizen' has led to the current contractualization of the relationship between the administration and the individual citizen. Citizens' contracts are employed not only to commit clients to a specific behavior, but first and foremost to commit them to a particular inner dialogue about obligation and freedom. Economic assistance becomes dependent on this dialogue and they thus become contracts both between the administration and the citizens and between the citizens and their own selves. The article moves beyond the Foucault-inspired categorization by identifying the tragic consequences of these self-contracts.

Keywords

Active citizenship; Contractualism; Luhmann; Koselleck; Semantics; Governmentality

*And if society alone is responsible for the cramping of our lives,
then the protagonist must needs be so pure and faultless as to force
us to deny his validity as a character.*

Arthur Miller
"Tragedy and the Common Man"

The relationship of the citizen to the state has become increasingly contractual. Stuart White (2000), for example, has identified a tendency toward "welfare contractualism" in England and examined the conditions under which this tendency may or may not be compatible with our received notions of social rights and social citizenry. Anna Yeatman (1997, 1998) has proposed that we are seeing the emergence of "a new contractualist discourse", by which individual freedom can no longer be presupposed but must be determined specifically through contracts.

Barbara Sullivan (1997) refers to contracts as a regulative strategy, designed to promote citizens' ability to choose, be independent and self-regulating. Social services administrations in Australia, New Zealand and England write up contracts for their citizens. In England, for example, jobseeker contracts were established in the Jobseekers Act of 1995, youth crime contracts in the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act of 1999 and school-parent contracts in the School Standards and Framework Act of 1995 (Vincent-Jones 2006). There is also an increase in the use of contracts in the Scandinavian countries. Norway, for example, has introduced a comprehensive system of immigrants' contracts. Finally, over the past five years, Denmark has seen a dramatic increase in the number of citizens' contracts so that contracts between citizens and the state now include family contracts, juvenile delinquency contracts, student contracts, school-home contracts, immigrant contracts, suicide contracts, diet contracts, circumcision contracts and marriage contracts with immigrants of Muslim descent (Andersen 2003, 2004).

This article is about the emergence of these new forms of active citizenry, empowerment, and self-help, all of which meet in the citizens' contract. Based on Danish social policy, the article shows how the articulation of the citizen as 'fellow citizen' leads to the contractualization of the relationship between the administration and the individual citizen. Citizens' contracts are employed not only to commit clients to a specific behavior, but first and foremost to commit them to a particular inner dialogue about obligation and freedom. Economic assistance becomes dependent on this dialogue and they thus become contracts both between the administration and the citizens and between the citizens and their own selves.

Foucault refers to this kind of practice as "self-technology". He makes a distinction between subjugation and subjectivation in the way that the social sphere addresses an individual (Foucault 1988, 1997a; Balibar 1994). *Subjugation* occurs when an individual or a collective is proclaimed to be a subject within a specific discourse. The individual or collective is offered a specific space in the discourse that determines whether and how one can speak and act meaningfully. *Subjectivation* occurs when the individual or collective has not only been made subject but also *wishes* to be so. Subjecting, therefore, indicates the space where one *receives oneself* whereas subjectivation indicates the space where *one gives oneself to oneself* (Schmidt 1990: 101, 352).

It is precisely in this way that the social services administration invokes the client. In offering up the contract, the social services administration does not speak to the client as its subject. In offering up the citizens' contract, the client is given a choice between being the sovereign or the subject, between subjugation and subjectivation. If the client chooses to accept the contract offer, he also accepts the obligation to transform himself. The citizens' contract requires the client to not merely receive himself passively but to actively give himself to himself. It is a way of admonishing the subject to invoke itself.

Foucault describes self-technologies as technologies that allow individuals to influence operations concerning their body, soul, thoughts and way of being in order that they can *transform* themselves in the direction of achieving a particular level of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault 1997b). In other words, self-technologies are procedures that tell the individual how to define its identity, maintain it and develop it in order to meet certain goals of self-control and self-consciousness (Foucault 1997a). These technologies are designed to preoccupy the self with itself (Dean 1994, 1998; Rose 1998; Rimke 2000).

Because it is ultimately not the client, however, who seeks out the social services administration as self-service station but instead the administration that

stages the client's self-occupation through the contract technology, the social services administration is left with a fundamental problem of control. How do I as social worker interpret the client as the other? More radically: How do I as social worker interpret the other of the client?

Some of the critics of the new contractualism have tried to suggest improvements to the citizen contracts. Stuart White identifies the problems of citizens' contracts in their neo-paternalism. He finds that these contracts might be legitimate if they can be linked to a "fair reciprocity approach" (White 2000: 509, 521). Kaneshka Jayasuriya identifies the problem in the neo-liberal approach and its anti-political understanding of the nature of agency. To Jayasuriya the hope lies in a movement towards a republican model of democratic contractualism that enhances the capacity of individual participation and democratizes the structure of contractual governance (Jayasuriya 2001).

On my view, however, the problems of citizens' contracts are deeply rooted in their basic, historical formation and are not easily repairable. Foucault raises the issue of self-technology; I will focus on the history of self-contracting. This article therefore places itself in the context of a range of discursive analyses of the shift from help to self-help (Miller & McHoul 1998), active citizenry and its inherent tensions (Lister 2001; Rimke 2000), and the literature about governmentality, empowerment and self-technologies at large (Dean 1994, 1998; Cruikshank 1999: 71). But I will also move beyond Foucault-inspired categories by identifying the tragic consequences of these self-contracts. Not only do the authorities that administer social services develop expectations of the client, the structure of expectations is doubled and come to form the social services administration's expectations of the client's self-expectations. Such contractualization, I want to argue, sets a tragic process in motion that cuts through the full range of social policies: the social services administration is unable to observe and control whether the citizen has actually entered into a contract with himself and hence whether it has been observed or not. The object of steering, we might say, is not within what Derrida calls the order of visibility (1996: 90).

The tragedy can thus be characterised in rather rigorous terms. In order to enter the dialogue the citizen must commit to self-improvement. Unfortunately there is no room for improvement: in order to foster the process of self-improvement, the social policy apparatus must invalidate the very self that was to be improved. In the attempt by the social services administration to close the distance between client and social worker it undermines precisely the values it was intended to defend. In its attempt to foster equality and presence, and to establish a space of empowerment (a space that fosters the emancipation and self-development of the client's resources), values such as individuality, responsibility and self-development are eroded. The reciprocity that the contract is supposed to establish suitable conditions for becomes a one-sided project that is simply *folded* in the administration's representation of the client. Thus, the distance between client and social worker is actually increased, with the important new twist that any scruples about intervention in the intimate lives of clients are removed. The impossibility of realizing the project of shaping one's self (the client's) in terms provided by another (the social services administration) arranges the initial conditions for a process whose only final outcome can be the erasure of the client's subjectivity. In its attempt to cross the distance between them, one side is fated to deny that the distance is real, i.e., to invalidate the character on the other side.

Analytical Strategy

Since the tragedy of the client's drama seems to turn on a paradox, I take a primarily semantic approach in this article, tracing the history not of the contracts themselves but of their meaning. The focus is on the development of a conceptual reservoir and related practices. The article is influenced by the conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck and by Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems of communication. Though Luhmann is most famous for his theory of autopoietic system, he actually wrote a half dozen of books on modern semantic history. As Gibson, Gregory and Robinson have correctly noticed, I read systems theory as a pool of discursive analytical strategies rather than a grand theory (Gibson, Gregory and Robinson 2005: 4; Andersen 2003). They use this opening to establish a link between grounded theory and systems theory, which they describe as a link between the study of "everyday communication alongside an analysis of everyday social semantic" (Gibson, Gregory and Robinson 2005: 17). While I appreciate and recognize the fruitfulness of the combination they suggest, I will focus on everyday social semantics and leave the issue of everyday communication for later studies of contractual interaction. My aim here is to practice is kind of deconstructive systems theory (Andersen 2006) by employing a second-order *textual* approach. At the center of Luhmann's systems theory is the observation of observation as observation (Andersen 1999, 2003). I am not going to observe clients or citizens. I am going to observe the way social policy and the social services administration observe clients and citizens, and the way in which the contract might become the form through which observation takes place.

Luhmann defines observation as an indication within the framework of a difference. All observations operate by means of a difference. When an observation attaches itself to something in the world, a distinction is drawn between this "something" and everything else. That which the observer sees only becomes indicated and visible through the observation's relationship to that which it is distinguished from. That means that it is the difference that comes to indicate how observation takes place. A citizen, for example, is not simply a citizen, but always a citizen to an observer, and the way in which a citizen becomes visible in an observation depends on the difference in operation.

The point is that every observation is an operation, drawing a distinction which at the same time remains invisible to the observation itself. The observation always indicates one side of this distinction and leaves the other side unmarked, although it still guides the observation. The distinction defines both the gaze and the blind spot of the observation. With reference to Spencer-Brown, Luhmann refers to the inside of the difference as the indicated side (m) and the outside of the difference as the non-indicated side (Spencer-Brown 1969). The blind spot constitutes the very unity of the difference, which both separates the two sides and holds them together in one difference. This is called the form of difference:

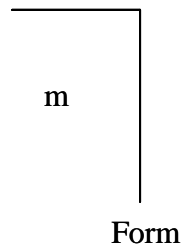


Figure 1 Calculus of form

A difference can be folded and thereby become a part of itself. Luhmann and Spencer-Brown call this moment “re-entry”, when a difference is sometimes copied and reintroduced in the space as created by the difference itself (Spencer-Brown 1969: 69–76). A reintroduced difference is a difference that occurs in the space created by the difference (Luhmann 1993a: 484). This is the Luhmannian way of describing the infinity of a discourse. A reentry always constructs some kind of paradox because the difference appearing in the space is both the same and distinct from the difference making the space. Identifying and specifying re-entries plays an important role in the kind of second order analysis I employ here because they indicate the formal properties of the discursive machinery that guides communication. A re-entry can be illustrated like this:

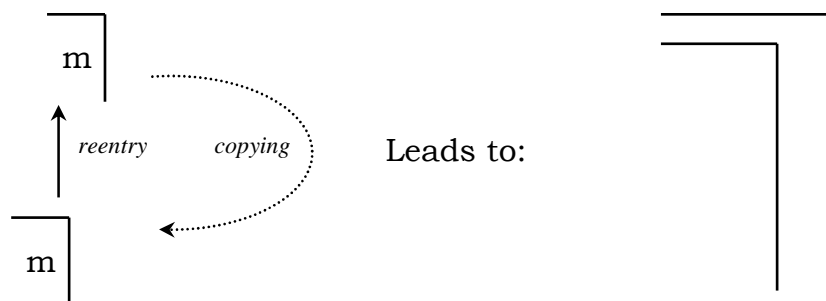


Figure 2 Reentry

Operating differences can be traced to conceptual distinctions; the former are fixed and condensed instances of the latter. Luhmann distinguishes between a system of communication and semantics. Semantics are defined as special structures that connect communication with communication by providing different forms of meaning, which the system of communication treats as worthy of preservation (Luhmann 1995: 282). Semantics are the reserve of generalized forms of differences (concepts, ideas, images, symbols, and so forth) which can be used in the selection of meaning in the systems of communication. Semantics are, in other words, condensed and replicable forms of meaning available to communication. These generalized forms of meaning are relatively independent of the situation and obtain their concrete content in the communication that selects them (Luhmann 1993b: 9–72).

A concept *condenses* a multiplicity of expectations to form semantic reservoirs, which are then made available to communication and can be identified by semantic analysis. Concepts, however, are never unambiguously definable. If we are told that someone is a social worker, it immediately creates a horizon of different expectations, such as for example “s/he categorizes people”, “s/he is probably a liberal”, “s/he is social and caring”, “s/he smokes a pipe”, “s/he removes children from their homes”. A concept thus structures expectation. Using a specific concept in specific communication activates specific expectations. These expectations, condensed by concepts, are the *meaning* of the communication. The multiplicity of meaning always becomes fixed in the form of concepts by the difference between concept and counterconcept:

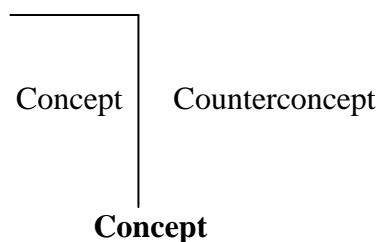


Figure 3 The concept of concept

There cannot be a concept without a counter-concept to keep the concept in its place (Koselleck 2004: 155-192; Luhmann 1991:15-17). The counter-concept defines restrictions for the concept. A social worker, for example, is only a social worker in relation to a client, and what can be expected of a social worker therefore depends entirely on the expectations that attach to the counter-concept of client. The struggle over the meaning of “social worker” takes place in the description of clients and the expectations that are attached to them. The range of possible descriptions is condensed in the concept of client, who may be “self-reliant, active and independent” or “dependent, helpless and weak”.

The semantic analysis asks, how are meaning and expectations formed and how are these condensed and generalized into concepts, which then establish a semantic reservoir for systems of communication? This includes the question of how concepts are displaced so that they might be given new counter-concepts or that counter-concepts become counter-concepts to new concepts or a counter-concept becomes unspecified, occasioning a struggle to fill it out. We are here studying concrete operations of distinctions and how they build particular horizons of expectations.

In short, if we want to understand how meaning is created, stabilized and condensed in the form of new concepts, we must trace the shifts in the concepts and their relations, including the replacement of the concepts’ counter-concepts. That means that I am going to focus on the conceptual distinctions through which social policy observes and the effect of these on the view of the client (Luhmann 1993b; Andersen 2003; Koselleck 1985). And it also includes how distinctions between concept and counter-concept might be re-entered and become a part of their own whole establishing a particular logic of paradoxical communication (Luhmann 1999).

The archive for this analysis consists of 500 so-called reflexive texts, that is, texts that discuss practice and conditions for practice as opposed to case documents, decisions, etc. The reflexive texts have been chosen because the nurturing focus of their semantic content makes them a comparatively richer material for analysis. I have looked through all issues of the journal *Socialrådgiveren* (The Social Worker) from 1980 until today and approximately 300 articles have been read closely, mapping distinctions that make the client observable in communication. In addition, I have systematically gone through various more theoretical journals in the field from the same period, reports and draft Bills, not only from social policy in a more restricted sense but also employment policy, the annual reports from the association of social services executives in Denmark from 1980 until today and other publications from that organization. I have also included different social-policy textbooks and debate contributions. Moreover, I have tried to locate different concepts used in plans of action and contracts including the standards that different institutions have sought to establish.

The history of the notion of client

1980-1983: Individual assessment of needs

It is useful to review the history of citizens' contracts in Denmark. The period 1980-1983 is largely focused on the issue of case consideration, of mediating between law and judgment, between the generalized client and the singular complexity of the individual case. Throughout this period, the agenda is dominated by the question of how the social services administration may differentiate its services so that they remain sensitive to the individual case, the individual family, or the individual client without decreasing public legal security and abolishing the calculability of the services. The client's self-relation, however, is not on the agenda. The individualization of help is merely an attempt to make the social services administration more sensitive to individual variables.

Anna Koch's book *Socialt arbejde – helhedsprincip og behovsvurdering på fagligt grundlag* ("Social Work – the holistic principle and needs assessment on a professional basis") represents a good example of this debate. The book is a monument in Danish social policy and was for a long period of time required reading at the different schools of social work. The book focuses on the registration of insecurity among social workers with respect to the concepts "the holistic principle" and "needs assessment" and seeks to define these concepts and their impact on the relationship between law and judgment. The book distinguishes between two approaches to social services administration: the legal approach, which concerns the equal treatment of clients in accordance with the law, and the professional approach, which is based on requirements from the Social Security Act about individualization and a holistic approach. The holistic principle is defined by Anne Kock as the act not only of observing the client but of observing client and context as a unified whole, which means localizing factors in the environment that relate to the client's problem (whether the client is an individual or a family). The needs assessment, therefore, has to be an assessment of the need-as-part-of-a-whole and can never be general, but has to be specific and sensitive to the complexity of the individual case. Anna Koch identifies certain assumptions behind the latter approach. These are:

1. The social worker is confident that the services have an effect because he or she knows from experience that doing something together with people leads to development.
2. It is presupposed that the client has an interest in changing his or her situation.
3. It is presupposed that social work represents an actual alternative for the client.
4. It is presupposed that the client accepts working to achieve the chosen changes (Koch 1982:21)

This establishes a clear distinction between social worker and client. It is the social worker who helps and the client who needs help. However, the difference is not defined so straightforwardly that it is merely a difference between the active and the passive person, between the one giving and the one receiving. The recipient must be willing to receive and to work independently with the help provided. It is required, in other words, that the client *actively receives* help. Therefore, the client's self-relation becomes relevant to the social services administration in the sense that the client has to want to be helped. Motivation means to approach the social worker with a willingness to receive help.

1983-1989: Privatization of responsibility

In 1982, the non-socialist parties formed a new conservative government in Denmark. This happened concurrently with the emergence of the discourse on New Public Management in Denmark (Andersen 1995). The boundary between administration and citizen became a topic for discussion at, to take one example, a conference that sought new "ideas for self-regulatory mechanisms", organized by the Ministry of Finance in 1985.

In an interview in *Socialrådgiveren* in 1983, conservative Minister of Finance, Palle Simonsen, said,

No matter how expansive we make the social budgets, we will never be able to solve all social problems. No one can solve all social problems. Instead, the goal must be to try to get people to show a little more interest in one another and to realize that not all problems can be solved by the Department of Social Services

(...) To a large degree, privatization is also about the effort to do something for oneself or one's group. (*Socialrådgiveren* 1983a: 4-5)

In a subsequent article, he writes that "we have to review the tendency by the State to always choose demeaning institutional solutions instead of self-administration" (Simonsen 1989: 256).

Hardly anyone involved in social work in the mid 1980s supports the notion of privatization of responsibility. Many see the statements as a "hidden measure to cut back social services and to re-privatize social misery" (*Socialrådgiveren* 1983b: 15). The forceful rejection can be seen in the context of attempts to formulate a new ideal for social policy, whose concept of the individual and the client are antagonistically opposed to the ideal of the privatization of responsibility. What the social workers want to put on the agenda is the individual-in-the-local-community.

The alternative “individual-in-the-community” discourse finds expression in an editorial in the journal *Socialrådgiveren*:

On a local level we have to increase user-influence and strengthen the sense of collective responsibility, and we have to decrease the current individualization of social responsibilities. (...) We have to generally ensure popular involvement in social work. Users, residents’ associations and unions ought to participate in the local administration of social work in the same way that they participate in general debates about social policies. (...) We need to see new initiatives in social work aiming at increased user-influence and self-organization, reconstruction of social networks, establishment of mutual solidarity in residential environments, families etc. – with the support of municipal associations, the unions, companies, general medical practices, residents’ associations, etc. (*Socialrådgiveren* 1984:13)

Karin Holland, associate professor at the College for Social Work says:

When people’s environment and resources fall apart, it does not help for the state to offer support to the individual client – the goal must be to reconstruct the environment or to find new ones. The goal is to enable people to act together and to strengthen their right to impact their own lives and the societal debate (...) The clients are not disempowered because of the social system but because they have been placed outside society and have been pushed into the social system (...) But we have to empower the clients and give them an identity as citizens, both locally and in society at large, and ensure their ability to influence their own lives, residential environment, local politics, etc. (and also specific policies/social work). (*Socialrådgiveren* 1986: 12-13)

This discursive outline in the two quotations has its origin in the following perspective: an individual is nothing in itself. Part of making decisions with respect to one’s own life is to have an influence on the community, which forms the background of one’s life. Identity can only be obtained as part of a collective whole, which can be the local community, one’s residence, a people or simply society. Such entities represent cosmologies and outside them one does not exist. Outside them is disempowerment. That is why the privatization of responsibility as suggested by Palle Simonsen, a conservative member of parliament, is unacceptable. To him, the individual is already independent and determined. It already has a self outside the collective to which one might appeal. In the above quote from Karin Holland and the editorial in *Socialrådgiveren*, on the other hand, the client does not own himself until the self is mediated through a collective. The client’s problems cannot be solved without the creation of a collective will, which the client can then assume. The client does not come into his own until he has been constituted as political subject, which actively takes possession of his environment together with other subjects.

1989 until today: The empowerment of the individual self

From around 1989, we can see another shift in the question of the self. The self-relation of the self is put on the agenda as the central concern of social policy. It seemingly begins as a questioning of the relations of power between social worker and client. Social worker Annette Andersen writes in *Socialrådgiveren*:

As social workers we have to be careful not to exercise the relations of power between social worker and client to the extent that the clients become **too** dependent on us (...) Therefore, as a profession, we must seek to use the power we have to liberate the clients from their dependence on us and the system so that they can become better equipped to work independently – have the right to make their own choices. (*Socialrådgiveren* 1989a: 4-5)

Similarly. Eva Gailhed writes:

Power should not lead to disempowerment, but to the opposite, empowerment. It should be used to set someone free from dependence on the social worker, on the system. Therefore, the social worker has to strengthen the client's self-esteem, sense of responsibility, active participation and independent action. (*Socialrådgiveren* 1989c:19)

It is a specific set of concepts and counterconcepts which we see in these quotes. I have tried to summarize the discussion's conceptual/counterconceptual pairs in the following figure:

<u>Concept</u>	<u>Counterconcept</u>
•Respect	•Saving the client
•The client's own problem	•The God syndrome
•Stimulate the curiosity of the client	•The passive role as recipient makes people dull
•Inquire into different possibilities	•Creates more clients
•Allow the client to introduce ideas	•Stigmatizing
•Processes of change	•Power relations are a reality
•Work with the client	•Work for the client
•Liberate the client from their dependence on us	•The overall situation of the client
•The client's self-respect	•Disempowerment
•The client's self-responsibility	
•The client's own active initiative and contribution	
•Room for the process	
•Involvement	
•Empowerment	
•Transparency of power	
•Independence is rewarded	

Figure 4

One of the issues here is the fact that power as such is seen as an impediment to providing help. Power encumbers the active, self-reliant and involved client. Power produces dependence instead of independence. Therefore, power has to be made transparent in order to be proscribed or at least restricted. When we look at the above quotes and the ones to come, asking from where power becomes visible and from where the responsibility of the client becomes visible, the answer is from power itself. The difference between power and non-power, between regulator and regulated re-enters into itself in such a way that what is to be regulated is the self-

regulation of the regulated person. The form of power becomes the power over the client's power relation with himself. The objective of power becomes the maximization of the client's power over himself. The more the client is in control of himself, the more content and purpose is potentially available to the conversation with the client. What has really happened is an articulation of the fact that the power of social policy ends with the client's power over himself. Power is made at once visible and invisible by the same operation of distinction. How does that happen? It has been decided by social policy that the client is to make independent decisions. It is the responsibility of social policy that the client assumes responsibility for his own situation. It is the will of social policy that the client wants to make something of himself. But only the client side is indicated in the observation of social policy. What we can observe is a peculiar privatization of power, where the public administration alone is able to observe whether the client is empowered or powerless and where it is up to the client to prove his empowerment through public self-presentation.

Barbara Cruikshank provides a thorough description of this doubling of power in her book about the will to empower, which comprises a critical and clearheaded study of empowerment in liberal feminist movements as well as in conservative groups who fight poverty in the US. She shows how the empowerment figures create a focus on the lack of self-esteem and on the way power is exercised by the disempowered against themselves. The precondition, she argues, is the establishment of a way of seeing that divides the world into the empowered and the disempowered. The empowered clients can only be produced on the basis of the disempowered client (Cruikshank 1999:71). In other words, social policies have to first produce the clients as disempowered before they can become empowered, i.e., become people who take responsibility for themselves. Thus it is a double fabrication. Both empowered and disempowered clients are produced but this fact remains invisible to social policies. To them, clients are simply disempowered, tied up in relations of dependency and without initiative.

However, it is not only power that is a problem to power. Help in certain forms can obstruct itself and turn into non-help. The difference between help and non-help is re-entered, which allows for a number of forms of help to become articulated as non-help.

The holistic perspective, for example, is no longer seen as help because it defines the social worker as the observer and the client as a mere object. Instead, it is now referred to as a shared perspective. Thomas Thomsen says:

A shared perspective would be a true and honest name for the social worker's most important activity in the encounter with the client. (...) We see together with the client (...) A shared perspective is a binding and engaging activity for the social worker and it transforms the client into an equal if not leading partner in the establishing of such a shared perspective. (*Socialrådgiveren* 1992b: 12)

Even the concept of "social worker" is defined as a counter-concept and becomes the expression of non-help:

We have to challenge the function of social worker. Stop being social workers. The very concept is problematic because it implies that only one person acts. And that someone else is acted upon and hence pacified. The concept of social worker is void of mindful content. (*Socialrådgiveren* 1990:11)

All passive means, including the different forms of help presented by Anna Kock in the beginning of the 1980s, are defined as help that represents non-help. Only active and engaged means really work as help:

If we want to turn passive means into active means – then we have to first turn passive clients into active clients. This is done through the recreation of self-esteem and self-respect. Then the motivation will originate in the client. (*Socialrådgiveren* 1992b: 7-9)

Or in the words of former Minister for Social Affairs, Karen Jespersen: “Today the issue is largely (...) to have faith in one’s abilities, power to act and ability to partake in the community, or in what has been called “the inner welfare” (Jespersen 2000: 17). True help is based on recreation of self-esteem, creating spaces within which the client is able to independently formulate problems and mobilize influence.

This self-help figure leads to a displacement of the reciprocal ranking of the semantic dimensions. This can be seen by the fact that problems are transferred from a factual dimension to a time dimension where they are referred to as personal development and growth. It also means that diagnosing becomes proceduralized. This is an exceedingly sophisticated displacement of the communication of help.

What we are able to observe is a doubling of needs for help into needs of a first and second order respectively. First order needs are needs for help that offer a remedy to a problem. This could be the need for assistance and appliances in the home, the need for relief, the need for placement in a rehabilitation clinic, the need for home care, etc. This is first-order social policy. Second-order needs for help diagnose the self-relation of the self as a problem. These problems include the lack of responsibility for oneself, the lack of motivation and the lack of responsibility towards one’s family. On one hand, the client is invited to be the co-author and co-negotiator of his own problems. On the other hand, this is no longer where the problem is. The second-order problem is the client’s difficulty relating to his own problem. If the client is able to articulate his own problem so that the social worker recognizes the problem as a particular need for help, then the client does not have a second-order need for help. The “real” needs for help are comprised solely by the second-order needs, because if the client did not have a problem with his self-relation he would already, on his own initiative, have solved the first-order need or been in the process of solving it.

Historical Conclusions

From 1980 until today, we have moved from the individual assessment of needs via collective empowerment to the empowerment of the individual, from the self being relevant only as the active recipient of help via the self as collectively mediated to the self-relation of the self as the overriding theme and from first-order needs for help to second-order needs for help with respect to the creation of the self who is able to be self-reliant:

Period	1980-1983	1983-1989	1989-2002
Form of problem	Problem-intervention	Mastering of environment	Self-mastering
Agenda	Individual assessment of needs, judgment and comprehensive perspective	Privatization of responsibility vs. the collectivization of the local	Empowerment of the individual self
Self-relevance	Active reception	Individual-in-collective	The-self-in-relation-to-itself
Help	First-order help	First-order help	Second-order help

Figure 5

In the first period, a distinction is drawn between two forms of problem ascription: Problems can either be self-inflicted effects of a chosen fate or the self of the client is itself an effect of its fate, whether the client's background, class or social conditions in the widest sense came to decide his fate. No matter what, the problem is not the client's self. The self represents an external circumstance in relation to the problem.

In the second period, there is the same distinction; however, a new distinction is introduced so that one's fate can be defined as self-created but where the client is still not seen as being in control of the consequences of the chosen fate. Someone may choose an education to become a typographer, but this does not prevent them from being unemployed or a welfare recipient.

The issue looks radically different in the third period. Now, the social services department defines the problem as the very self, and the problem is a question of creating the self that is able to self-create, that can create its own fate. Or we could say that the problem is how to create the self that is able to make itself responsible for its own fate. Everything is about the self-relation of the self in the third period. There are no external references that do not at the same time concern the self's self-relation. The outer side is an unmarked space. However, we might ask whether the unmarked space is not precisely the space that the motivation-based strategy makes available to the economic strategy and which can be filled by a fate for the self that has been sanctioned by the social policy if the attempt to establish a self-responsible self fails. The movement might be formalized like this:

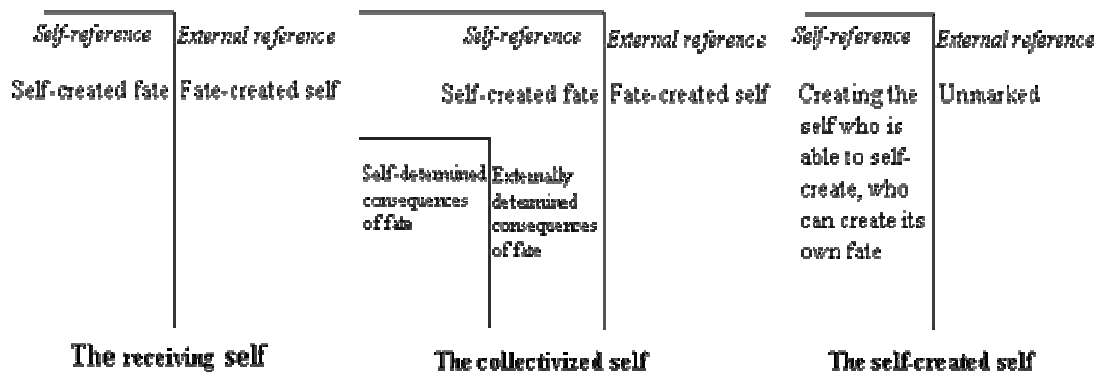


Figure 6 Problem ascription and the self of the client

From plan of action to citizens' contract

The new figure of empowerment about the self-created self established a focus on new tools and on the modification of old tools to fit new problems. I am going to focus on a single tool: the action plan. I am going to show the way that plans of action are gradually recreated as citizens' contracts and are seen as a solution to the problem of how to create self-responsible, motivated, active and self-empowered clients.

The return of the plan of action as plan

Plans of action in the social services field date back to the 1960s, however, from the late 1980s they receive renewed interest. One example from 1989 concerns the placement of children and adolescents outside their homes:

On an experimental basis, the municipality of Copenhagen is to work out a "social plan of action" in relation to the placement of children and adolescents outside their home. (...) All caseworkers in Copenhagen have to fill out a form called "social plan of action". The form is to be signed by the caseworker and group leader after discussions with both parents and child if the child is over 12 years old and the family's attitude towards the plan of action is to be noted on the form. On this basis, it will be possible to reach a decision concerning placement with or without the consent of the parents. The plan of action is followed up with new discussions every six months. (*Socialrådgiveren* 1989b: 6)

This is clearly a traditional approach to the plan of action. It is a plan for action in the social services administration concerning children and adolescents and their possible removal from their home. As a plan it decides on premises for future decisions in the social services administration regarding the fate of the children and parents. The plan is, in other words, a decision proposal for the social services administration which has to comprise certain obligatory elements such as, for example, a short description of the reason(s) for placement, previously implemented aid provisions, the expected duration of the placement and expected support provisions for the child during the placement.

The proceduralization and dialogization of the plans of action

In the 1990s, dialogical elements increasingly become more prevalent in the design and practice of plans of action. As part of the jobservice, for example, it is said that “through a professional approach to guidance, interviews about plans of action and other mobilization interviews can become one among a number of development interviews which people are exposed to/given the opportunity to take in their life” (*Socialrådgiveren* 1999: 11) Social worker John Nielsen sees these plans of action as “an instrument, which is designed to establish a certain level of *compulsory dialogue* between parents and the administration which can have a positive impact for the so-called yo-yo kids” (*Socialrådgiveren* 1991b: 7, my italicizations).

The conversation with the client becomes increasingly more important and the plan of action is seen as a tool to enforce the conversation. However, the conversation is not a goal in itself. The conversation is beginning to be considered a means to stage the clients’ articulation of their self-relation. For example, social workers Per Hansen and Poul Nielsen write:

The working methods employed consisted of a long and thorough conversation at the first contact. The conversation was unconventional because it took as its starting point questions of quality of life and the desire and need of the participants to change their lives. Subsequently, plans of action were worked out together with the participants. The rehabilitation provisions in these plans were on different levels.” (*Socialrådgiveren* 1991a: 8)

Plans of action no longer constitute a plan for ways in which social workers can act on their client’s problem. The plan of action is a procedural and dialogical tool that helps the clients establish a distance to themselves, articulate themselves and act on themselves (Born & Jensen 2001; Olesen 2001). The social worker has become displaced as someone who mediates the client’s relating to himself and his problems. The social worker initiates the staging of the relation client-problem-action.

The reconstruction of the plan of action as contract

Finally the plans of action are transformed into contracts. The notion of plan of action is replaced by the notion of contract. A contractual semantic that comprises concepts like agreement, breach of agreement and voluntary contractual agreements emerges. It is no longer simply a question of informed consent but of signing a contract with mutual obligations.

In the book *I have plans, or do I? – Social plans of action and practice*, Bertil Michael Mahs (2002) writes:

One important purpose of working with plans of action is to actively include the citizen in his possibilities and to assume responsibility for his choices. Ideally, the plan of action constitutes an agreement and to a certain extent even a contract with the user. A contract in which administration and citizen together express agreement about the social problem, its origin and extent and specifies measures which may solve or restrict the problems. (p. 13)

However, it is not a standard contract since the aim from the perspective of the administration is to empower the citizen with respect to his own situation, to actively include the citizen in his possibilities. The administration wants the citizen to want something for himself.

Knud Ramian and Erik Adolph (Ramian & Adolph 2002) suggest a tool that they refer to as “the personal plan”:

The personal plan is the individual person’s reflection of his life and answers to questions such as: what is important and not important in the present situation? What things do I wish or not wish to change and how? Agreements in the personal plan are with no one but oneself. (pp. 17-18)

Ramian and Adolph’s suggestion is that the administration or others have to help the client in developing a plan for himself in order to give him a space from which he can relate to the administration. Such a plan is an agreement – not with the administration but with the citizen himself. It is a self-contract about one’s ambitions with one’s life.

Social worker Britta Lissner has this view of citizens’ contracts:

The use of contractual ideas in relation to agreements is something I have been interested in as a way to increase the client’s ability to look after his own interests in the system. It is based on a recognition of the fact that the interests of the administration and the client are not necessarily identical and that the relationship requires careful negotiations: this is my position – what is yours? Where and about what are we able to meet? (*Socialrådgiveren* 1994: 4-5)

The administration does not enter into a contract with another legal entity, a *bonus pater* with own interests and a certain level of rationality. The administration enters into a contract with a client all the while relying on the client to realize himself in the contract negotiations as the representative of own interest and hence take control of his own life. The contract is a tool for the creation and realization of difference of interest.

The municipality of Frederikshavn writes:

Words such as caseworker and clients have disappeared. Now everyone is an employee, employed in a shared workplace, the activation department. The former clients are asked: What are your abilities and what do you want? Once they have answered those questions, they are employed, and if they do not observe a contractual agreement, they get a cut in pay. The social workers no longer want to steal the clients’ problems – the clients have to take responsibility for their own lives. But being tough is not easy, it is often easier to say yes than to say no. (*Socialrådgiveren* 1992a: 3)

The contract is an educational tool used to impress responsibility and the ability to live within one’s means. The cut in pay is symbolic, which is emphasized by the fact that “being tough is not easy”. It almost hurts the social worker to have to cut the “employee’s” pay. The pay is not withheld because the administration did not get anything in return for its money. But in order not to “steal the clients’ problems”, the administration cannot simply continue to pay the client. The cut in benefits is meant to benefit the client. It is really a way of respecting him.

In the municipality of Karlebo contracts with citizens are discussed in this way:

We want to reserve the possibility of withholding some of the welfare payments for families with criminal children. We might write it into the contract that the child in question is to stay away from public spaces after 10 pm. If the family is unable to observe such a simple and sensible rule, we might cut their welfare payments (...) A family contract might include

stipulations saying that the family has to share at least one meal a day and discuss the events of the day. Their responsibility is to talk about what the child is doing. That would help them regain their sense of parenthood. (*Jyllandsposten* 1992b: 2)

The municipality of Vojens has developed a tool called “family contracts”. Leif Petersen, psychologist and administrative director in the municipality of Vojens makes the following argument in favor of using family contracts:

We are dealing with a group of people where there is usually issues of alcohol abuse, unemployment, low level of education and changing partners. Often there is violence in the home and the children witness a lot of moving in and out of the home. The result is single mothers. Now we are able to seriously tell these mothers that it is their duty to change their lives. (...) Parents are required to sign a written psychological contract, which could include many different things such as requirements about drug abuse treatment, requirements for the person to find a job or accept job training or a declaration saying that the person will not become involved with another man until she is in control of her children. Another requirement can be for the woman to have a contraceptive ampoule implanted which ensures contraception for several years, says Leif Petersen who has experienced a number of mothers who, in his opinion, would have been in a better situation if they had not had their third or fourth child. If clients are unwilling to accept a contractual agreement, the social services department takes a tougher line – Our fuse becomes very short and that could mean that the children are removed from the home, says Leif Petersen. (*Jydske Vestkysten* 2001)

The vice mayor of Vojens at the time, Hans Christian Schmidt, explains it as follows to the magazine *Socialrådgiveren*:

These are voluntary contracts, and therefore they can be terminated immediately and without consequences (...) The purpose of the contracts is to gain control of one’s life. (...) And we become rather personal when the contract includes demands about not having too many changing partners. But we do it to help the children. Too much change is not good for the children. Everybody who works in social work knows this or they walk through life blindfolded. (*Socialrådgiveren* 2001: 3)

In the same article, Leif Petersen, the administrative director says:

Obviously we need to observe the service act which means that there will never be simplified messages such as: now that you have become pregnant despite our agreement that you would not get pregnant, we will remove your children. We will always establish a comprehensive judgment of the situation of the children and of the family. But if the contract is breached, the client is on the way towards disqualification. (*Socialrådgiveren* 2001: 3)

However, according to Tove Sunddal, leading caseworker in Vojens, a breach of contract could mean that the children are placed outside the home (*Berlingske Tidende* 2002).

As these quotes make very clear, it is an unusual concept of contract that we are dealing with in Vojens: they are claimed to be “voluntary contracts”, yet failure to sign them could have consequences. The contracts are claimed to contain “no sanctions” and it is said that they can be cancelled immediately immediately “without

consequences”, yet any breach of contract means that the person is “on the way towards disqualification”. We are clearly dealing with a case of institutionalized double talk.

Conclusion on the dislocation of plan

Thus, at the same time as problems come to revolve around the self-relation of the self, we can also observe a contractualization of the relationship between administration and client. First, plans of action are given meaning simply as plans. Plans of action are created as a *plan for* how the social worker might *act* in response to the client’s problem. Thus, plan of action refers back to dichotomies between problem/solution, social worker/client, subject/object, etc., that is, first-order needs for help. Subsequently, plans of action are displaced so that the focus becomes the way in which they are used to organize dialogue. The procedural elements become more important than the purely substantial ones and the plans of action start to be given the characteristics of agreement. Finally a new tool called citizens’ contracts emerges as an independent structure, established precisely as a contract between the social services department and the citizen. These contracts are designed to support the client’s creation of a self. This movement is summarized in the following table:

Plan of action	Plan of action with informed consent	Citizens’ contract
The plan of action is a plan, which means that it defines the premises for future action taken by the social services department in response to the client.	The plan of action is still a plan but the process of planning becomes dialogized and proceduralized, partly in order to create a greater degree of responsibility in the administration in relation to the individual client’s wishes and needs and partly in relation to the communication of knowledge and to create reconciliation between knowledge and feelings in the client.	The citizens’ contract represents a mutual obligation between administration and client about the client’s responsibilities in relation to himself, including commitments toward self-development and taking responsibility. The contract does not primarily create a commitment toward an exchange between the parties of the contract but rather toward a specific personal image of the future. In that way the contract is about the commitment to commit oneself. It is a commitment toward development
The action taken by the administration in response to the client.	The action taken by the administration in response to the client’s action in relation to himself.	The administration responds to the client’s self-commitment toward the definition of goals for self-development and to reflect and act in relation to these goals.

Figure 7

The tragedy of the citizens' contract

But what is a contract and what are the special characteristics of the citizens' contracts? Niklas Luhmann proposes the observation of modern contracts as a particular form of communication, operating with the distinction obligation/freedom (Luhmann 1981:250). A contract represents the unity of the distinction obligation/freedom. What is particular about this form of communication is that it only operates on the inner side of the form. Contract communication is about the specification of mutual obligations but it presupposes the freedom to become obligated on the part of the participants to communication. Freedom is always located outside of communication and as an "outside" it constitutes the possibility for the continuation of communication. We may formalize the form of contract like this:

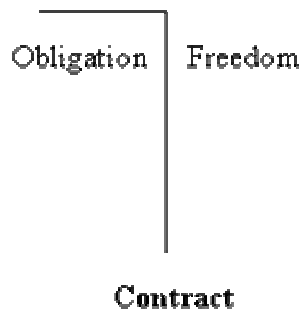


Figure 8

Citizens' contracts, however, constitute a slightly different form. They do not presuppose the freedom of the client. The client's freedom as the ability to take on obligation is precisely what the administration seeks to create by means of the contracts. What it hopes to achieve is a situation in which the client, once the one-sided statement is replaced by the mutual form of the contract and the subject is invoked to voluntary commitment, realizes and recognizes himself as free. The obligation, which the social services administration seeks to concretize through citizens' contracts, is the clients' obligation to act as if they were free, wanting freedom and to be responsible for their freedom. It is about the obligation to commit oneself, to give oneself to oneself as free. The form of the citizens' contract becomes rather paradoxical. It requires that freedom be reentered as obligation, but it has to at the same time presuppose freedom because otherwise there could not be any obligation towards freedom. What is an unmarked but absolutely necessary precondition for contracting is attempted to be given a public form addressed as a floating and mediated object for contractual negotiations. Freedom as the universal other side of obligation in the form of contract is becoming a negotiable particularity in the citizen contract and the universal quality of freedom is therefore polluted. That can be summed up like this (Andersen 2004):

The social contract

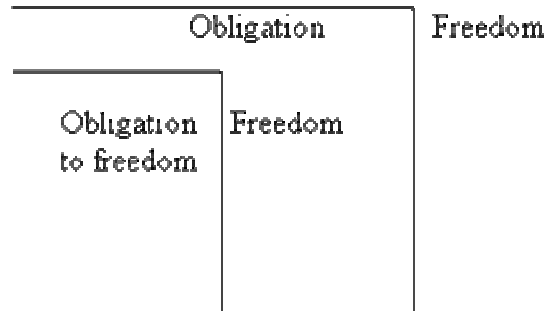
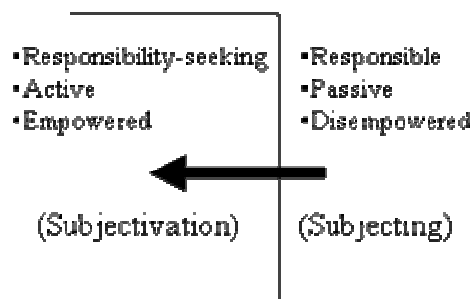


Figure 9

Citizens' contracts seem to continually create and deconstruct themselves with respect to their characteristics as contract. The form of the citizens' contract seems to suggest that administration and citizen must recognize each other as equal parties to a negotiation, while at the same time suggesting that the administration is the only free participant in it. One might be tempted to say that the client is presumed to be unable to fulfill a promise, but the point is that they are observed as not even being capable of making a promise because of their lack of capacity to represent themselves and their inner will. With its stipulation about focusing on the effort to liberate the client, only the administration acknowledges itself as free while the client is observed as being not yet free, not yet responsible, not yet capable of making a promise. The administration's promise of reciprocity is at once made and withdrawn as the administration reserves for itself the right to decide when the client appears free/not yet free. The contract is at once created and cancelled.

In this way the contract is an obligation towards a specific form of freedom for the client. The contract is an obligation to translate obligation into freedom through the act of relating to oneself as free.

The citizens' contract can be described as a self-technology through which the already invoked client is able to transform himself from responsible to responsibility-seeking, which means that the client puts his own development on the agenda and takes responsibility for it. Here, the individual becomes a "client-for-self-development-and-for-independently-chosen-freedom". The transformational character of the citizens' contract can be illustrated like this:



The transformational form of the social contract

Figure 10

The citizens' contract establishes *self-occupation* since what is put into contract is the self-relation of the client. The contract concerns the development of the client whether with respect to making sure that the children go to school in the morning, that the family shares meals, that one learns to get up in the morning and attend job training in a workshop or that one establishes a goal to complete a formal qualifying education. The content becomes self-occupation through the staging of a dialogical negotiation in which the client is invited to bring himself into play vis-à-vis the social services administration. In these negotiations, singular themes can be linked to a common chain so that the willingness to get up in the morning can be linked to the possibility for interesting job-training, where the ability to present one's history as a CV story is linked to a definition of a possible future education, where personal hygiene and disease prevention is linked to questions about the ability to function as mother, and where the ability to get one's children to school on time becomes linked to a possible cut in benefits. The emphasis put on the time dimension in the citizens' contracts, on the client as projected into the future, ensures the continuity of the self-occupation. The dialogue about the client's self-relation does not end with the signing of the contract, however, once the contract has been signed, a direction has been given and status interviews will follow - a contractual aftermath.

Final Conclusion

The entire practice of citizens' contracts, then, is tragic in its basic construction. The problem is that the object of steering is not within what Derrida calls the order of visibility (Derrida 1996: 90). The object of steering is the inner self-relation of the client. This self-relation is expected to be represented in the contract dialogue. But the self-relation is not just something natural invisible, which can be brought into the open and exposed to an external light. Self-relations belong to the order of absolute invisibility.

What the citizens' contract establishes, in fact, is a social worker who talks to a client who is supposed to talk to himself about his own relationship between obligation and freedom. The form of the citizens' contract creates a problem of expectation: the social worker's expectation of the client's expectation of himself. This represents a monstrous challenge for the social services administration about how to control the way in which the client creates his way of establishing himself. How can the social services administration even establish a language for the self-relation of the other? How to observe the internal self-observation of the other and define these observations as premises for administrative actions and decisions?

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Individual Planning or Adaptation: Personal Destinies of Non-Estonians in the Period of Socio-Economic Reforms of the 1990s in Estonia

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the interrelationship between structural changes and personal destinies of non-Estonians. How do non-Estonians who have grown up in a socialist system and have finished their education in the late 1980s or early 1990s experience a societal transformation? Were structural and institutional changes brought about by a minimum of adaptations and fluctuations or a by maximum of turbulence and mobility? How successful were they in converting resources gained in the old system into other types of assets in post-socialist conditions? The paper is based on in-depth interviews conducted in 2003 and 2004 with non-Estonians graduating from secondary educational institutions in 1983 and belonging to the so-called “winners” cohort. One of the central results of the analysis is that non-Estonians’ behaviour was not so much directed by purposeful biographical projects but rather it could be characterized as an adaptation to new circumstances. Opportunities proved to be less a matter of individual control and planning than of unfavourable structural conditions. Our analysis indicated the stability of relative rankings in social hierarchy despite the huge amount of job moves. It was evident that having only higher education did not guarantee non-Estonians a stable position in the labour market. Broad social network helped to realize this resource.

Keywords

Personal destinies; Adaptation; Post-socialist structural changes; Social networks; Non-Estonians

As Mayer (2004) maintains:

the relation to historical time is crucial for the sociological study of life courses because life courses are embedded in definite strands of historical periods. Life courses are subject not only to historical circumstances at any time but also to the cumulative or delayed effects of earlier historical times on the individual life history or the collective life history of birth cohorts. (pp. 165- 166)

The breakdown and transformation of the former socialist societies illustrates in an exemplary manner the major questions which sociological life course research attempts to answer. One aim is to understand how structures, institutions and policies on the macro- and meso-level influence individual life courses (see Gershuny 1998; Mayer 2006). One could expect that the reforms, which took place not only in economy, but also in political and social sphere, could be the turning point of individual life courses. Those changes destabilized people's life paths and forced people make choices in a situation with increased risks and insecurity.

Another aim is to study how on the micro level previous life course events and trajectory constrain or foster transitions and outcomes in later life. Some authors have underlined that sometimes the unexpected consequences of old choices might be even more important than new choices. The transformation period should allow us to answer the question how the resources and characteristics ascribed or acquired before differently shape life outcomes despite the instability of life courses. New political and economic institutions presented people with new opportunities and constraints, but they responded to those opportunities and constraints on the basis of their existing resources. It has been mentioned that during the rapid economic, social and institutional changes in post-socialist societies the meaning of previously gained resources changed as well (Róna-Tas 1998).

The Estonian economic reform has been one of the most radical among the post-socialist countries, particularly with regard to its highly liberal economic principles and the modest role of the state (de Melo, Denizer and Gelb 1996). Estonia is often used as an example of success, especially compared to other former Soviet Union countries (Åslund 1996; de Melo, Denizer and Gelb 1996). As Vodopivec (2000) maintains:

Estonia provides exceptionally fruitful grounds for the research of labour market adjustment in transition: it is a reform laboratory. It is not only implementing distinctive labour market policies (generally in the direction suggested by the World Bank), but is also clearly in the forefront of the implementation of reforms among the successor states of Soviet Union and has therefore undergone many changes that will ultimately be implemented in other economies as well. (p. 4)

However, the "success story" of Estonia has also been criticized, emphasizing the increase of social inequality¹, the deepening of tensions between economic sectors and generations along the capital-periphery axis (Estonian Human Development Report 1997; Poverty in Transition 1998).

The question is how were people reallocated in the process of intensive structural and institutional changes? Were the life courses disrupted and reoriented or did they show a high degree of stability and continuity? How useful were the education, informal ties and other resources acquired before the transformation period? Did age or cohort membership make a difference? Who were the losers, who were the winners of the transformation?

It has been pointed out that the transition in Estonia means the change from a “gerontocratic” to a “youth-oriented” society (Tallo and Terk 1998). Adaptation to the new environment was relatively successful for younger age cohorts. For example the results of the NORBALT project showed that in Estonia the winners of the transition were the well educated, advancing and ambitious young males 25-34 years of age with Estonian citizenship (Grøgaard 1996: 96). We also anticipated that “during the process of transition to a market economy, the group in the most favourable position would be the younger age cohort, first of all, the 20-29 year-old group” (Helemäe and Saar 1995: 137). The generation that emerged in the early 1990s received many advantages thanks to its youth. This generation has been called the generation of winners due to their successful careers (see Titma 1999; Titma, Tuma and Silver 1998). Nevertheless the previous analysis shows that there is also the great proportion of losers in this winner generation (Helemäe, Saar, and Vöörmann 2000). In this paper we will analyze how changes on macro level affected the life course of this generation. The problem is why some members of the winner age cohort have lost their age advantage in a society, which glorifies youth.

It has been mentioned that the transformation process in Estonia brought about a crucial change in the status of non-Estonians, most of whom were ethnic Russians (Aasland and Fløtten 2001). The transition was for non-Estonians not just about moving from plan to market, but of moving from a privileged nation within a large empire to becoming a minority within a new nationalizing state (Kennedy 2002). Many of them had to choose whether to leave the country or continue to live in Estonia, for what citizenship to petition and whether to learn Estonian becoming the state language. The political changes in Estonia during the late 1980s and early 1990s have demonstrated a link between legal restorationism and segmentational institutions and policies (the citizenship law, the language law; Pettai and Hallik 2002). In the socio-economic domain political measures have had only a limited impact, because it is influenced by past histories and structures. While to date there have been no programmatic measures that would either explicitly support Estonians or discriminate against non-Estonians, the segmentational institutions and policies have contributed to the growth of non-Estonians’ socio-economic dependence on Estonians – a dependence attributed to both the Soviet legacy and market transition (Pettai and Hallik *ibidem*).

Now Estonia is frequently characterized as an ethnically divided society with deeply embedded ethnic cleavages (Evans and Lipsmeyer 2001: 379), politically and psychologically polarized along ethnic-linguistic lines (Hallik 2002: 68). However, previous research is mainly looking at the process on macro-level. There are relatively few contributions from the micro perspective on how societal changes impacted individual life courses of non-Estonians. Nevertheless it is important to identify the structural constraints within the life course, which cut down the set of abstractly possible alternatives to a smaller subset of feasible actions. Emphasizing only the changing social structure does not address how these changes enter the lives of individuals trying to cope with them.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the interrelationship between the structural changes and personal destinies of non-Estonians. How do non-Estonians who have grown up in a socialist system and have finished their education in the late 1980s or early 1990s experience a societal transformation? Were structural and institutional changes brought about by a minimum of adaptations and fluctuations or a by maximum of turbulence and mobility? How successful were they in converting resources gained in the old system into other types of assets in post-socialist conditions?

The paper is based on in-depth interviews conducted in 2003 and 2004 with non-Estonians graduating from secondary educational institutions in 1983 and belonging to the so-called “winners” cohort.

Ethnic Segmentation in Estonian society

After World War II, vast material resources and waves of ethnic Russians were sent to the border areas. The idea was to create Russian-language melting-pots in the Soviet republics and to integrate the population of the empire into one Soviet people.

During the Soviet period, Estonia was in many respects “over-industrialized”, owing to Moscow’s geopolitical interests. The development of defence-related enterprises offered a path for settling a large number of people in Estonia from other parts of the Soviet Union, mainly from Russia. Under the centrally planned economy, the basic factors bringing about labour market segmentation (economic power, management strategies, and employees’ responses) were all a direct function of bureaucratically mediated non-competitive relations between economic organizations and central planning agencies (Mach, Mayer and Pohoski 1994). The main mediating structures between the level of central economic administration and enterprises were ‘branch’ ministries for industrial sectors. However, since Estonia was a part of the former Soviet Union, the mediating structure was more complex compared to Central European countries. The Soviet Union had three types of state enterprises: all-union, mixed all-union-republic, and republic enterprises. The first two types of enterprises were in practice under the control of the ministries in Moscow, the last under the control of the republics. Estonia also had ministries to execute political power over the segment of the economy that was not subordinated to all-union ministries. All-union ministries controlled the most privileged industries, such as those closely connected to the military. This meant that the Estonian labour market was structured along the line of an internal (by Estonian authorities) versus external (by the Central Soviet authorities) locus of control (Vöörmann and Helemäe 2003).

Most of the all-Union enterprises operated on the basis of raw materials imported from other parts of Soviet Union, while labour was also recruited from outside Estonia (Hallik 1998). It is evident that in the Soviet period Estonia already had an ethnically divided labour market. Non-Estonians (mostly immigrants) were concentrated in basic industrial branches closely connected to the military complex. By the end of the Soviet period the Estonian share of industrial workers was less than 40 per cent, and the majority of them were employed in local light industry. A number of industrial fields were generally closed for Estonians (first of all defence industry where this was due to the disloyalty of the local population; Pettai and Hallik 2002). Estonians were concentrated in agriculture, but also in the social service (Kala 1992). The ethnic segmentation of the economy was a by-product of its bureaucratic organization.

There were clear relationships between industrialization and the redistribution of ethnic groups in Estonia. For example, in 1989 over 90 per cent of the non-Estonian population lived in urban areas: over half in Tallinn and the area immediately surrounding the capital, and another 30 per cent in the North-East industrial region, bordering the Russian Federation (Hallik and Kirch 1992). This means that separate Russian-speaking enclaves formed in Estonia (in north-east part of Estonia).

The language-based separation of enterprises (Estonian and Russian based) brought along separate communities of non-Estonians and Estonians. There was

also a parallel set of institutions (schools, kindergartens, clubs, newspapers etc) for Estonians and newcomers with little communication across the language divide (Zaslavsky 1992: 73). Status differentials as well as the allocation of many social benefits were driven more by ideological choices of the command economy than by any societal and market demands. The priority was given to the industrial sector. After the Soviet system collapsed the inevitable result was a drop in status for those (mostly non-Estonians) most linked to the previously privileged sectors, as the enterprises of industrial sector first of all have undergone the greatest transformations or have been closed at all.

Changes in Estonia in the 1990s

The years since 1989 have been of decisive importance to the Estonian economy and labour force. In June 1992 Estonia introduced its own currency. This is considered to be the start of serious economic reforms (Arro et al. 2001). At the beginning of the 1990s, the immediate reaction to economic uncertainty was a sharp decline in demand for labour. There was a certain delay before the employment effects of the transition crisis were felt, as enterprises were at first reluctant to dismiss redundant workers. Estonia took a very liberal approach in embracing a more free market oriented strategy. By allowing enterprises to discharge excess labour without imposing undue costs on them, this ended the period of job security.

At the beginning of the transition period in the first half of the 1990s the employment structure in Estonia was not a result of a market-oriented development but rather a structure resulting from the economic needs of the former Soviet Union (Eamets 2001). In Estonia the disruption of trade with the former Soviet Union created large shifts in the composition of final demand for sectoral outputs. The collapse of the institutional and technological links of the Soviet centrally planned system disrupted the supply of inputs for production and the delivery of outputs.

The share of the service sector increased dramatically, whereas the decline in the industrial and agricultural sectors accelerated. Blue-collar workers were particularly affected, and their numbers declined by almost 1.5 times from 1989 to 2001, while the number of white-collar workers declined by less than one third (Pettai 2001). These changes accompanied collective downward social mobility of industrial and agricultural workers. For them the risks were increasing and the opportunities were decreasing. On the other hand there were certain sectors of labour force for whom new opportunities prevailed, and they have experienced upward mobility (for example employees in finance).

The occupation structure of different ethnic groups was also strongly affected. In 1989, there was some overrepresentation of Estonians among managers and professionals. The share of non-Estonians was higher among skilled industrial workers as well as clerks (see Table 1). Already in 1993 we can notice a clear vertical ethnic segmentation: the overrepresentation of non-Estonians in unskilled and skilled workers positions increased. Non-Estonians were slightly underrepresented among managers and professionals. In the period 1993-2003 this tendency continued. During this period the occupational status of non-Estonians lowered the most sharply.

Table 1. Rate of non-Estonians by occupational group in 1989–2003, %

Occupational group	Rate of non-Estonians					Index*				
	1989	1993	1998	2000	2003	1989	1993	1998	2000	2003
Managers	32	27	24	25	21	91	82	73	76	64
Professionals	31	27	22	24	23	89	82	67	73	70
Technicians and associate professionals	30	29	29	30	26	86	88	88	91	79
Clerks	41	38	33	36	37	117	115	100	109	112
Service workers	35	32	33	31	36	100	97	100	94	109
Skilled agricultural workers	13	9	9	8	-	37	27	27	24	0
Skilled industrial workers	43	45	43	46	45	123	136	130	139	136
Plant and machine operators	33	37	39	42	40	94	112	118	127	121
Elementary occupations	39	43	44	42	40	111	130	133	127	121
Total	35	33	33	33	33	100	100	100	100	100

Data of Estonian Labour Force Surveys (ELFS) 1995, 1998, 2000 and 2003.

* Index was computed using the following formula: (rate of non-Estonians in occupational group / rate of non-Estonians in the labour market) * 100. The value of the index lower than 100 indicates the underrepresentation of non-Estonians in this occupational group, the value greater than 100 indicates the overrepresentation.

A relatively strong reorientation of industry from Eastern markets to Western markets was frequently also accompanied by a transition from more complex production to less complicated work, usually subcontracting (Terk 1999). A lot of enterprises owned by foreign capital use Estonia primarily as a production shop, where products and technologies developed elsewhere are being realized (Borsos-Torstila 1997).

The fall in GDP did not lead to high unemployment in the first half of the 1990s. Unemployment in Estonia increased gradually. Some reasons for moderate unemployment growth have been put forth: a sharp drop in labour force participation, relatively flexible labour markets, low employment benefits, and net migration to the former Soviet Union (Eamets 2001).

In 1992 economic activity collapsed under the combined effects of the breakdown of trade relations with the countries of the former Soviet Union, the collapse of the old central planning system, the extensive price and trade liberalization, and the abolition of many subsidies. Real GDP fell by almost 22 per cent, and consumer price inflation reached 1069 per cent. Estonia as well as Latvia and Lithuania had the longest (Estonia 5 years) and deepest (Estonia 35 per cent) recession among all the transition countries (*World Bank Report* 2001). From 1996 to 1998 the situation stabilized; however since the end of 1998, unemployment has increased further as a result of the economic crisis in Russia (Pettai 2001). In 1989 unemployment did not exist, in 2003 the unemployment rate of non-Estonians was 15.9 per cent, while among Estonians it was 7.9 per cent.

The shrinkage of labour market opportunities for non-Estonians is usually explained by Soviet legacies: the concentration of non-Estonians in particular branches of economy and all-Union enterprises, the lack of appropriate cultural and human capital, the lack of social capital (see for example Puur 2000; Hansson 2001; Kaplan 2001; Pavelson and Luuk 2002). However, the previous analysis has shown that ethnicity has significant direct impact on labour market opportunities as well (Helemäe, Saar and Vöormann 1999).

The economic human capital theory explains the differences in the labour market position as well as in the rewards by differences in human capital investments. But we can not explain the higher unemployment rate of non-Estonians as well as their lower labour market opportunities by their lower educational level. According to the census data from 1989 the average education level of non-Estonians was significantly higher than the average education level of Estonians (Kala 1992). Previous analysis has shown that non-Estonians with higher education have considerably more difficulties in finding a higher professional or manager job. Only good Estonian language skills can improve their chances (Saar and Kazjulja 2002).

The labour market problems of non-Estonians could be associated with the two main ethno-political changes in Estonian society in the 1990s – citizenship and increasing demands for Estonian language proficiency. The citizenship law facilitated the political segmentation of non-Estonian population into different legal categoriesⁱⁱ, but it was not used as a discriminatory device for restricting the job opportunities of non-citizens (Pettai and Hallik 2002). The only area closed to non-citizens is the civil service. Still the underrepresentation of non-Estonians among legislators, senior officials and managers increased markedly from 1989 to 2003 (see Table 1).

The first language law of 1989, which defines Estonian as the state language, accepted a limited Estonian-Russian bilingualism (Hallik 2002). As assessed by Robertson and Laitin (Laitin 1998: 88), the language law of Estonia was one of those having the strongest degree of nationalising and exclusionary pressure. The new language law, enacted in 1995, was meant to reflect the restitutorial state development and an exclusionary minority policy (Pettai 1996: 22). There are reasons to suggest that both the legacies of the Soviet period as well as the ethno-political changes contributed to the restrictions of labour market opportunities of non-Estonians.

Data and method

Our analysis is based on in-depth interviews conducted from June 2003 to January 2004. The sample of respondents was drawn from a longitudinal study “Life Paths of a Generation” (PG), which was started in 1983 when a research group from Tartu University and Institute of History, Estonian Academy of Sciences, under the leadership of Prof. Mikk Titma, interviewed graduates from secondary educational institutions of that year (see for example Titma et al. 1998; Helemäe et al. 2000). PG has followed the life course of a specific cohort from secondary school graduation until the end of the 1990s (the first study took place in 1983 and follow-ups in 1987, 1992/93 and in 1998) That is, by time of interview in 2003/2004 already it has been collected by us much longitudinal information about members of this cohort.

The interviews were informal and followed a general list of questions about respondents' life path and especially about their biographical experiences in the years following social changes in Estonia at the beginning of 1990s. We look at the

experiences preceding and following societal changes. The biographical investigations operate with a series of case analysis in a comparative and typologizing manner (see also Flick 2006). We suppose that narratives of experienced events refer both to the current life and to the past experiences and provide information on the interviewee's present as well as about his/her past and perspectives for the future (see also Rosenthal 2004). Certain events and processes are analysed in respect of their meaning for individual and collective life histories.

The initial panel of respondents in PG was selected to represent the population of 1983 secondary-school graduates (born between 1964 and 1966). Three types of institutions of secondary education were distinguished: vocational schools, specialized secondary schools and general secondary schools. The linkage between each level of education and the future job was clearly defined (Helemäe et al. 2000). Vocational schools trained skilled workers, specialized secondary schools semi-professionals. General secondary school was the traditional academic track. Although the principle of compulsory secondary education was implemented in the 1980s, by estimations based on census data only 75 per cent to 85 per cent of the corresponding birth cohort graduated from institutions of secondary education as full-time students in the mid-1980s (Saar 1997). Thus, selected on an educational basis, the PG cohort is an advanced part of the corresponding birth cohort.

Young adults who were in their 20s at the beginning of the economic changes (about 1989) and are now in their late 30s are often considered to be most successful age cohorts under transition. Because the PG cohort was about 24-26 by the beginning of 1990s, and by definition was the most advanced cohort in terms of education, we considered longitudinal data to provide time-dependent information about the internal differentiation of the "winners of transition" and the ways that led them to success.

The PG cohort obtained their education under the Soviet system, completing their schooling in the mid- to late 1980s, and first entered the labour market at the start of the major social and economic transformations of Estonian society. For us the post-socialist transformation presents the rare opportunity to study how young adults have managed in a rapidly changing situation.

Emphasizing only the changing social structure does not address how these changes enter the lives of individuals trying to cope with them. It is suggested that the biographical research approach is particularly effective in capturing the experience of a changing social system because it focuses on personal destinies and is able to demonstrate how these are linked to societal transformations (Hoerning 2000). The main strength of the biographical approach is that it is able to explore subjectively experienced reality and conceptually reconstruct a changing world as interpreted by the social agents themselves (Hoerning *ibidem*).

The analysis of the longitudinal data has shown that the type of secondary education has a strong impact on the successful career among youth. We have conducted 32 interviews with members of this cohort, choosing 3-4 interviewees from graduates of each type of secondary educationⁱⁱⁱ. We intended to interview persons with different ethnicity, place of residence, gender etc. The interviews were conducted in the homes of respondents as well as in our institute. Each interview lasted 1-3 hours. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

In this paper we concentrate on the analysis of biographies of non-Estonians. Most biographical studies tend to select a few illuminating cases as a starting point for their analysis. Since there are relatively few non-Estonians in our sample (10), we have chosen to present most of them (8)^{iv} in the form of biographical profiles as examples of the wider trend. One task for the analyses was to look for common

elements, which occur across different interviews. We are using inductive approach whereby generalizations are produced through analysing a series of biographical profiles. These case analyses are compared and contrasted with each other. The steps of analysis were: first, analysis of biographical data; second, reconstruction of life histories (life as lived); third, development of types and contrastive comparison of several cases^v. These types are analytic. We can identify patterns of similarity or difference within life course patterns. We are interested in the experience of societal changes, we consider the interviewee's statements on that in the context on his or her whole life. On the basis of such reconstruction we are in a position to construct a type of adaptation to societal changes but also to explain the biographical course that leads to this. This analysis allows us to reconstruct the interrelationship between individual experience and collective framework.

Biographical profiles

The analysis of semi-structured interviews revealed four main types: relatively successful interviewees, losers, and two types of industrial and service workers careers: interviewees having stable careers, and interviewees having an unstable career at the beginning of 1990s, whose life stabilized later.

Relative success

Vitali, university degree, currently businessman, lives in Tallinn.

Vitali's mother is from Astrakhan, father from Belarus. They met in Kaliningrad during their studies. They were sent to Tallinn after their graduation^{vi}. Both have higher education^{vii}. Vitali graduated from a secondary school with a language bias (German) in Tallinn with high marks. He had the best report among his classmates, he took part in olympiads. Vitali went in for fencing during his studies, got high places in several competitions and even earned a sports master's degree. As he mentioned, Estonian was not taught in his school. Vitali tried to continue his studies in the St. Petersburg State University but there were 17 candidates to one place and he was not successful. As he said, a great number of students owed their acceptance to "connections" and acquaintances. Vitali worked one year as a turner and then applied again. This time, he succeeded, by being accepted to a so-called republican place^{viii}. Vitali started his studies in the faculty of history in 1984 and finished in 1991, due to interruption by compulsory military service (from 1985 to 1986). His study results were good (he published some papers in journals as well as lectured in the university). As Vitali had a republican place, he had to return to Estonia. As he mentioned, he received good offers in St. Petersburg as well. He was assigned to the department of history in Tallinn Technical University but this department was reorganized, most lecturers were laid off and there were not enough jobs even for the university's own people. At the beginning of the 1990s, Estonia and St. Petersburg signed a convention to organize the Representation of St. Petersburg in Tallinn. Vitali was offered a chance to start with this organization due to his contacts in St. Petersburg. He worked as an official representative of St. Petersburg in Estonia till 1994. In 1994 the embassy of Russia was formed, which meant that Vitali's and the embassy's duties started to coincide. He was not invited to official meetings any more. As Vitali said, he started to lose interest in his work. He decided to start his own business. His old contacts in Russia were very helpful. However, Vitali had some

problems in 1997-1998 as his first business failed due to a crisis in Russia. Nevertheless he managed to start again. Now Vitali has own business and he is also lecturing in the St. Petersburg University of International Relations. He regretted that he did not defend a Candidate's degree (he had no time to write his thesis). Answering to the interviewer's question about his possible career if the Soviet rule had not changed, he said that he would have had the leading post in regional administration. He did not regret that his career has developed in another way. As Vitali stressed several times, he understood in 1998 that we should live in the present time, not spending the whole time thinking about the past and what could have been. He thinks that making unrealistic plans and following impossible ideals would be a damaged life. It is important to get satisfaction and rapture. Vitali attended Estonian courses while he worked as a representative but nobody spoke Estonian with him. Now he feels that knowing other foreign languages is more important. He is able to communicate in German and English.

Irina, university degree, currently scientist (physicist), lives in Tartu (university town in Estonia)

Irina was born in a traditional workers' family in Tartu. Both parents were relatively educated: mother has secondary education; father studied in a specialized secondary school but gave it up. Irina graduated from secondary school with good marks and was accepted to the department of physics in Tartu University. She was a good student. She graduated in 1988. The requirement to work three years in the first workplace was practically abandoned by then and as Irina explained, the decomposition was detectable. She started working in the institute of physics. Her supervisor at the university was working in this institute as well; he knew her abilities and recommended her. Irina worked one and a half years and then stayed home on maternity leave. It was the time of rapid changes. Most young scientists from the institute emigrated to Western countries or to Russia. Only people in pre-retirement age remained at the institute. Irina started to look for a new job as a teacher but it was somewhat difficult to find one, as the number of physics and mathematics lessons in schools had been reduced. She accidentally met her supervisor who proposed that she should continue doctoral studies. Irina decided to accept this proposal. As she explained, she had no choice. She had published some papers before her maternity leave and thus her application for post-graduate studies was accepted. While Irina had not been very hopeful about her studies, she defended her Doctoral thesis successfully. Having a Doctor's degree, she could now work at the institute of physics without any problems. However, she does not have great hopes for the future – she is thinking that young scientists just completing their studies have more prospects because they are more modern, active and practical. Irina, like Vitali (see the previous biographical profile), is not regretting her choices. As she says, it is self-deception to live in the past. Self-pity could destroy the future. Irina emphasized the importance of the support by her family and husband.

Relatively successful interviewees tried to strengthen their position in the new circumstances by mobilizing resources. Education as well as social networks played the primary role among their resources. Irina and Vitali both have higher education. The speciality obtained at university placed Vitali and Irina in a relatively favourable situation. In addition to contacts with relatives and previous co-workers, they also have numerous weak ties to various acquaintances – former fellow students from the university times as well as their lecturers. These weak ties were activated and utilised

during the period of social changes and later by the more successful interviewees. Irina and Vitali are quite optimistic and have rather positive expectations for the future. They mostly see more positive than negative changes in the society. Irina's self-evaluation is quite different from Vitali's. Vitali emphasizes his active role in the adaptation process while Irina stresses the impact of others. She appreciates her success but nevertheless thinks that it was accidental. Vitali is thinking about himself as a winner, Irina does not take herself for a winner.

Relatively stable careers in the group of workers

Galina, specialized secondary education (chemistry), now controller in a factory, lives in Maardu^{ix} (small industrial town near Tallinn, 80 per cent of inhabitants are non-Estonians)

Galina was born in the countryside in Russia (near Smolensk). She stressed several times that their family was prosperous. Both parents were working in a kolkhoz. She graduated from secondary school. Her mother did not recommend for her to stay in the countryside and work in agriculture because this work was too hard. Galina's cousin was studying at Kohtla-Järve^x (industrial city in the north-east part of Estonia) and she suggested that Galina should come to Kohtla-Järve as well. Following her cousin's recommendation, Galina joined the specialized secondary school in Kohtla-Järve (chemical industry). She had never before dreamed of studying chemistry but she liked that field of study. The beginning was hard for her because as she said, she was brought up like in a greenhouse. Nevertheless she got used to living away from her family. After graduation, she was assigned to the Maardu chemical factory. Galina preferred to move to Maardu instead of staying at Kohtla-Järve. As she said, it was interesting for her to move to a new place. Galina worked in this factory as a worker until 1994 when her first child was born. It was the time when most Soviet-time big state-owned factories in Estonia were closed or split into smaller units. Many of Galina's co-workers were discharged. One of her friends recommended her to apply for a job at Elcoteq^{xi}. Galina attended brief training courses and then started work in the factory where she is still working now. As she said, the main cause for staying there is that she does not have any choices due to lacking Estonian citizenship. Elcoteq was one of the few enterprises hiring Russian-speaking workers (mainly because of their lower salary level). Most of the workers at Elcoteq are now non-Estonian women with secondary or specialized secondary education. Galina is not satisfied with her salary. She is afraid to lose her job and she has no confidence in the future. Galina has no hope that anything (either the job situation or life in general) would get better. She understands that it is indispensable to know Estonian and English to improve job opportunities. It is very hard for her to learn Estonian because she has only lived and worked in a Russian-speaking environment. Galina is thinking that she is too old. She is setting her hopes on her daughter: the parents pay for her additional Estonian courses as well as for some other hobbies and extra education.

Irina 2, general secondary education, laboratory assistant, lives in a small town in central Estonia

Irina was born in Russia (in the Pskov region). Her parents moved to Estonia (Tamsalu, a town in central Estonia) in the early 1970s. She graduated from a general secondary school in Tapa (a small industrial town near Tamsalu). She started her studies in St.Petersburg but gave up after a few months (she had

problems with the dormitory) and returned to Tamsalu. Her parents worked in the local corn processing factory. They recommended that she should apply for a position in the laboratory of the factory. Irina started working as a laboratory assistant but then changed jobs several times. In 1986 she got married. Before meeting her, her husband had been arrested for attempts to cross the border of the Soviet Union. In late 1980s, he was offered a chance to emigrate. They decided that Irina's husband should emigrate first and Irina would follow him later. They closed own business which have begun after a marriage and sold all property (their house etc.). Then, Irina's mother, who was against her emigration, fell ill, and Irina decided to stay in Estonia. It seems that Irina is a person who tends to give up easily. It was more comfortable for her to continue the life she was accustomed to. She started working again in the corn processing factory as a laboratory assistant. There have been some layoffs during the 1990s but Irina has succeeded in keeping her job. As she mentioned, she has no children and she has never been ill. Irina is quite optimistic and is thinking that her life has passed smoothly in spite of dramatic events in her family life.

Both interviewees belonging to this type are doing relatively well in spite of working in manufacturing. The impact of the transformation process on their life course was rather weak. Why? The firm where Irina² was working was not closed. Despite some layoffs Irina succeeded in keeping her job. Her experiences, age and childlessness protected her. Galina was at home with her child during the most unstable period in the early 1990s. In Galina's case it seems to have been not a restriction but even an advantage. She was not discharged. The enterprise was closed at the "right" time. Thanks to her network (contacts with previous co-workers) she received the information on working vacancy. She reacted very quickly and was successful in finding a new job. They both have had a reasonably stable career, remained at the same level of social hierarchy and could not see any significant improvement. Due to quite important strategic restrictions – low level of education (or quite "narrow" education received earlier) and not knowing the Estonian language – it is difficult to expect any rapid improvement in the future either. The interviewees belonging to this type in general approved social changes, although there were also changes that made them feel insecure.

Unstable period in the early 1990s, later stabilization

Ljudmila, general secondary education, seamstress in a clothes factory, lives in Narva (Estonia's fourth largest city situated on the border between Estonia and the Russian Federation, only 5 per cent of inhabitants are Estonians)

Ljudmila's mother is a native inhabitant of Narva while her father is from the Kuban region situated near the Black Sea. Her parents met when her mother went to work on the virgin lands. After marrying, they returned to live in Narva. Ljudmila graduated from a general secondary school in Narva with good marks. She was interested in mathematics. Her original wish was to study information technology; however, she was told there were no workplaces in towns for graduates of this field. Ljudmila had a problem with stammering and this lowered her self-confidence. She was afraid that other people would mock her. Ljudmila's parents did not support her aspirations to continue her studies. Her mother thought that she was not good enough to study at a university, and the family had some material problems as well. In the interview Ljudmila pointed out several times that she was lacking her parents'

and friends' support (not material but moral). She blamed the low social status of her parents for the shortage of their encouragement. She thinks that if her parents had been engineers, she would have continued her studies. So she stayed at home and started to work as a sales assistant in a shop – a job she held for ten years. Now she is regretting her choice. In 1985 she got married and the first child was born soon after. In 1988 she gave birth prematurely to their second child who lived only five days. This was a very difficult time for Ljudmila as she and her husband divorced some months after the baby's death. Until then, they had been living with Ljudmila's mother-in-law, but after the divorce Ljudmila and her child were evicted. She found a new place to live and understood that she could rely only on herself. As she said, she decided to become a strong woman. In 1993 her daughter went to school. Ljudmila decided to look for a new job as work days in the shop were too long. She was unemployed for a few months but then got a job as a cloakroom attendant. The salary was very low, but the working schedule was more suitable. Her parents helped her financially as well as with the upbringing of the daughter. She attended an Estonian language course and passed the exam. Ljudmila has Estonian citizenship (her mother was born in Estonia). In 1995 the culture centre where Ljudmila was working was closed and she lost her job. She worked for some months in a private shop but the owner cheated the employees and she decided to find a new job. As Ljudmila likes sewing, she started working in a clothes factory. She feels lucky to have a secure job. She is not afraid to lose her job, because as she explained, there are a lot of clothes factories in Narva and she could find a new job, but she worries about the potential salary decrease. Ljudmila thinks that her life has been peaceful and quiet since 1992. However, she also finds her life boring, and feels that everything is stuck in money problems. She would like to attend computer courses but she lacks the money for that. Ljudmila has self-initiative but material constraints limited her activity. She has no future plans but tries to maintain the present situation. Ljudmila thinks that it is not possible to find a better job in Narva even if she continued her studies in correspondence courses. As she said, it is possible to live well also without higher education. It is more important to have good social contacts, to know the right people. Ljudmila worries about the future of her daughter. She thinks that her daughter should continue her studies but she herself has no aspirations. Ljudmila understands that she is pushing her dreams on her daughter.

Juri, specialized secondary school, now works as a miner, lives in a small industrial town in the north-eastern part of Estonia

Juri's father was born in Russia in the countryside where people did not have passports in the 1950s. His aim was to move away from the countryside, but without a passport, this was very difficult. However, he was recruited to Komi to fell forest, which helped him to get a passport, and a little later he moved to Estonia. Juri was born at Kohtla-Järve. His father worked as a miner while his mother was working in a clothes factory. Both had a very low level of education (mother completed 7 grades, father only 4 grades). They lived in a small mining town in the north-eastern part of Estonia. After graduating from basic school, Juri entered a specialized secondary school^{xii}. He was weak in mathematics and had difficulties already during the first course. He studied mechanics for four years but gave up before defending his diploma. As he explained, he had to get married. At about the same time, Juri was called up. He returned from the army service in 1985 and started to work as a turner. He continued his studies in the correspondence department and got a diploma in 1986. In 1989 his friends set up a bar and he decided to become a barman. It was

very difficult time; there was a shortage of products and hard liquor. The competition was tough and the bar went bankrupt. Juri's brother was working as a plumber and he offered Juri a similar job. Juri worked three years as a plumber. Then the state enterprise was reorganized and as most workers lost their jobs, Juri became unemployed as well. When one of his acquaintances set up a business, Juri was employed as his assistant. There were no official borders and they imported school supplies from Belarus. However, the business didn't last long. Juri's father was working as a guard at the time and he recommended Juri the same job in his workplace. Juri held this job for one year and then began working in an oil-shale mine – a job he got thanks to his social contacts. As his father had worked 13 years as a miner and had lost his health there, Juri had sworn that he would never go to work in a mine, but in the meantime he had got married again (Juri divorced in 1986) and needed money. This marriage ended in a divorce a few years later as well. Juri does not like his job but he needs money to pay child support. Nevertheless he thinks that his life has stabilized. At the end of the interview Juri mentioned that he has had a very difficult period: he was a heavy drinker and was at one point ready to commit suicide.

Economic changes in the early 1990s destabilized the life courses of interviewees belonging to this type^{xiii}. Individuals working in economic sectors where restructuring was the most profound – such as construction, the service sector and most of all manufacturing – were forced to change their chosen life path. It was the period of searching for new opportunities, but mostly for men. Women have a very important limitation – small children restricted their opportunities. During the transition period all representatives of this type were very active on the labour market. But the process of restructuring of economic sector in the industrial region of Estonia, where all respondents of this group lived, did not guarantee reliable workplaces. The number of workplaces was reduced, the enterprises were closed. Most often new jobs have been found with the help of social connections (contacts with relatives and previous co-workers). These social networks helped to find a new job, but did not guarantee a stable work or a higher level in social hierarchy. One of the crucial restrictions of the interviewees of this type was the weakness of the starting position – they started the transition period with fewer opportunities. Their living standard had declined. They had scarce personal resources as well as scarce social resources (social networks for instrumental support only). Interviewees having an unstable career during the transition period and now working as skilled workers were aware of their poor opportunities, they have no future plans.

Losers

Eduard, higher military education, unemployed^{xiv}, lives in Tallinn

Eduard was born in a small town in Estonia in the family of a military man. His father had university education and mother specialized secondary education. They moved several times within Estonia and Eduard attended different schools. Eduard was interested in technology and he even thought about studying in a polytechnical specialized secondary school after graduation from basic school but his father had to make a long business trip to Russia and his parents did not want him to stay behind in Tallinn on his own. So he continued his studies in general secondary school. After graduating from secondary school in Tallinn he entered the Tallinn higher military

technical school. His father did not approve of his choice but as Eduard said, he had lived all his life in military towns and knew everything about this occupation. It was self-evident that he should obtain higher education (his two older brothers had continued their studies too). After graduation Eduard stayed in Estonia. He was assigned to Tallinn because he had a living-place there. Now Eduard thinks that perhaps it would have been better to move to the Far East or Siberia. He moved several times in Estonia. In 1991, before the putsch in Moscow, he left the army as he understood that the Soviet Union was failing and the Soviet army would leave Estonia soon. Eduard wanted to stay in Estonia. He worked for two years as a parking lot guard. In 1993 Eduard started a private business together with his brother who was living in St. Petersburg. They had links mostly to Russian enterprises. In 1998 the firm went under due to the Russian financial crisis and Eduard lost his job as well as the property. He thinks that globalization has a major impact on business: small private enterprises have no future, big strong firms will swallow the small ones. He characterises his life since 1998 as hell. This dreadful period was still continuing in 2003. He is feeling that the long unemployment period is decreasing his chances to find a job. Eduard understands that he has not much time to grasp at something.

Olga, university degree, unemployed, lives in Tallinn

Olga's father passed his military service in Estonia. After demobilization he stayed in Tallinn. Both parents had higher education. Olga characterises her father as a person of principles. Olga graduated from general secondary school with good marks. Her original wish was to study cosmetology. She understood that to become a good cosmetologist she should study at the medical department in the university. However, as she was afraid that she did not have enough patience for that, Olga decided to study some subject connected with economics because she thought that it would be easier to find a job. She noticed an advertisement in a newspaper about republican places in the specialized secondary school of hotel service in Kiev. She passed the entrance exams and continued her studies in Kiev. Olga studied for two and a half years. It was an interesting period because their class had practical training in several places: in Yalta, in Kiev, in Tallinn. She finished her studies in 1986 and returned to Tallinn. She started work in a catering establishment and continued her studies at Tartu University, in the department of economics (she was a correspondence student). It was a conscious decision. She understood that it was not possible to increase her opportunities without having higher education. She got her diploma in 1991. In 1989 Olga was laid off. She got married and a child was born. Olga was offered a job in a bar. She worked there for two years. This was followed by an unstable period: Olga changed workplaces several times. In 1994 Olga and her friend started their own business: they rented a shop and borrowed money, but they were lacking financing and knowledge and their business failed. In 1998 another child was born. After one and a half years Olga started to work again in a bar but in two years the bar was closed and Olga lost her job. Now she is unemployed. Like Eduard (see the previous interview), she understands that she has limited time to find something more stable. She thinks that it is important to know languages (Estonian and English) on a high level. Her husband has graduated from nautical schools. He used to work at a yachting centre and liked his job, but as the centre was reorganized, he lost his job. Now he is unemployed as well. Olga has thought about emigrating but her husband did not want to leave his home country. In spite of the failures, Olga is still hopeful and has plans for the future. She wants to get additional training and perhaps find a job in another country. She holds the opinion that people

who are purposeful and have abilities to use the situation have been more successful.

Despite having a higher education Olga and Eduard did not succeed. They have had no official workplace long time that does not allow them to receive the unemployment benefits. Works which they sometimes have had have been short and informal. They both had difficulties in utilising his qualifications in a changing situation. One reason was that Eduard obtained a degree in a very narrow speciality. The speciality obtained by Olga is of a substantially higher demand (sale and service) but she graduated from the correspondence department in the early 1990s and has had no time to make full use of her education. As she said, she had no opportunity to utilise her qualification. Poor command of the Estonian language had placed additional restrictions on their competitiveness in the labour market. Both of them consider that they have not much time to grasp at something. Losers were facing significant hardship. There was only one breadwinner in their families and that made the economic situation quite hopeless. Their attitude regarding opportunities in the future is very different. Eduard was very pessimistic, he felt deprived, while Olga is not thinking about herself as a loser. In Olga's case, the period of instability is shorter. Besides, as she said, she completely realized the plans regarding creation of family and the birth of children. These circumstances increase her optimism.

Collective fate or individual life courses

Age cohort and changes in the 1990s

It has been stated that the paternalistic state "interfered" much more with individuals' life choices than would be tolerated in a Western-type society. Although the state exerted some pressure on young people in choosing a certain education, they still had a reasonable amount of free choice. A socialist society stabilized life planning and minimized the personal risks involved. The result for individuals was a clear reduction of occupational risk and autonomy of choice. The burden of risk was taken from the individual and placed in the hands of the state. Young people were even freer in their choices in the socialist period compared with the 1990s because the individual risks were lower. The need to cope with the uncertainty was reduced. In a certain sense the socialist state had taken responsibility for the possibility that anything would go "wrong". So individuals had a feeling that nothing could happen that would disturb their life planning. Whatever mistakes the individual made in making an educational or occupational choice could always corrected afterwards (Kupferberg 1998).

The members of our studied cohort received their education either immediately before the transition period or already in the Republic of Estonia. It has made their educational choices not very risky. The decision between work and education was governed less by financial considerations than by social ambitions. The transition period had a twofold impact on their following career and occupational path. It means that the members of the cohort had no time to improve on mistakes previously made by them in their educational choices. Major institutional and structural changes in the 1990s made the improvement difficult. On the other hand the cohort received an advantage in the labour market due to their youth. It is somewhat different from other former socialist countries - for example in East Germany the age group that has benefited from the transformation were those between 18 and about 40 years old in 1989 (Diewald, Goedicke and Mayer 2006: 304).

There were clear differences between graduates of different types of educational institutions. Even though the interviewees belong to the same age cohort, the transition period “hit” them in different life phases. Most graduates of vocational and specialized secondary schools finished their studies in the middle of the 1980s when the transition from the educational system to the labour market was highly institutionalized: the graduates were obliged to work three years in the first job assigned by the state. Their work career was quite stable until the transition period in the early 1990s.

Members of the cohort continuing their studies at universities acquired higher education and started their work careers at the end of the 1980s (women) or even right at the beginning of the reforms (men). The institutionalization of transition to the labour market was substantially weakened. Most of them found a job on their own. There were also differences between the male and female university graduates. Men belonging to this cohort obtained higher education and entered the labour market 1-2 years later than women due to the interruption by compulsory military service. Young women faced the beginning of societal changes just at the moment of their life course when the contradiction between two careers (mother *versus* work) was especially sharp.

Collective fates

Analyzing the biographical profiles of non-Estonians, it is clear that at least in the early years, the transition period led more to a collective fate than increased individualizing variety. Firm closures and company reorganization triggered interfirm-shifts and transitions to unemployment. Almost all interviewees were in some way “disturbed” in their life planning. The disturbance took different forms. Vitali started his career as an official and later created his own business instead of becoming a lecturer at university. Galina changed her job. Irina² had to make a very hard decision: to emigrate with her husband, or to stay in Estonia. Andrei was moving from one short-term job to another. Ljudmila, Juri and Svetlana had been unemployed for a time and have changed their occupation, Juri even several times. Juri had to accept a job in an oil-shale mine, a job he thought he would never choose. Eduard and Olga have started their own business. It was a forced choice because they both lost their jobs. Only Irina managed to keep both her job and position, but had to begin doctor’s degree studies. In her biographical narrative, she emphasizes her luck. She seems to be unaware of the larger institutional and structural context, which predetermined her easy survival of the transition period. She was working in the “right” sector (sciences). Her “luck” was that she got her doctor’s degree in the “right” time before the very intensive layoffs in this field in the middle of the 1990s. Our analysis indicates cumulative advantages and disadvantages in the period of intense social and economic reforms found also in other former socialist countries (see Diewald et al. 2006).

The biographical profiles confirm that a period of relative stabilization arrived in 1996-1997^{xv}. The career of interviewees belonging to the group of skilled workers has relatively stabilized, after the transition period forced them to change their professional profile and acquire a new profession (through retraining or directly in the workplace). Nevertheless, their position in the labour market is quite uncertain because most of them are working in enterprises owned by foreign investors. Post-socialist countries are all very sensitive to capital mobility as a lot of foreign direct investments are connected with cheap labour in these countries. There is a potential

danger that if the production input in Estonia becomes more expensive, foreign investors oriented towards export production have no reason to be interested in continuing production in Estonia. For this reason, production could be easily moved to cheaper countries (Terk 1999). In addition, labour demand in specific countries is likewise affected by international economic fluctuations, with the extent of the impact varying according to the openness of the national economy. For example, the Asian crisis as well as the Russian financial crisis in 1998 also caused a considerable economic shock in Estonia due to the fact that Estonia had large trade exchanges with the Russian Federation.

In the situation of great economic and social uncertainty people took different paths into entrepreneurial activities. On the one hand, for one group losing their job and not finding the new job more important are “push” factors (see also Saar and Unt 2006). A significant part of the new self-employment consisted of marginal activities by persons who wanted to avoid unemployment in some other post-socialist countries either (for an overview of this thesis see Hanley 2000). Eduard and Olga are representatives of this group. Wholesale and retail trade as a niche for entrepreneurship was a rather forced choice for them. Both of them, as most non-Estonian entrepreneurs, had micro-enterprises^{xvi}, which are very sensitive to the global changes. Vitali shifted to entrepreneurial activity voluntarily (not simply because he could not find another job). The businesses started by Eduard and Vitali mostly had dealings with Russian enterprises. The 1998 crisis in Russia had a significant impact on their business: their firms went bankrupt. Vitali – thanks to his social contacts in Russia – was able to start a new business but Eduard has had only temporary jobs since 1998 and is now unemployed. This is a rather typical path for many non-Estonian small firm owners. Olga’s business failed as well.

The sample of non-Estonian interviewees does not include people who were working in the public sector at the beginning of the 1990s. We suppose that these groups were relatively better sheltered from unemployment risks as well as from downward mobility. That some of the few expanding sectors like real estate, rental and commercial services were mostly Estonians’ monopolies before the 1990s helped them to sustain their position.

The reallocation of non-Estonians seems to result in a mix of stability and mobility. The stability can be observed in the stability of relative rankings in social position for all those who managed to stay in or to re-enter the labour market. The huge amount of mobility can be seen in the exits from firms and firm shifts, in sustained spells of unemployment and in the non-voluntary nature of most labour market moves.

The impact of achieved characteristics

For individual there are different sorts of potential benefits (“positional advantages”) that may derive from personal capital. But the positional advantage emerges not from those accumulated skilful characteristics themselves, but from their interaction with the rules of social institutions. These skills only provide advantage insofar as they are salient to the requirement of the institutions. The utility of capital is determined by institutions, which set the rules of its application and thus influence its value. In times of social change, capital accumulated under different institutional conditions is deployed to fit new institutions. Individuals have to match past with present, employing capital developed under one set of institutional rules in transactions guided by another set of rules.

The important question is: why were some non-Estonian interviewees more successful than others? Might human capital be considered as an important asset that helped non-Estonians cope with the societal changes? It has been found that in transitional countries qualificational resources have proved to be a forceful discriminator in all dimensions of labour market transformation processes (Orazem and Vodopivec 1995; Mayer, Diewald and Solga 1999; Narusk and Hansson 1999). Our analysis indicates that for non-Estonians the impact is not so obvious. Higher education seems to have an even twofold impact. There were two extreme types among non-Estonians with higher education: the most successful interviewees as well as the losers. The important difference between these two types seems to be the range of their social network. Vitali and Irina, belonging to the type of the more successful interviewees, have broad social networks and a large “network reserve” (especially Vitali in Russia) which helped them to manage in the new situation. Graduating from university in St. Petersburg was not a restriction for Vitali; on the contrary, it was an advantage because thanks to his fellow students he had many contacts in Russia. The losers, Eduard and Olga, have used their social contacts as well but their networks consist of mostly relatives and close friends. The attempts to replace the kin and former fellow students in their networks by a bigger share of co-workers and former co-workers have become less effective. The specificity of social networks under socialism - the relevance of workplace relationships with colleagues and supervisors - hit them strongly. They had too few opportunities to rebuild their previous networks formed from colleagues because of job shifts, dismissals and the changing work culture (growing work competition and intensity has resulted in the deterioration of relationship with co-workers). They could rely on their family members for compensation of weakened relations at the workplace. The same process took place also in East Germany (Diewald and Lüdicke 2006). Eduard’s social networks were also poor of former classmates. Practically all his former classmates (as well as former colleagues) are outside Estonia, both because of the specificity of the high military education received by him and because of the transformations in the society. Obviously, in the case of Olga, the fact that she has received vocational education outside of Estonia and higher education at distance learning courses has restricted her opportunities to restore and use the previous networks of classmates. Obviously a very important restriction for Eduard was having limited social contacts in Russia (only two brothers).

Ron Burt (1998) has emphasized that one of the most essential properties of social capital is that it helps to find the best use for an individual’s cultural capital, in other words, for his or her education. It seems that the possibilities for various networks to offer help are different. Most interviewees have used their social contacts to find a job but it is one level when the network attempts to save its unemployed member and to find him or her even just a temporary job. It is quite another level when appointments to high positions seem to operate according to the rule that it is not one’s speciality competence that is important – but belonging to *us*, i.e. to the *right* network (see also Hansson 2001). Previous studies have indicated that the role of social networks consisting of relatives and acquaintances belonging frequently to the same social group as the respondents is limited (Kazjulja 2001). These networks have helped people to find a job but not to move up. In order to be able to view a network as social capital for the individual, it must contain sufficient resources and influence. As well people with a lot of weak ties have been better off (see also Völker and Flap 2001).

Earlier studies have shown that the general education acquired in the 1980s had a completely different meaning for Estonians and non-Estonians: those who

graduated from Estonian-language schools had significantly greater opportunities to become white-collar workers, while Russian young people were “directed” by the secondary school to become mostly manual workers (Helemäe et al. 2000). We got some support to this conclusion from our analysis. Two non-Estonian female interviewees have general secondary education and they both are working as manual workers.

Education seems to play a very important role for non-Estonians in becoming a winner. Those non-Estonian interviewees having general secondary, vocational or specialized secondary education remained in the group of manual workers. They all have a job but their labour market position is quite uncertain and they are afraid to lose their job.

It has been mentioned that many non-Estonians are disadvantaged in the labour market partly due to the new language law demanding basic knowledge of Estonian (Titma et al. 1998; Narusk and Hansson 1999). Our previous analysis has indicated that Estonian language competence is more important in the transition from unemployment to employment than it is for the risk of becoming unemployed (Saar and Helemäe 2001). Some interviewees have attended Estonian courses (Vitali, Ljudmila, Svetlana) but they all complain they do not have an opportunity to practise. It is very hard for them to learn Estonian because they have lived and worked in a Russian-speaking environment. Ljudmila and Svetlana are living in Narva where there is no opportunity to communicate with Estonians on a daily basis as only 4 per cent of the town’s inhabitants are Estonians. The interviewees living in a Russian-speaking environment do not find having Estonian language competence very helpful. This is quite different from the attitude of non-Estonian women living in Tallinn (Olga, Galina). They think that it is indispensable to know Estonian and English to improve their job opportunities but as Olga said “one should know Estonian and English on a very high level.” Vitali, on the other hand, emphasizes that now it is more important to know other languages (English, German), not Estonian.

Estonian citizenship was mentioned only in two interviews. Non-Estonian interviewees do not stress the role of citizenship in the improvement of their labour market opportunities. However, Estonian citizenship seems to have impact on non-Estonians’ sense of social certainty. Ljudmila, having Estonian citizenship, mentioned it several times during the interview. For her, this is a reserve for the future. Galina emphasizes that she and other non-Estonians without Estonian citizenship feel like nobodies in Estonian society.

Discussion

The aim of this paper was to analyze the interrelationship between structural changes and personal destinies of non-Estonians as well as to explore whether the resources accumulated by non-Estonians before the structural changes at the beginning of the 1990s in Estonia proved useful in the new situation. Aggregate statistics tell us little without complementary close descriptions of how people respond to the uncertainty they are facing. The biographical research approach used in this paper was very illuminating, mainly because we were able to connect the personal and historical dimensions.

Economic and social changes in Estonia destabilized life careers, forced individuals to make unexpected choices and devaluated their previous investments. Their behaviour was not so much directed by purposeful biographical projects and realization of their future conceptions of themselves but rather it could be characterized as an adaptation to the new circumstances. Individuals changed their

plans and behaviour because they had to adapt. Opportunities proved to be less a matter of individual control and planning than of unfavourable structural conditions. As in other post-socialist countries dismissals were often collective experiences, which had nothing to do with individual qualifications and motivation (see for example for East Germany Goedicke 2006). Very important was to live in the right place and work at the right workplace. The changes initiated far more "push" mobility than opportunities for "pull" moves. Contrary to expectations that system change make place for differences in personal characteristics to become more important for success and failure in life a decisive role had structural position at the beginning of changes. Success was less of matter of individual control than a matter of structural conditions. Self-initiative of people was not realized because institutional rules and structural conditions entailed passive coping strategies.

Our analysis indicates clear cumulative advantage and disadvantage patterns in life courses of non-Estonians. The winner/losers divide from the first half of the 1990s consolidated during next period. It was very hard to overcome exclusion of the first phase. The channels by which risks were shifted depended upon pre-existing inequalities of resources. Increasing economic risks in the process of post-socialist transformation were shifted towards the more disadvantaged groups within the labour force; from the market transition benefited those who were already better rewarded. Non-Estonians who were already in middle and lower positions in the 1980s found themselves again in such positions. In this sense the situation of non-Estonians in Estonia was quite close to life course patterns in East Germany where later corrections were also rare (Diewald, Goedicke and Mayer 2006). There are also similar features in recruitment process to elite and upper service class positions. After reunification a West German "import" to elite and upper service class positions in East Germany has taken place (Solga 2006). In Estonia non-Estonians in upper class positions were often replaced by Estonians. This process was supported by liberal ideology, which in Estonia has been fused with nationalism (see Kennedy 2002: 158).

However changes in the 1990s affected two national communities in Estonia differently. Non-Estonians had twofold downgrading risks: as a ethnic group moving from a privileged nation to becoming a minority within a nationalizing Estonia and as most of them worked in industry also as representatives of previously privileged social group (industrial workers).

A radical system change from socialist planning economy to liberal market economy has not devalued prior personal resources. Education played a very important role among these resources. Devaluations of education can be observed, but they were quite selective. They occurred more often by unemployment than by downward mobility as in some other post-socialist countries. But it was evident that having only higher education did not guarantee non-Estonians stable positions in the labour market. They had to have a whole "package" of different assets (higher education, broad social network, good knowledge of Estonian, favourable structural position) to become successful. Very important seems to be the amount of weak ties. Non-Estonians who have experienced a loss of colleague and fellow student networks were in less favourable situation compared with those who managed to keep these networks. Family networks have operated as a buffer in uncertain and difficult situation but these networks were not able to compensate for losses of other relationships especially for people belonging to lower social classes.

However, there were no chances for upward mobility for non-Estonians without higher education. Our analysis indicated the stability of relative rankings in social hierarchy despite the huge amount of job moves. The increase in the vertical mobility

has been far less than expected in other post-socialist countries either (see also Solga 2006; Večernik and Matéjů 1999). However the low stability in occupational field of non-Estonians was quite different from the picture in East Germany.

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Endnotes

- i Comparison of the highest income households (the top 20 per cent quintile) and the lowest income households (the bottom 20 per cent quintile) shows that the difference in the disposable income per member of household in these groups differed about 7 times in Estonia. In the European Union, the average difference is 5 times – bigger in the southern member states and smaller in the northern member states (*Indicators of Sustainable Development* 2002: 29).
- ii The updated citizenship law from 1938 was accepted in February 1992. In July 1993 the parliament adopted a new Aliens Law, which established procedures for non-citizens to receive Estonian residency and work permits. In early 1995 additional nationalist elements were added to the citizenship law. These changes fragmented the non-Estonian population into three different legal categories: Estonian citizens (in 1999 approximately 30 per cent of non-Estonians), Russian Federation citizens (18% of non-Estonians) and stateless persons (a little less than 50 per cent, approximately 250,000 non-Estonians) (Hallik, 1999).
- iii There were distinguished eight types of the institutions of secondary education: rural vocational schools; urban vocational schools; agricultural specialized secondary schools; industrial specialized secondary schools; other types of specialized secondary schools; common grades of general secondary schools; academic grades of general secondary schools (from 8th grade); academic grades of general secondary schools (from 1st grade).
- iv We decided to present two biographical profiles from each group. The third type includes four profiles but there is no room to describe all of them.
- v Comparison is at the core of grounded theory (Dey 2004).
- vi Graduates of vocational schools, specialized secondary schools and universities were required to work three years in the first workplace that was assigned by state.
- vii As Vitali said, they both *of course* (my accentuation) have higher education.
- viii Some places in certain universities of St. Petersburg and Moscow were assigned to republics. This means that the candidates were allowed to take the entrance exams in local universities and the competition to these places was somewhat lower. The graduates were obliged to return to their home republic.
- ix The share of Estonians among inhabitants of Maardu is only 20 per cent.
- x Kohtla-Järve lies in the oil-shale fields of north-east Estonia. The oil-shale industry was rapidly expanded in the Soviet period to meet Soviet energy and chemical requirements. Population growth in Kohtla-Järve in the 1950s and

- 1960s has been due to the influx of a large number of non-Estonians. In 2000 Estonians accounted only for 18 per cent of the population.
- xi Elcoteq is a leading European electronics manufacturing services company providing engineering and manufacturing services, supply chain management and after sales services to international high-tech companies. Two of Elcoteq's largest plants (by number of employees) are situated in Estonia, in Tallinn. The number of their employees in Estonia amounts approximately to 3,300, total number of their employees reaches over 19,000. In fact three quarters of the company's capacity are located in Estonia, Hungary, Mexico and China - countries that are highly competitive with respect to market proximity, good availability of skilled labour and favourable general cost levels.
 - xii Specialized secondary school was more prestigious compared to vocational school. As Juri explained, the scholarship in specialized secondary school was much higher.
 - xiii Two non-Estonian women and two men belong to this group. We have presented only two biographical profiles due to the restricted length of the paper.
 - xiv Both respondents who belonged to losers, have defined own position on a labour market, as the unemployed.
 - xv In Estonia there was a sharp fall in the movements across sectors in 1998; similar processes were detected in Lithuania (Rõõm 2002; Rutkowski 2003).
 - xvi There were no legal limitations on the Russians' business activities in Estonia in the 1990s. All of them could establish and rent enterprises. Nevertheless Erik Andersen (1997) argues that non-citizens were consistently disadvantaged by Estonia's property reform principles because the low regulations on small-scale privatization contained various limitations on the non-Estonians' participation in the first and second phase. It means that Estonians began operating in the market economy much faster. The large majority of non-Estonian entrepreneurs were involved in small businesses.

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Still Killing Mockingbirds: Narratives of Race and Innocence in Hollywood's Depiction of the White Messiah Lawyer

Abstract

Through a narrative analysis of movies confronting issues of race and racism in the post-civil rights era, we suggest that the movie *To Kill a Mockingbird* ushered in a new genre for movies about race which presented an image of a white male hero, or perhaps savior, for the black community. We suggest that this genre outlasted the era of the Civil Rights Movement and continues to impact popular cultural discourses about race in post-civil rights America. Post-civil rights films share the central elements of the anti-racist white male hero genre, but they also provide a plot twist that simultaneously highlights the racial innocence of the central characters and reinforces the ideology of liberal individualism. Reading these films within their broader historical context, we show how the innocence of these characters reflects not only the recent neo-conservative emphasis on “color blindness,” but presents a cinematic analogue to the anti-affirmative action narrative of the innocent white victim.

Keywords

Race; Racism; Film; Popular culture; Whiteness

The film, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, based on Harper Lee's eponymous book, was produced in the early 1960s, in the midst of the civil rights movement. Its narrative focuses on the valiant efforts of a small town lawyer, Atticus Finch, who defends Tom Robinson, a black man wrongfully accused of rape, against the racism of the Jim Crow South. In doing so, it creates a representation of an honorable, upper-middle class, white man who becomes a hero to the black community. The movie industry paid great tribute to this white male hero. Gregory Peck, who played the role of Atticus Finch, won an Academy Award, a New York Film Critics Circle Award, and a Golden Globe for Best Actor for his portrayal of the white lawyer/hero and Mary Badham who played Scout was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress. The film's immense success – it won even more acclaim and awards than the Pulitzer prize-winning book – suggests that its portrayal of the white hero who fights against racial injustice was an appealing and popular one to many

white Americans at this historical moment.ⁱ Furthermore, the film's appeal has stood the test of time as the American Film Institute featured it one of the top 25 films of all time in 2007. What is the appeal of such a story?

In her analysis of Hollywood films in the 1980s and 1990s, media scholar Kelly Madison (1999) argues that the Civil Rights Movement created a crisis of identity for whites in the United States in that it largely redefined the image of the black self for white America. Blacks asserted themselves as a positive and powerful force against externally imposed oppression and publicly voiced the fact that that oppression was rooted in white supremacy. This, Madison suggests, led to a need among white Americans to redefine themselves in order to maintain the notion of whiteness as good, civilized, and just. In her view, the emergence of "anti-racist, white hero films" in the late 1980s and 1990s reaffirmed the fiction of a good white self by creating a new collective memory in which whites become the heroes of the Civil Rights Movement, the leaders in the historic fight for racial justice.

We concur with Madison's argument about the "legitimation crisis" the Civil Rights Movement posed for white America; however, we challenge her assertion that the anti-racist, white hero film genre emerged in the post-civil rights era. As the plot of *To Kill a Mockingbird* suggests, this project began at least as early as the 1960s. Further, as other scholars have pointed out, Hollywood has long produced the fiction of the white savior as the noble and kind, beneficent, all powerful, and usually male. For example, Hernán Vera and Andrew Gordon argue that even early movies like *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and *The Littlest Rebel* (1935), though steeped in "nostalgia for the antebellum South," present images of the courageous, just and kind white self – a white self that at once recognized and participated in structures of racial hierarchy (Vera and Gordon 2003: 23).

Consequently, we argue that *To Kill A Mockingbird* not only offered a racially divided nation a representation of anti-racist white male heroism, but it also set up a new genre, one that outlasted the Civil Rights Movement and continues to emerge in popular films in post-civil rights America. As our analysis will demonstrate, these post-civil rights films share the central elements of the anti-racist white male hero genre, but they also provide a plot twist that simultaneously highlights the racial innocence of the central characters and reinforces the ideology of liberal individualism.ⁱⁱ Reading these films within their broader historical context, we show how this genre is complicated over time by shifts in underlying discourses about racial inequality in the United States between 1950 and 2000. As we will argue, the innocence of these characters reflects not only the recent neo-conservative emphasis on "color blindness," but presents a cinematic analogue to the anti-affirmative action narrative of the innocent white victim.

Narratives, Sources and Method

Susan Chase (1995) notes that individuals draw on "cultural resources," as they construct their own narratives and that, "[c]ontrary to common sense, which assumes that our lives determine our stories, narrative scholars argue that our stories shape our lives and that narration makes self understanding possible" (Chase *ibidem*: 7). Serving as a powerful cultural resource, popular films offer a particular type of narration to a mass audience. As such movies serve as a powerful "mode of discourse" that at once tell us about our lives and those of others, but also shape the stories we might tell (Manley 1994: 134). In this way, films present us with stories

about who we are, provide information about what important social issues and historical events might be, and help us make sense of the world that we live in.

Furthermore, because of the popularity of movies as a source of entertainment and cultural expression, the reach of this discourse goes further than many other discursive forms (Feagin 2003; Entman and Rojecki 2001; Hooks; Wilson and Gutierrez 1985). As Joe Feagin (2003: vii) observes, "For the majority of Americans, Hollywood's movies are a constant source of images, ideas, and 'data' about the social world. Indeed, the average citizen spends about 13 hours a year at movie theaters, and half of all adults go to the movies at least once a month.... Almost all U.S. families now have a VCR, and watching movies is the top leisure-time activity."

The expansive reach of the narrative frames in movies make them a particularly important site for examining popular culture constructions of social issues such as race relations in American society. Because the United States is racially segregated nation, most Americans live in neighborhoods that are racially isolated (Massey and Denton 1993). The result of this spatial segregation is that most people spend the majority of their time socially interacting with people of their own race and little time with others of different racial or ethnic groups. This is particularly true for white Americans who, as a result of white flight and wealth accumulation, live and socialize within neighborhoods that are predominantly white (Massey and Denton 1993; Oliver and Shapiro 1997). As a result, popular films about race and racism offer many white Americans narratives for experiences they may not have had. In fact, as some scholars have noted, in the absence of lived experience, films may seem more "authentic" and "true." Historian George Lipsitz, for example, notes *Mississippi Burning* and other such films "probably frame memory [of the 1960s] for the greatest number of people" (1998: 219).

Given the power of popular films to construct such "authentic" narratives, we asked what movies produced in the post-Civil Rights era could tell us about race and racism, during an historical time period that many sociologists described as one in which racial prejudice has declined (See, for example, Bobo, Kluegel and Smith 1997; and Schuman, et. al. 1997). As part of a larger research project, we searched all movies made between 1980 and 2000 that explored issues of race and racism. Specifically, we searched and analyzed plot summaries of movies and selected those movies in which a main aspect of the plot engaged issues of race, racism or racial reconciliation. Plot summaries were obtained from Internet Movie Database, (www.imdb.com). Through this search, we located 174 movies. Next we examined the earnings of these movies, and kept only those movies that made at least 3 million dollars. Our rationale here was to include a wide range of films including those that were top grossing (\$25 million) as well as those that had a substantial viewing audience, but were not block buster hits. This left us with 64 movies in our sample (see Appendix A for an excerpt of this list).

We watched the movies in our sample and conducted a narrative and frame analysis of each movie. The coding categories we employed in our discourse analyses derived from our theoretical questions about popular movie constructions of white male protagonists and innocence (Johnston 2002). In the end we produced an analysis of each movie which included a detailed plot summary (including relevant quotations from the movie's dialogue) and an analysis of analytical categories including: constructions of innocence and appeals to innocence in the movie; constructions of race and character development along lines of race; transformation or conversion narratives by characters in the movie; constructions of whiteness; and the convergence between constructions of race, class and gender.

Of those 64 films, approximately twenty-five percent focused on a white male hero battling racial injustice. This particular genre contains three main elements. First, as the central character in these films, the white savior's viewpoint becomes the narrative focus, while the perspectives of African American characters and their broader community are peripheral at best, if not entirely absent. Second, the white hero sacrifices a great deal at the hands of white racists to further the cause of African Americans and suffers terribly. Third, the white hero also appears in professionally prestigious and influential positions such as lawyer, law enforcement official or educator. The resulting "white Messiahs," as Vera and Gordon (2003) call them, appear to communities of color with a structural power that the community itself does not possess.

The Innocent White Messiah Lawyer

For the sake of brevity in this paper we focus on our analyses of three post-civil rights film presentations of the white Messiah lawyer to illustrate our broader findings. The films *Amistad*, *Ghosts of Mississippi*, and *A Time to Kill*, represent direct narrative parallels to the Civil Rights era film *To Kill a Mockingbird*, making a comparative analysis feasible. Yet in our broader analysis of post-civil rights films about race, we note that the figure of the white savior extends to roles beyond legal advocates. These heroic characters come in the form of law enforcement officials such as police officers or FBI officials (cf., *Mississippi Burning*). Or they appear as educators – teachers or high school principals (cf., *Dangerous Minds*).ⁱⁱⁱ What these films all share with the film depiction of the white messiah lawyer is a narrative focus on a white hero who appears in a role with relative structural power vis-à-vis African Americans. Their authoritative positioning not only reifies white hegemonic power structures, but also silently suggests their entitlement to the story's central focus. One who possesses structural power and uses it with painful consequences to themselves and their loved ones in a battle against injustice is obviously deserving of focused and nuanced attention. In Madison's (1999) reading, these anti-racist white heroes become a trope, representing the goodness and valor of whiteness. At the same time, people of color are not represented in positions of authority, thus signaling them as powerless, passive or ineffectual.

While the portrayal of white involvement in struggles for racial justice is arguably progressive, the fact that this particular story becomes a dominant genre to the exclusion of those focusing centrally on people of color as agents of social change is problematic. The white experience and interpretation of racial struggles is repeated time and again in the movies of the post-civil rights era while films with people of color as central heroic characters are quite rare (cf., *Stand and Deliver*). Moreover, the post-Civil Rights era films create and sustain a new ideology based upon the notion of white innocence. As our analysis reveals, the white lawyer messiah in each of the three post-Civil Rights films we discuss below is initially represented as *innocent* of racism. In their innocence, these characters appear initially completely unaware of racial prejudice or hatred in society, and they rely upon narratives that minimize the relevance of racism by asserting that race does not matter because we live in a color-blind society.

White Innocence in Social Context

Within the broader context of post-Civil Rights United States society, the notion of white innocence has served as the basis for halting progressive reforms of the Civil Rights Movement. For example, affirmative action programs have been severely restricted based upon the notion that the state must protect “innocent white victims” (Ross 1990). For legal scholars, this framework derives from the 1978 U.S. Supreme Court *Bakke* decision wherein the Court ruled that the University of California, Davis had violated the equal protection clause of the Constitution by denying access to whites, or more specifically to Allan Bakke, “solely because of their race” (*Bakke v. Regents of the University of California* 1978; Schwartz 1988; Ball 2000. Bakke claimed that he had been discriminated against in medical school admissions because he was white. As historian Mathew Frye Jacobson (2006: 100) points out, the Court’s ruling “created a new class of victims” – the innocent white male.

Legal scholar Thomas Ross has suggested the notion of innocence is not only an element of legal rhetoric, but a powerful ideological image in American culture. He (Ross 1990) states:

the argument for white innocence in matters of race connects with the cultural ideas of innocence and defilement. The very contrast between the colors, white and black, is often a symbol for the contrast between innocence and defilement. Thus, the theme of white innocence in the legal rhetoric of race draws its power from more than the obvious advantage of pushing away responsibility... White and black often symbolize some form of good and bad. (p. 34)

Stories of innocence have long been part of the mythology about America’s history and heritage. In American Studies, the theme of “innocence” is central in the early historiography of America as an exceptional nation, a nation uncorrupted by the forces of feudalism and aristocratic excess, as “innocent” and unmarked by history, and as “innocent” of imperialism and fascism (Marx 1964; Perry 1960; Smith 1950). And stories about racism and genocide are profoundly shocking, as Coco Fusco (1995) reminds us, because they deeply upset white Americans’ notion of self as good and tolerant people. As a result, as Kelly Madison (1999) suggests, the Civil Rights Movement presented a stark challenge to the historical rhetoric of American innocence by making visible the violent story of white racism.

Trina Grillo and Stephanie Wildman (1991: 400) note that, “when people who are not regarded as entitled to the center move into it, however briefly, they are viewed as usurpers.” The Civil Rights Movement functioned to center the experiences of African Americans, and in doing so, blatantly challenged notions of the innocent and beneficent white community. As a result, the cinematic emergence of an empathic white civil rights hero during this era corresponds to the process of re-establishing a dominant narrative that registered with traditional cultural conceptions of goodness and innocence, while simultaneously de-centering, once again, the histories and experiences of African Americans (Delgado 1996). But, more important for our analysis, in the post-civil rights era white Americans acted to retrench white power through the halting of racially progressive reforms, and in doing so constructed an even more virulent narrative of white innocence (Crenshaw 1988). The development of the *innocent* white male hero in post-civil rights era Hollywood films, along with their emphasis upon heroic individual solutions not only registers with dominant cultural conceptions of innocence, it also functions to distinguish these

films from their earlier anti-racist white hero cinema counter-parts like Atticus Finch in *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

The White Messiah Lawyer of the Civil Rights Era

In *To Kill a Mockingbird* Atticus Finch (as portrayed by Gregory Peck) is a noble and selfless lawyer who justly takes on the case of a black man wrongly accused of raping a white woman despite the fact that representing this man is a clear violation of racial norms in the Jim Crow South.^{iv} When Finch takes the case of Tom Robinson, he fully understands that he and his family will be the target of racial hatred in the small, Depression era, Southern town of Maycomb, Georgia. Because he understands the racial dynamics of his community, he not only anticipates potential harassment, but responds to these incidents with dignity. Part of what makes his character heroic is that despite his awareness of the consequences of taking the case, he does it because it he considers it his moral obligation. As a consequence, he endures insults and threats from neighbors and a violent attempt on his children's lives at the hands of the father of the woman who accused Robinson of raping her.

Throughout the movie, Finch never questions his decision to represent Robinson. Nor does he complain about the negative consequences he suffers as a result of his decision. Finch maintains his belief that justice will prevail through his commitment to the legal process, the hegemonic white legal power structure of the Jim Crow South, and remains optimistic about the possibility of legal justice with a higher court even after the Maycomb jury convicts Robinson of the rape he did not commit. As such, Atticus Finch personifies a Messiah role. A major element of this role is his expectation of suffering and the fact that he does not falter in his commitment throughout the film. Moreover, his character is portrayed not as innocent of power, but rather as knowledgeable about racism, courageous, and selfless. Innocence in this film is instead represented by his young daughter, Scout, who does not understand the racial dynamics of her girlhood town, and continually violates racial norms without being aware that she has done so. Scout's youth makes her a perfect innocent, because as a child she is not yet expected to understand the racial taboos of her social world. Thus the film pushes against these taboos, directly, with Finch publicly rejecting them by taking the case, and more subtly, with young Scout who violates racial norms because they do not make sense to her.

Scout's innocence, however, is betrayed by the conclusion of the trial. Finch cannot save Robinson from conviction by the racist, all white jury. And, when Robinson attempts to escape from jail and is shot by the guards, the possibility of appealing to a higher court is lost, and white racism prevails. The death of Robinson captures the film's central metaphor. Mockingbirds represent, as Finch tells Scout early in the film, goodness (read innocence), and killing them constitutes a cruel and senseless act. In this light, killing mockingbirds becomes a metaphor for the violent consequences of racism.

Like the post-civil rights films we analyze below, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is told from the perspective of the white male hero. We never learn what Tom Robinson is thinking. In fact, we rarely see him for much of the film. As for the larger Black community, all we are shown is their gratitude for Atticus. His perspective thus becomes normative. His perspective, however, is not uncritical and presumably appeals to a white audience's sense of fair play. The film highlights injustice – in personal terms with respect to Atticus and his family and, more generally, with

respect to white racism in his community. Further, and in a significant twist that differentiates this film from later ones, Atticus is never innocent of racism or its consequences, and though he is valorized as the beneficent white hero, he cannot prevail against its intractability. His failure suggests that despite his goodness, his hard work, and his commitment to justice through the legal system, one individual can not solve this larger social problem.

The genre of the male white hero saving African Americans through the legal system reappears in post-Civil Rights films; however, there are a number of subtle, but important differences in these more recent depictions. In the post-civil rights era, the white savior is initially represented as innocent of racism. Interestingly, their innocence of racism at once mirrors the viewpoint of the young ingénue Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but their actual role as adult lawyer saviors reproduces Finch's commitment to the legal system in obtaining justice. Further, their savior role is enhanced by the fact that unlike Atticus Finch, they actually win their cases in court. As a result, they are vindicated as morally righteous when the juries or judges rule in their favor. The storyline then becomes a conversion narrative in which these lawyers were once blind to racism, but over time become advocates for racial justice through the legal system, a system that now gets portrayed as fundamentally fair.⁹

The Cinematic Narrative of White Innocence

In our first film, *Amistad*, a Steven Spielberg film released in 1997, the audience is transported to the early 1800s to witness the legal battle that surrounded the infamous ship *Amistad*. The film is loosely based upon the actual case of the *Amistad* ship, in which a revolt occurred upon a Spanish ship, illegally engaged in the transportation of Africans into slavery from the British protectorate Sierra Leone. The movie opens with melancholy music as we see Cinque (portrayed by Djimon Hounsou), an African man shackled aboard the ship break free from his bonds and revolt against the white crew of the ship. The scene of the revolt is dark and ends with a close-up shot of Cinque brutally stabbing a white crewman, stepping on his neck to pull out the knife, and then stabbing him again and again while shrieking. The camera pans back to the name on the front of the boat: *Amistad*. Following this dramatic opening, the *Amistad* floats into American waters and the Africans who revolted against their captors are taken into custody to be prosecuted for murder. After setting us up with this image of a black man that expressly illustrates defilement, the ensuing legal drama unfolds.

Although the movie *Amistad* has more than one lawyer, the white lawyer who becomes the savior in the legal battle is Mr. Baldwin (played by Mathew McConaughey). Baldwin is an eager real estate attorney who approaches two abolitionists, Mr. Tappan, a white man (portrayed by Stellan Skarsgard) and Mr. Johnson, a black man (played by Morgan Freeman) who are working together to find legal representation for the African men and women who were aboard the *Amistad*. On their first meeting Baldwin tells the two men that he is perfect for the case because "all of the claims [in the case] speak to the issue of property and ownership," and in a later meeting he says that it is really a simple case, "It's like anything, land, livestock, [etc.]..." After he makes this point, the camera dwells on the shocked face of the white abolitionist. Baldwin goes on to make his legal argument: If the men and women from the *Amistad* are slaves, then they must be viewed as possessions, and therefore, may not be tried for murder; but if they are not slaves, then they were illegally obtained and were justifiably defending themselves. The white abolitionist responds with outrage, "This fight must be waged on the battlefield of

righteousness... these are people... not livestock.” He adds that his cause is in the name of Christ himself, and Baldwin responds, “But Christ lost.”

Here, Baldwin presents us a discursive framework based upon legal formality, one without emotion or moral judgment that the white abolitionist finds dehumanizing and offensive. In addition to emphasizing the differences between a dispassionate legal rationality and a Christian moral righteousness, this scene also provides a subtle but important message about race relations and the law. Matters of race and racial justice are to be sorted out by white men and the perspective of white men in regard to these issues is of the utmost importance (Morgan Freeman’s character is silent throughout this exchange). As the movie progresses however, Baldwin becomes less reliant on cold legal logic and more emotionally invested in the lives of the people he represents suggesting that the arguments he began with are indeed offensive and dehumanizing. Baldwin’s conversion from racial innocence to recognition of the humanity of the black people whom he represents becomes the film’s central focus.

Baldwin’s loss of innocence and growing awareness of racism is revealed in multiple scenes. For example, after successfully arguing his case to the district court where he proves that the ship *Amistad* came from Sierra Leone, a protectorate of Great Britain where slavery is outlawed, he leaves the courtroom and a white man comes up behind him and hits him over the head. Baldwin falls to the floor and when he gets up he asks in deep confusion, “What did I do to deserve this?” Mr. Johnson, the black abolitionist involved in the case responds, “You took the case sir, you took the case.” Here, Baldwin’s portrayal is one of a white man who is naïve about the racial norms of the time who become the unwitting victim of discrimination and harassment.

As Baldwin’s case progresses he meets with lawyer, Congressman, and former President, John Quincy Adams (portrayed by Anthony Hopkins), who convinces Baldwin that he must get to know the African men and woman better in order to tell their story in higher court. After finding a Mende translator, Baldwin talks through this interpreter with Cinque about his capture and the abuses of his journey. Throughout this process, Baldwin becomes more personally invested in the human issues of the case. Yet, after winning his case at the court of appeals, Baldwin learns that it will be appealed to the United States Supreme Court. Here again, he appears completely taken aback that this would happen – despite the fact that from the perspective of an advocate in our legal system who understands the appeal process this should have been fully anticipated. When he reports this news to Cinque in his jail cell, Cinque expresses disgust by the outcome and refuses to talk further with Baldwin. To this Baldwin responds with anger, “Has it occurred to you that I’m all you’ve got? Because as it happens, since my practice has deteriorated, you’re all I’ve got.” Then he shows Cinque the death threats he has received since he took the case and tells him that one benefit to having no business is that, “I am now free to sit here as long as it takes for you to talk to me.” In this moment, Baldwin becomes the Messiah, one who has forsaken his own livelihood in order to save the men and women of the *Amistad*. In this scene and throughout the film, Baldwin’s suffering becomes the central frame of the story despite what we learn about the abuses Cinque and other Africans suffered on the *Amistad*.

In sum, Baldwin becomes a Messiah, through his conversion from a rationalistic lawyer, naïve about racial politics, to an advocate for racial justice. Given that Baldwin is ultimately successful in his endeavor, the film also suggests that the white legal structure is the appropriate route to racial justice, a paradoxical fact given that at this historical moment the United States legal system was an expressly white racist

system in which the institution of slavery was its defining characteristic. In this way, *Amistad* echoes *To Kill a Mockingbird's* emphasis on the legal system as a route to social justice, but unlike Finch Baldwin actually prevails.

In our second film, director Rob Reiner's *Ghosts of Mississippi* (1996), we are faced with a brutal crime against a black civil rights advocate at the hands of white men. The movie opens with scenes of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s set to protest music of the era. Documentary footage from the era shows black protestors being beaten by white police, black soldiers fighting in Viet Nam, black athletes winning major competitions, Martin Luther King Jr. giving a speech, black women picking cotton, and then ominously, crosses burning in the yards of people's home. In a caption, the screen notes "Mississippi Delta in 1963," followed by the line, "This story is true." In the next scene, a white man murders black civil rights worker Medgar Evers in front of his home and as the murder unfolds, we hear John F. Kennedy's Civil Rights speech in the background. Then, we see the white man who shot Evers, Byron De La Beckwith (portrayed by James Woods), in the courtroom. White law officials shake his hand and are friendly toward him as he enters the court for his hearing, and as Myrlie Evers (portrayed by Whoopi Goldberg) testifies on the witness stand, the former governor of Mississippi walks up to Beckwith in front of the court, and jury. After two hung juries, Beckwith is released, and we see him being greeted by a street full of white people, celebrating his acquittal. Juxtaposed against this celebration, Myrlie Evers is shown trying to scrub the blood off of the car port cement outside her home where her husband was shot.

These snapshots of the 1960s murder of Medgar Evers set up the historical background for *Ghosts of Mississippi*. The film jumps forward in time with the screen signaling a different date: 1989. Here we meet Bobby De Laughter (portrayed by Alec Baldwin), a prosecutor for the district attorney's office. Bobby's boss asks him to check on the files of the Medgar Evers case. Initially, he resists, explaining that the murder case is over 25 years old, but his boss responds, "Sure it is, but if we try to bury this, Myrlie Evers is gonna have every black politician in Jackson climbing all over me." Thus, the audience is set up to watch our Messiah transform into a reasonable attorney who will eventually do good in the world. By contrast, Merlie Evers's character is thrust into the background as a nagging voice unreasonably focused on the racism of the past who will manipulate politicians to achieve her own ends.

Although De Laughter initially looks into the Evers' murder case file to appease Evers, as time goes on he discovers evidence of corruption in the first trial. His expression of disgust with the case's blatant racism and corruption mark a shift in his viewpoint from his original blindness to racism (read innocence) to his ultimate conversion as an advocate for racial justice when decides to re-open the case and re-prosecute Beckwith for the murder of Medgar Evers. Like Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Baldwin in *Amistad*, De Laughter experiences injury at the hands of other whites as a result of his decision. His wife leaves him in disgust, his family tells him they are embarrassed by his actions, and he becomes the target of hate crimes: His van is vandalized, he receives threatening phone calls, and his son gets in a fight with a boy who calls De Laughter a "nigger lover." Yet, like Baldwin and unlike Atticus Finch, De Laughter expresses surprise and confusion about these events, he is completely bewildered that such things would happen to him when he is simply trying to be a good advocate.

Near the conclusion of the film, the press learns through their investigation that De Laughter has found the original murder weapon. When they publish this information, Myrlie Evers is furious with De Laughter because he had not told her. In

a scene of a press conference with two black men standing at a podium, one of the men says, "...as far as I'm concerned they're [referring to Bobby De Laughter and his boss] nothin' but a pair of lying racists who never, I repeat never, had any intention of prosecuting the case." The next day, De Laughter's boss tells him that he is taking him off the case and he is to be replaced by a black prosecutor. Like earlier attributions to Myrlie Evers as a manipulator, here the black community leaders are represented as irrational and quick to wage claims about racism. Because De Laughter's story is central to the film, and he has been represented thus far as the all-sacrificing hero, the threat to dismiss him appears incredibly unjust. He is innocent of accusations of racism and is represented as being unfairly replaced by a black attorney, a portrayal which silently echoes broader narratives of the innocent white victim unfairly harmed by affirmative action.

The night after his boss takes him off the case, De Laughter calls Myrlie Evers from a pay phone at a movie theater. He tells Evers that he is committed to the case, and he wants her to make a commitment to him by telling his boss to leave him on the case. The next day at De Laughter's office, Myrlie Evers shows up and gives him the transcript to the original trial—noting that she has kept it for many years, and tells him he will not find any more opposition to his handling the case. After this final exchange, De Laughter goes forward to win the case with the full trust and support of Myrlie Evers thus solidifying his role as the white Messiah lawyer. Here again, as in *Amistad*, through a conversion narrative from innocence to advocate for racial justice, De Laughter prevails as an heroic individual.

The third and final movie we discuss, *A Time to Kill* (1996) directed by Joel Schumacher, opens with the same dramatic set-up for the legal challenge the white Messiah lawyer will face. Foreboding music plays as we see a group of white men in a pick-up truck with a confederate flag on it riding around talking and laughing loudly, while making dirt fly off the road with their truck. This is juxtaposed with a scene of a young black girl, ten year old Tonya, buying groceries at a small groceries store. After Tonya leaves the store, we see one of the white men throw a can of beer at her head and hit her as she walks down the road. Then we hear her screaming and see the face of one of the white men, and then blood on Tonya's feet. Tonya has been raped by these white men, and when her father, Carl Lee Haley (played by Samuel L. Jackson), comes home from work, and sits beside his daughter on the couch. Her face is badly swollen and bloody. In a scene invoking deep emotion, Tonya says to her father, "Daddy, I'm sorry I dropped the groceries."

The white men who raped Tonya are soon arrested and in the next scene Carl Lee Haley, a janitor, talks to Jake Brigance (portrayed by Mathew McConaughey), a white lawyer. He asks Brigance what sentence the young men who raped his daughter are likely to receive. Brigance responds with uncertainty, but acknowledges that in a nearby town a white man who raped a black girl got off. Haley then says to Brigance, "If I was in a jam, you'd help me?" Brigance says that he would. On the following day of the arraignment of the white men, Haley shoots and kills them. He is arrested and charged with the murder, and then, requests that Brigance represent him.

Here again, the central focus of the story is on the personal growth of Brigance from racial innocent into anti-racist white hero. We learn very little about Haley or his perspective. And, we learn almost nothing of the 10 year old Tonya, who is objectified as the victim of a horrible violence in a scene at the beginning of the movie. Jake's innocence of racism is established early in the film when the press asks him whether Haley can get a fair trial in Mississippi. Brigance replies, "Some folks believe Black folks can't get a fair trial, but in the New South justice will be color

blind.” And, like the other films discussed, because Brigance agrees to take the case, he is punished for doing so. The Ku Klux Klan begins a spree of hate crimes against his home, his family, and his colleagues. The Klan burns a cross in front of his home and his daughter comes home crying every day from school because she gets taunted as a “nigger lover.” Throughout Brigance appears confused and stunned that such things could happen. When his secretary tells him that she has been getting death threats on the phone, he responds with concern and confusion, “I’m sorry. Why didn’t you tell me?” She responds indignantly, “Why? Would you have dropped the case?”

As the film progresses, the violence against Brigance and his friends escalates. First, the Klan attacks and beats his secretary’s husband, while they hold her down forcing her to watch. Her husband later dies as a result of the attack. Finally, toward the end of the film, the Klan burns Brigance’s home to the ground. His friend (an alcoholic divorce attorney) tells him, “Your marriage is on the rocks... Your career is ruined if you’re lucky. And, if you’re not, you’re dead. Do everyone a favor and quit the case.” He ignores the advice and sits forlornly in the smoldering rubble of his house, calling for his dog.

Despite his enormous suffering, Brigance as the white Meissah lawyer moves forward just as the central characters do the other post-civil rights films do and ultimately wins his case in the end. However, over the course of the trial, it begins to look increasingly difficult to secure an acquittal. The night before the last day of trial, Brigance goes to the jail to see Haley and suggests that he try to negotiate a plea bargain. Haley refuses to let Brigance give up and explains that he picked Brigance, a white lawyer, because he, Brigance, is “one of them.” Brigance protest that this is not true, suggesting that he and Haley are friends. Haley challenges Brigance’s professed color-blindness saying,

We ain’t no friends... America is a war, and you on the other side. How a black man ever gonna get a fair trial? You, you one of the bad guys. You see me as different. You see me as that jury sees me. If you was on that jury, what would it take to convince you to set me free?”

Brigance leaves looking stunned – his innocence about color-blindness shattered.

The next day, in Brigance’s dramatic final summation to the jury he tells them that “the eyes of the law are human eyes” and that the racial differences we see mean that Blacks often cannot get a fair trial. He urges them to seek the truth with their hearts. Asking the jury to close their eyes, he slowly and dramatically retells the story of the beating and rape of the little girl that shattered “everything innocent and pure...” Finally he says, “I want you to picture that little girl... Now, [I want you to] imagine that she’s white.” Brigance is nearly crying as he speaks, and the faces of the jurors are lined with tears. In the next scene, the doors of the courthouse open, and a young black boy yells “Innocent. He’s innocent.”

Like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the central narrative focus in *A Time to Kill* is on a white lawyer who fights for racial justice on the behalf of an African American man. African American perspectives are marginalized in the film, and the abuses suffered by African Americans in the story serve merely to set the stage for a story about the white male hero. Here too, the exceptional heroism of the white hero and their encounters with white racism on the behalf of African Americans suggests that whites also suffer and perhaps have done more than their fair share to aid Blacks. And finally, power is rightfully executed in the hands of a white man suggesting at once his beneficence and paternalism toward the African American community.

Despite these similarities, *A Time to Kill* differs in significant ways. Unlike Atticus Finch, Jake Brigance is initially presented as an innocent who is unaware of racism who becomes transformed during the process of defending Carl Lee Haley. While Finch fully anticipates the negative consequences of his decision to take the case for Tom Robinson, Brigance is surprised and confused when he finds himself the target of hate crimes. Like the roles of Baldwin and De Laughter, his role presents the cinematic analogue of Bakke as the innocent white victim. His transformation from color-blindness to an anti-racist consciousness becomes the central focus of the film. Furthermore, while Finch may be portrayed as a hero to the Black community, he is not a savior – he cannot rescue Tom Robinson from prison or prevent his death. By contrast, the more recent anti-racist heroes we discussed, like Brigance, do prevail – often against tremendous odds – and win their legal cases. How do we account for these differences? To answer this question, we suggest that these films must be read within the historical context of their production.

Racial Narratives and White Messiahs

In 1962, in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, dominant narratives about racial inequality were shifting and changing. As Richard Pride (2002) argues in the *Politics of Racial Narratives*, notions of Black biological inferiority were being supplanted by narratives that highlighted the historical and contemporary effects of white discrimination against African Americans. While such narratives arose in the civil rights movement, he suggests that white liberals also espoused such stories to explain racial inequality. In this light, Finch's initial understanding of racism reflects this broader historical narrative. He begins with an awareness of the consequences of white discrimination. Further, his failure to save Tom Robinson confirms this larger narrative. Despite his goodness, his hard work, and his commitment to justice through the legal system, the film suggests that individual solutions will not solve this larger social problem. Remedies for the historical burdens of discrimination will not come about through individual effort, but entail instead government policies and programs that will ultimately restructure political power.

As historian Angela Dillard argues, in the 1980s neo-conservatives began to reject what they saw as the excessive egalitarianism of American culture and stood in staunch opposition to programs such as affirmative action and many of the Great Society program's federal initiatives which, in their view, constituted government interventions in the "free market" and undermined the importance of individual achievement, responsibility, and hard work. Similarly, Pride argues that in the 1980s and 1990s, another narrative emphasizing individualism and the lack of the Black work ethic to explain racial inequality becomes dominant. During this time period, remedial programs and policies such as affirmative action designed to ameliorate Black disadvantage come under attack by conservatives and, as other sociologists have noted, the ideology of color blindness begins to emerge (Flagg 1993; Bonilla-Silva 2001, 2003). Within this framework, race no longer matters and discrimination is a relic of the past. African Americans are to be judged according to their hard work, individual effort, and merits. If they don't succeed, it's because they haven't worked hard enough, taken initiative, and so forth. The racial innocence of the heroes in the films of the 1990s captures these themes. They do not expect to find discrimination, and when they do, they are completely surprised.

As we have shown, the focus of the narrative then becomes the protagonist's transformation from innocence to anti-racist white hero who battles against the odds and ultimately triumphs in the courtroom. Whereas Atticus Finch's efforts may be

regarded as heroic, these newer anti-racist heroes are saviors. As the ideology of liberal individualism would predict, their hard work and suffering are rewarded in the end with success.

Conclusion

Portraying white men in these post-civil rights films – *Amistad*, *Ghosts of Mississippi*, and *A Time to Kill* – as saviors rather than oppressors of other races serves to assuage white guilt by reassuring white viewers that white people are not bad, they simply may not know about racism. These white male saviors are also differentiated from “bad” white people as the narrative of racism is framed as explicit racial violence. They are innocents, color-blind. And, when they lose their innocence, they become heroic figures who fight against injustice. Here, we see a theme common to many Hollywood movies, collective endeavors, such as the Civil Rights Movement, are transformed into the battle of a lone individual who triumphs against evil, in this case, racism (cf., Vera and Gordon 2003). Further, while this narrative purports to be anti-racist, it also serves to reinforce white paternalism. Whites are presented in these films as saviors rather than oppressors of other races and people of color are passive or ineffectual victims who cannot save themselves. In comparing these more recent films with *To Kill a Mockingbird*, we are not suggesting that the former is a radical film and the others are not. As we have argued, all these films all share problematic elements – particularly their narrative focus on the white male hero which serves to create the fiction that whites, rather than people of color, are heroes in historic struggles against racial injustice. Rather, our point is that the ideology of innocence and liberal individualism has become a dominant motif in these more recent films.

This subtle shift in the anti-racist hero genre has several effects. First, the focus on the main character’s transformation from innocence to consciousness about racism suggests the possibility of such a transformation for white America. By contrast, both survey data and qualitative research demonstrate the majority of white Americans believe that African Americans no longer experience discrimination (Schuman et al.1997). In fact, as Jennifer Pierce (2003) finds in her research with highly educated white professionals, these white men are often “racing for innocence,” that is, they disavow discrimination and exclusion at the same time that they practice it. In this way, the films provide a convenient fiction which serves to gloss over the actual beliefs of most white Americans.

Second, by emphasizing the victimhood of white men, these films also play into and reinscribe the broader narrative of the innocent white male from contemporary debates about affirmative action. While anti-affirmative action rhetoric paints white men as unfairly victimized by such policies, the films portray the central characters as victims in their relentless pursuit of racial justice. While the source of their injury differs in each case, what is central to both is a narrative focus on the benevolent white male who is innocent of racism (at least initially in the films), and has been treated unfairly. By making white male victimhood the central focus, the films obscure the long history of discrimination and violence directed against communities of color in the United States. Indeed, if these films had focused instead on the suffering of Cinque in *Amistad*, or Medgar Evers (or Merlie Evers) in *Ghosts of Mississippi*, or Tonya in *A Time to Kill* within a larger genre of films of the same type, they would not only tell a story that is more true to the experiences of people of color historically and contemporarily in the United States, but they would also decenter the innocent white male victim of contemporary public rhetoric.

Finally, by focusing on the white savior's heroic and individual efforts to combat racism, these films also celebrate and reinforce the ideology of liberal individualism. The triumph of the individual not only masks and obscures the collective exercise of power that relentlessly channels rewards, resources, and opportunities to white Americans, but silently suggests that government programs and policies such as affirmative action are unnecessary. As Bonilla-Silva (2003) points out, this new individualistic, color-blind perspective, which fails to account for racialized practices and structural racism, results in consequences strikingly similar to earlier periods in which black biological inferiority was professed. If killing mockingbirds serves as a metaphor for the violent consequences of racism in the movie *To Kill a Mockingbird*, we suggest that popular movies in the post-civil rights era are, perhaps metaphorically, still killing mockingbirds.

Appendix A: Films Included in the Study

The full list of 64 movies included in our sample include: *American History X*, *American Me*, *Amistad*, *Amos and Andrew*, *BAPS*, *Black and White*, *Bonfire of the Vanities*, *Bullworth*, *City Hall*, *The Color Purple*, *Cop and a 1/2*, *Cry Freedom*, *Dances with Wolves*, *Dangerous Minds*, *Deep Cover*, *Dead Presidents*, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Dry White Season*, *A Family Thing*, *The Five Heartbeats*, *Gattaca*, *Get on the Bus*, *Ghosts of Mississippi*, *The Glass Shield*, *Glory*, *Heart Condition*, *Higher Learning*, *Hoodlum*, *The Hurricane*, *Joy Luck Club*, *Jungle Fever*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Liberty Heights*, *Long Walk Home*, *Losing Isaiah*, *Malcolm X*, *Men of Honor*, *Mi Vida Loca*, *Mississippi Burning*, *Mississippi Massala*, *Panther*, *Posse*, *Remember the Titans*, *Rising Sun*, *Romeo Must Die*, *Rosewood*, *Round Midnight*, *Set it Off*, *She's Gotta Have It*, *Stand and Deliver*, *Surf Ninjas*, *Surviving the Game*, *Tales for the Hood*, *Thunderheart*, *A Time to Kill*, *True Identity*, *Two Family House*, *A Walk in the Clouds*, *White Man's Burden*, *White Nights*, *The Wood*.

Films identified in the anti-racist white hero genre include: *Amistad*, *Bullworth*, *Cry Freedom*, *Dances with Wolves*, *Dangerous Minds*, *Dry White Season*, *Ghosts of Mississippi*, *Long Walk Home*, *Losing Isaiah*, *Mississippi Burning*, *Thunderheart*, and *A Time to Kill*.

Endnotes

- i The movie received rave reviews, as well as winning substantial movie industry nominations and awards including: Best Actor (win) - Gregory Peck - 1962 Academy, Best Adapted Screenplay (win) - Horton Foote - 1962 Academy, Best Art Direction (win) - Oliver Emert - 1962 Academy, Best Art Direction (win) - Henry Bumstead - 1962 Academy, Best Art Direction (win) - Alexander Golitzen - 1962 Academy, Best Cinematography (nom) - Russell Harlan - 1962 Academy, Best Director (nom) - Robert Mulligan - 1962 Academy, Best Picture (nom) 1962 Academy, Best Score (nom) - Elmer Bernstein - 1962 Academy, Best Supporting Actress (nom) - Mary Badham - 1962 Academy, Competing Film (win) - Robert Mulligan - 1963 Cannes Film Festival, Gary Cooper Award

for Human Values (win) - Robert Mulligan - 1963 Cannes Film Festival, Best Actor (win) - Gregory Peck - 1963 New York Film Critics Circle, Best Film (win) - Robert Mulligan - 1963 New York Film Critics Circle, Best Screenwriting (win) - Horton Foote - 1963 New York Film Critics Circle, U.S. National Film Registry (win) 1995 Library of Congress, 100 Greatest American Movies (win) 1998 American Film Institute, Best Director (nom) - Robert Mulligan - 1962 Directors Guild of America, Best Picture - Drama B (nom) 1962 Golden Globe, Best Actor - Drama (win) - Gregory Peck - 1962 Golden Globe, Best Director (nom) - Robert Mulligan - 1962 Golden Globe, Best Original Score (win) - Elmer Bernstein - 1962 Golden Globe, Motion Picture Promoting International Understanding (win) 1962 Golden Globe.

- ii As George Lipsitz reminds us, the language of liberal individualism serves to recast long standing, systematic racist practices such as discrimination against African Americans and other people of color in employment and housing into seemingly individual, isolated incidents of personal prejudice. “Collective exercise of power that relentlessly channels rewards, resources, and opportunities from one group to another will not appear ‘racist’ from this perspective because they rarely announce their intention to discriminate against others” (Lipsitz 1998: 20-21).
- iii We also note that while our period of examination ended in 2000, the recent (2006) film *Freedom Writers*, which parallels the plot line of *Dangerous Minds*, suggests that the white Messiah image in post-civil rights film continues to proliferate.
- iv As in many screenplays, the plot for the film *To Kill a Mockingbird* deviated from the book’s original storyline. Harper Lee’s (1960) book takes the perspective of Scout, the young girl, while the film centrally on her father Atticus Finch. For an interesting discussion of how and why this change was made, see Shields 2006.
- v As literary scholar Ann DuCille argues, “The I was blind, but now I see” script among white feminists who claimed to be anti-racist serves to mask responsibility for racist practices.

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Backpackers as a Community of Strangers: The Interaction Order of an Online Backpacker Notice Board

Abstract

While commercial images of “backpacking” emphasise adventure, youth and sightseeing, recent ethnographies of backpackers identify other motivations and rationales that accentuate travel experiences as formative of the self and identity. This raises the question of the basis of this apparently common orientation. This paper investigates, through analysis of postings on an electronic backpacker notice board, “backpacker” as a collaboratively constructed category. We propose that the shared understandings of “backpacker” enabled by these notice boards are consistent with cultural orientations captured in notions of cosmopolitanism (Beck 2000) involving a shift to new forms of sociality across borders: a solidarity with strangers.

Keywords

Backpackers; Interaction Order; Cosmopolitanism; Information and Communication; Technology;

This study focuses on internet backpacker notice boards as a site for the cultural dissemination of meanings of travel and mobility that refer to backpackers' everyday experience. In seeking to understand the common orientations to self formation noted in backpacker ethnographies, we saw this focus as an opportunity to examine quasi-conversational interaction that located their orientations in specific spatio-temporal contexts. The data analysis describes the teamwork and alignment (Goffman 1971) between participants and the generation of common understandings of everyday backpacker problems, uncertainties and risks evident in the notice board interaction. We further suggest that this is providing the basis of a common culture founded on these experiences. Thus, while ethnographies of backpacking have identified the salience of self-formation in backpackers' narratives, this study provides an insight into the means by which everyday experiences come to constitute a shared orientation.

The paper first turns to an overview of ethnographies of backpacking, identifying underlying themes characterising backpacker practices and rationales. The paper then reports on an analysis of interaction on a backpacker electronic notice board, arguing that “backpacker” is a category that potentially challenges commercial images of “backpacking”.

From “Backpacking” to “Backpacker”

Much of the literature on backpackers rests on the assumption that backpackers can be identified as a group on the basis of their engagement in “backpacking”. In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, backpackers are predominantly young people in the 15-25 age category. (Locker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Sorensen 2003) However these studies and others have observed the growing number of backpackers that fall into a more mature category of 26 to 44 years and noticeably a smaller percentage of people travelling from 45yrs and above who identify as backpackers (*Tourism Queensland* 2003) Their increasing importance to the tourism market has been noted in Australia and internationally. The term commonly refers to a group seen as self organized pleasure tourists on a prolonged multiple destination journey with a flexible itinerary, extended beyond that which it is usually possible to fit into a cyclical holiday pattern” (Sorensen 2003: 851).

These characteristics are seen to be consistent with preferences for budget accommodation, an emphasis on meeting both locals and travellers, and on informal and participatory recreation activities (Locker-Murphy and Pearce 1995: 830-831). A study of Israeli backpackers points to the overarching importance of these characteristics in backpacker identity in spite of differences within this group. The study sought to distinguish analytically between “backpacking” as a specific form of non-institutionalised tourism and “backpackers” as a group that attribute distinctive meanings to travel (Uriely, Yonay and Simchai 2002). It found that backpackers constituted a heterogeneous group with respect to the diversity of rationales and meanings attached to their travel experiences. However, above this heterogeneity they also displayed a common commitment to a non-institutionalised form of travel, which was central to their self-identification as backpackers. If this is a more universal pattern amongst backpackers, this raises the question of a specific framework employed by this group that is salient for their common understandings of the purposes and rationales of travel.

Studies of backpacker’s narratives (Desforges 1998; Cederholm 2000; Elsrund 2001) point to the existence of such a framework that coheres around principles of self-creation (Noy 2003) summarises the implications of these findings:

They show that what lies at the core of the backpackers’ stories, though often covert, is these youths’ selves and identities, rather than the exciting activities and accomplishments which constitute the overt topic of narration (p. 79)

The backpacker experience is usually characterized as a self imposed transition or rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood, and occurs in the time between the end of formal education and the beginning of full time employment. In the case of more mature backpackers, the experience commonly occurs in other transition periods during life course such as marriage breakdown, “mid-life” crisis or career transition. Either way the experience is a liminal one, forming a transitional experience between the end of one part of life and the beginning of another. This

liminality also suggests a disconnection from conventional principles of experience within the bounds of everyday life, which makes certain behaviours like risk-taking, uncertainty and adventure available to the backpacker more so than other tourist groups.

The liminality of the backpacker experience is important to the construction of novelty or, as Simmel (1971: 187) described it, “dropping out of the continuity of life”. Backpacking differs from the generic idea of tourism or “the tourist” because the backpacker is expected to court risks purposively rather than to avoid them (Giddens 1991: 124). It is important to note here the difference between acceptable and avoided risks. Acceptable risks are those that are self-imposed and “controlled” by the individual as distinct from avoided risks that are imposed by others (Reith 2003). This logic of risk is consistent with the motivation of backpacking in terms of self-creation, constituting a way of testing and displaying the capacity to cope with risk appropriately. This has been seen as a distinguishing feature of the dispositions and practices of non-institutionalized tourist or backpacker when compared to the institutionalized tourist (Uriely, Yonay and Simchai 2002).

Thus ethnographic studies of backpackers’ dispositions and rationales point to the possibility of a group habitus (Bourdieu 1984) or commonly shared dispositions, pertaining to the development of a specific kind of self, developed through controlled risks in the context of mobility. However, this raises the question of the specific nature of relationships that enable this development, and, further, the nature of the risks that provide for it. This paper now turns to an investigation of backpacker interaction on an internet backpacker notice board in order to investigate the contexts in which self formation becomes salient as a rationale for travel.

The Research context and Methodology: The Interaction Order of an on-line Backpacker Notice Board

The decision to analyse messages posted on an electronic notice board rather than their more tangible form within backpacker hostels was informed by observations conducted in a backpacker hostel. On our tour of a “newish” backpacker hostel located in an inner city area in Brisbane Australia, we were told they no longer had notice boards in the hostel as the internet provided a more superior version that could be accessed easily by backpackers all over the world. For the most part the hostel entry was quite small, with the majority of the building closed to visitors (not dissimilar to a normal hotel foyer design). The only publicly accessible areas within the hostel were the entry and the bar. The entry itself was made up of the reception desk and travel desk, two small but comfortable lounge areas and a hidden alcove behind the lounges, which housed six computers and two telephones with a toilet facility and shower close by. The computer area was the most hospitable looking section of the entry; however the concealed position indicated its use as a private space for backpackers within the hostel, despite being located within the public access area. The accessibility and homeliness of the computer area focused our attention on information and communication technologies as a central resource for backpackers.

The analysis of the notice board data was informed by the theories and methodologies related to the perspective of the Interaction Order. This perspective has been outlined by Rawls (1989) in order to gather together the theoretical and methodological insights of Goffman, Garfinkel and Sacks. While there are differences between these sociologists in terms of emphases and specific frameworks for data

analysis, there are clear commonalities in their focus on a specific level of social ordering – the production of localised order. The interaction order framework takes its name from Erving Goffman's work in describing and analysing a domain of social ordering that he asserted to warrant attention as a discrete focus of social investigation. Through numerous studies and examples, Goffman documented the way interaction in settings has a life of its own, with its own character and needs. He (Goffman 1967) provides a brief description of his case with reference to conversation as follows:

A conversation has a life of its own and makes demands on its own behalf. It is a little social system with its own boundary maintaining tendencies; it is a little patch of commitment and loyalty with its own heroes and its own villains. (pp. 113-114)

Goffman's research focus ranged between some key organising principles of the interaction order: the presentational nature of the self, the capacity of selves to resist or survive the constraints of structure, the active production of interaction orders by participants (as opposed to passive responses to pre-defined goals), and the moral requirement for participants to commit to the ground rules of interaction (Rawls 1987: 136-137).

Goffman's establishment of the interaction order as a discrete level of social organisation and his focus on the situatedness of conduct was consistent with, and has frequently been used in conjunction with, studies based on the work of Harold Garfinkel in Ethnomethodology and Harvey Sacks in Conversation Analysis. Both Garfinkel and Sacks developed social analyses of the relationship between conduct and context, departing, like Goffman, from attempts to understand practices in terms of individual motivations or the constraints of social structure. In terms of Garfinkel's perspective of ethnomethodology, practices are related to their contexts reflexively – shaped by a sense of the current context and forming a component of an ongoing context which, in turn, shapes further activity. In addition to this reflexive relationship, practices are seen as indexical – drawing their meaning from the order of events in their temporal sequence (Heritage 1984).

These relationships to context are further seen in terms of the integration of normative and interpretive dimensions of action. Garfinkel's development of ethnomethodology involved bringing together insights from phenomenology concerning interpretive aspects of common experience (such as the work of Alfred Schutz), and social ordering approaches that focus on questions of the normative regulation of conduct (such as the work of Talcott Parsons). For Garfinkel, participation in settings of practice requires ongoing work of interpretation, which occurs within a framework of conventions of conduct in which participants refer to, manipulate, renew and/or change a sense of conduct appropriate to the setting. This postulate of reflexive accountability represents a major departure from "top down" explanations of social order where participants are seen as passive internalisers of a normative order imposed from above. This top down mode of theorising, according to Garfinkel, depicts actors as "judgemental dopes" because it divests them of the ability to reflect, manipulate and make moral choices (Garfinkel 1967). It fails to account for the active constitution of the social world by societal members in which they constantly renew the context to which conduct is responsive.

The other key link between social activity and context that characterises ethnomethodology and informs the interaction order framework is the postulate of the indexical nature of conduct. The term indexicality was used initially in philosophy to

refer to the way in which the truth value of statements was related to the context in which the statements were used. In other words establishing the “truth” of statements such as “Hamlet was the Prince of Denmark” involves an explication of the contextual conditions under which the assertion might be proposed to be true. Further, ordinary language was argued not to be primarily oriented to truth or precision so much as to economies of communication and conduct that rely heavily on common understandings. In the event of usage of words such as “it” “here”, “she” etc., actors routinely use the context of the talk’s production to identify the referent and meanings of the terms. This postulate thus focuses on the way in which conduct is based on an ongoing and common sense of the setting and the gist of interaction occurring in it.

These two postulates are fundamental to the work of Harvey Sacks in conversation analysis. For Sacks, conversation was the focus for a finegrained analysis of the way these principles of conduct are manifested in settings of practice. The turn-taking system that forms the framework for the sequential organisation of talk was identified as involving a nuanced set of conventions that are addressed and negotiated in the reflexive development of context (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). Studies of, for example, the way interruptions are dealt with illustrate the ongoing salience of participants’ attention to – and negotiation of - a normative order. As overlaps in talk that often contravene principles of turn-taking, interruptions are routinely followed by standard resolution procedures but also frequently attract overt sanctions and reprimands. Further, Sacks placed significant emphasis on the nature of peoples’ descriptions, and the commonly shared understandings they imply. In this respect, the ways in which utterances refer to or index meanings and experiences that are shared with other participants through lexical choice is a central focus of investigation.

The analytical focus of the interaction order perspective on *in situ* and active production of interaction, involving an emphasis on context and sequential order is suited to an investigation of backpacker dispositions and practices in the context of mobility. The organisation of interaction on backpacker online notice boards provided an opportunity to study both the sequential ordering of backpacker interaction and also, through their descriptions, the backpackers’ positioning of themselves and others in terms of a travel sequence. The data were drawn from publicly available archived notice board material. These notice boards are now a common feature of backpacker websites. The key categories listed across the top of the website that was the focus of this study, indicate the overarching purpose as advertising and providing services for the burgeoning backpacker market. The categories, listed as follows included the item “noticeboard” on the right hand side of the list

Home Accommodation Employment Entertainment News & Sport Travel Backpacker Tools Notice Board




Underneath these categories, in a text box on the right hand side of the home page was the following message:

NOTICE BOARD

Questions about Australia?

Post a question about travelling, working, accommodation, flights, going out, concerts.....Our Notice Board is a great place to find information for your holiday in Australia

The word Noticeboard is hyperlinked to the noticeboard section of the website where visitors can select from “for sale” or “general” categories. Clicking on the general category takes visitors to a page with recent posts on the noticeboard appearing in the following format:

	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Posted</u>
 4 replies	<u>cask for oz</u>	Jim	
 2 replies	<u>money for oz</u>	Sam G	
 4 replies	<u>keeping things secure</u>	Mel	

A key focus for the nature of many of the items posted was that they were oriented to eliciting information and advice. The topic of the question (but not the whole message) is displayed and to the left is a count of how many people have posted a reply to the topic. In order to read the question the “topic” must be “clicked on” and the reader will subsequently be shown the message and all the responses. The responses are listed in temporal order, with the most current reply posted at the top, so that the first person to respond to the message will be at the end of the list with the most recent at the beginning. Thus the replies will ‘shift’ downward with every posted response and the question remains the focal point of all the postings. The maintenance of a sequential and temporal order of replies also included the subsequent comments of the original questioner to those attempting to answer the question.

Goffman’s insights into the way practices are oriented to the needs of the interaction order allowed for an understanding of this interaction in terms of his notion of “teams”, where backpackers organised themselves into advice givers and receivers and thus in terms of a stage of travel that gave them a warrant to either seek or give advice. The sequential ordering of original postings and responses, and the nature of the descriptions embedded in them, displayed features of “quasi-conversational” interaction: possessing some features that are similar to everyday conversation and others that are also clearly oriented to other constraints, such as (in this case) the absence of a face-to-face “real time” dimension. The ordering and lexical features of the postings were thus suited to investigation based on conversation analytic principles.

The analysis of backpacker interaction using this methodological framework identified characteristics of the notice board interaction order that were important in understanding the way “backpacker” has become a category that is potentially at the centre of a social change. First, the local order of advice seeking and advice giving revealed the importance of background understandings of backpackers seeking to interact over details of everyday life. Second, this organisation formed a context for exchanges based on first and second stories. The incorporation of stories in both advice seeking and advice giving turns provided public access to the nuances of

daily experiences that are the potential sources of a sense of common experiences not necessarily captured in commercial images of “backpacking”. The paper will now examine each of these aspects of notice board interaction in turn.

The sequential order and turn structure of advice seeking and advice giving

The sequential and temporal ordering of on-line advice segments displayed some key quasi-conversational features of the interaction¹. A central feature of the normative ordering of conversation for Sacks was the turn-taking system where normally one person speaks at a time, and participants are required to monitor the ongoing sequence of talk for points at which a turn might be taken, both sequentially and in terms of the ongoing sense of the conversation. A central element of the turn-taking system for Sacks is the adjacency pair. This refers to a pair of utterances such as invitation-acceptance/refusal wherein the production of the first part of the pair - for example, an invitation – projects the response (acceptance or refusal) as a relevant next activity. In these frameworks of activity, a preference system operates such that the nature of the second parts of the pairs clearly show that some responses are perceived as preferred over others. For example, acceptance of an invitation can be quite a straightforward interactional activity. However, invitation refusals routinely contain a range of strategies that mark them as difficult, including attempts to mitigate implications of rejection or indifference. While clearly the noticeboard interaction was produced through text rather than spoken interaction, there were similarities with the normative systems in conversation as illustrated in adjacency pairs and the preference system.

Many of the questions were clearly oriented to by participants as requests for advice and the responses as provision of advice. Further, the salience of the original question in organising topic (Button and Casey 1985) the structuring of responses as second pair parts to an adjacency pair (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974), and the common local understandings embedded in them, constituted a cultural form identified as a sub-domain of conversation (Schegloff 1986: 112; Sacks 1995). These features of the interaction are illustrated in the following extract:

Original Notice

Topic : Feeling a bit scared

Hi so I've literally just arrived in Oz! Checked into my hostel, they didn't have clue that I was staying there though I booked, I've been handed my linen and now I haven't got a clue what to do with Myself? There is nobody there at the moment and I'm quite worried! So I've run off to this internet café. Help me!

Responses

Topic: Finding your feet in Sydney

Getting to a new place by yourself is always a bit lonely At the start, but Sydney's a great place to start in and there are loads of others in exactly the same boat. I always get started by chatting to people in my dorm, have made so many friends that way, its just so easy. See if there is a bit of a pub crawl going on (I know when I was in Sydney there was the Party Bus pub crawl). They're always a great way meeting people and if not get some people together and do one yourself. Don't worry though give it a couple of days you'll be settling in no trouble. Oh and I totally agree about the sleeping bag advice, its much easier and usually warmer too. There are some great cheap army surplus stores/camping shops down the end of George st. near central station. Or try Kent street down by wanderers hostel, there's loads of outdoorsy shops there right next to each other. Anyway good luck.

Topic: What to do

me again Emma - if you haven't already bought blankets buy a sleeping bag instead. a lot more compact for carting around I think you were feeling a bit overwhelmed with the long flight, being tired and feeling very alone but you sound a lot happier now. Hope you find some nice friends while you are here.

The utterances above are organised into different kinds of posts on the noticeboard: an original notice and responses. In the original notice "feeling a bit scared" (a young woman) is seeking advice about what to do having arrived at a Sydney Backpacker hostel. The subsequent responses each read as the provision of advice suited to the request in the original notice. Together, the utterances display characteristics of the structure and sequential organisation of advice provision that have been well documented in conversation analytic research. The status of questioners as advice seekers and of those responding as advice providers is produced and maintained collaboratively by advice seekers' displays of knowledge deficits and an orientation to prospective respondents as sufficiently knowledgeable to provide the advice sought. Alignment to these roles in interaction and the collaboration involved is captured in Goffman's (1971) description of the work accomplished by "teams":

A team, then, may be defined as a set of individuals whose intimate co-operation is required if a given projected definition of the situation is to be maintained. A team is a grouping, but it is a grouping not in relation to a social structure or social organization but rather in relation to an interaction or series of interactions in which the relevant definition of the situation is maintained. (p. 69)

In this sense, the collaboration required for the organisation of the notice board interaction, as advice giving and receiving, constitutes a generic set of team activities organised locally in the context provided by the online notice board. From Goffman's perspective it involves a taken-for-granted but staged collaboration in which participants carry within themselves "something of the sweet guilt of conspirators" (Goffman 1971: 70).

However, the above example also illustrates that a more specific set of team understandings are additionally required in the organisation of a specifically *backpacker* notice board. An examination of the initial question reveals a greeting followed by the production of a "preface" to the actual advice request component of the turn:

Hi so I've literally just arrived in Oz!

This greeting and advice preface situates the inquirer in space and time as in the early phases of Australian travel and is hearable as potentially a display of knowledge deficit warranting advice due to this spatio-temporal positioning. Following prefaces of this kind, advice-seeking turns tended to move to a story, providing a specific context in which the problem could be identified followed by a specific question/problem component. This occurred in the subsequent part of the advice-seeking turn as follows:

Checked into my hostel, they didn't have clue that I was staying there though I booked, I've been handed my linen and now I haven't got a clue

what to do with Myself? There is nobody there at the moment and I'm quite worried! So I've run off to this internet café. Help me!

The extract illustrates the scenic nature of the story about checking into the hostel in the provision of details of context. The utterance then moved to a rather non-specific call for help: "I haven't got a clue what to do with Myself?" This provided for advice that drew from a range of different options, but also displayed a tacit understanding of the kind of situation faced by 'feeling a bit scared' such that a specific kind of advice might be warranted. The replies implicitly identified her problems in terms of loneliness and also in terms of bed linen and sleeping bags, subsequently describing details of respondents' experiences of these and means of addressing them in the context of backpacker hostels. Thus, while individual notice board participants may be strangers, their online interaction constitutes them as having common access to many aspects of mundane backpacker experiences. This common access was accomplished in the context of advice exchanges as centrally organised around the provision of first and second stories. The paper now turns to an examination of these components of advice seeking and advice provision turns and the way they served to develop a sense of a common culture based on everyday backpacker experiences.

Backpackers' first and second stories

For Harvey Sacks, a story is any report of an event (Coulthard 1987). The study of stories in conversation provided an opportunity to examine the sequential management of topic and, thus, categories, in talk (Housely 2000: 426). His studies demonstrated the way in which storytelling required a high degree of collaboration between participants, involving such tasks as participants' obtaining 'the floor' and the production of response tokens (eg "mm hm"). Another key factor Sacks found to be present in these contexts was the production of "second stories" – an important means by which speakers may "tie" their utterances to previous turns. A second story functions as a strong appreciation of a previous story. Following the production of a story, one possible response is a receipt of it such as "Oh really". In place of this kind of utterance, a second story preserves key elements of the first story, exhibiting rather than simply claiming understanding of the first story (Silverman 1998). Sacks (1995) elaborates on this relationship of second to first stories in displaying mutual access to experiences:

'showing understanding', searching experience, 'seeing the point' ...turns on the fact that the second story involves the hearer of the first turning up a story which stands as an analysis of the other, critically by virtue of that story involving the teller of the second playing a role precisely similar to the first's, for a story which is similar to the first's. In short, that the teller's place in the story is the key thing for searching ones experience, providing a strong clue as to the sort of search one should do. (p. 771)

In the backpacker notice board data, advice seeking and advice provision turns frequently contained first and second story components. This is illustrated in the following extract:

Original Message

ok....nervous as hell...am i being silly?

Leaving for OZ on the 24th of september from Vancouver Canada. I was supposed to go with a girlfriend, but she still doesnt have her birth certificate... which means no passport, and i've already postponed my flight once. Looks like im heading down under all by my lonesome. I am leaving everything behind, and with only 18 days left in canada i am feeling hella nervous. Just wonderin' if anyone has any advise or if anyone is in a simalar sinking ship...

Responses

Nervous

mary

dont be nervous. i just got here and love it. i mean, its easier said then done to say dont be nervous, but yo have no reason to be. I started making friends with people on my flight before it even left LA. eveyone you meet is gonna be a backpacker and down for doing anything. 99.999999999% of the people do it alone. a great experience, i have heard. i did it solo and y know what its kinda wierd at first but its really fun and you will be so overwhelemed with all the new fun stuff to do and people to meet you wont even think about home! im serious!! anywho my email isif you have any que or wanna meet up with some people when you get here. you are gonna have a great time. There is SO much fun stuff to do here and all the people are super talkative. if you can understand them that is, HAHAHA.

ps. be prepared to call everyone Mate!

thanx

thanx judith...are you flying to sydney?

im excited one minute, and nervous the next it comes in waves...but im gunna just try to roll with it. thanks again for your enthusiasm.

mary

ok....nervous as hell...am i being silly?

Hey

I just wanna tell you that you shouldn't be nervous because there are soooo many backpackers like you who are going solo. I am going alone. Im not nervous or anything. I've talked to ppl online who are on the same flight as me and to ppl who are already there. Have fun with it!

ttyl

Judith

As in the previous example, the utterances are organised into an original message which reads as an advice request and then responses that orient to the provision of the advice sought. Nervous as hell is concerned about coming to Australia on her own and the responses offer supportive advice and encouragement. It is important to note at this point that again the advice is being sought by a young woman and also that her concerns are consistent with those of "feeling a bit scared" with respect to being alone in a strange place. In the original message "nervous as hell [...]" produces a first story that provides the context for her nervousness:

Leaving for OZ on the 24th of september from Vancouver Canada. I was supposed to go with a girlfriend, but she still doesnt have her birth certificate... which means no passport, and i've already postponed my flight once. Looks like im heading down under all by my lonesome. I am leaving everything behind, and with only 18 days left in canada i am feeling hella nervous.

This story component of the turn is then followed by a request for advice. In the advice provision turns following the original message the following second stories appeared:

I started making friends with people on my flight before it even left LA. everyone you meet is gonna be a backpacker and down for doing anything. 99.999999999% of the people do it alone. a great experience, i have heard. i did it solo and y know what its kinda wierd at first but its really fun and you will be so overwhelmed with all the new fun stuff to do and people to meet you wont even think about home! im serious!!

I just wanna tell you that you shouldn't be nervous because there are soooo many backpackers like you who are going solo. I am going alone. Im not nervous or anything. I've talked to ppl online who are on the same flight as me and to ppl who are already there. Have fun with it!

The “tying” principles at work in the first and second stories in the above example provide for an identification of the cultural commonalities that are developed through this sequence. The stories embedded in advice provision also contain components that attest to experiences that provide a warrant for the expertise required for this provision: One respondent “started making friends with people on [his] flight before it even left LA”, and another has “talked to ppl online who are on the same flight as me and to ppl who are already there”. However, a key element in the relationship between the first story and its seconds is their displays of access to the experience of travelling alone. In the original message, the fragment “Looks like im heading down under all by my lonesome” is met with the respondents’ “I did it solo and y know what its kinda weird at first but its really fun” and “I am going alone. Im not nervous or anything.” The design of the original message and the subsequent advice thus work to construct a sense of experience in common and a sense of affiliation in attempting to alleviate the “nervousness” of “nervous as hell...”, through descriptions of positive experiences of solo travel.

Conclusion: Cosmopolitanism and Communities of Strangers

While ethnographies of backpacking have identified the salience of self-formation in backpackers’ narratives, this study of an internet backpacker notice board has provided an insight into the means by which everyday experiences come to constitute a group habitus. Our initial observations in a backpacker hostel suggested that Information and Communication Technologies appeared to be serving as very important communication tools for backpackers. This study provides preliminary evidence that this has enabled the establishment of a specific form and content of backpacker interaction that allows for broad cultural sharing of everyday backpacker experiences. The online notice board provided “just in time”, quasi-conversational interaction for backpackers to share experiences and information. The data analysis has suggested that the teamwork and alignment between participants and the highly contextual, local understandings of everyday backpacker problems, uncertainties and risks evident in the notice board interaction is providing the basis of a common culture founded on these experiences.

In this way, the advice exchanges revealed the fine details of everyday backpackers’ experiences, which could potentially constitute a culturally shared means of typifying the practices and dilemmas of backpackers

Through the ready availability of Information and Communication Technologies, backpackers have common access to fellow backpackers' stories about mundane issues of survival in the context of unfamiliar or culturally strange surroundings. Sociologically, this takes on a particular cultural significance when we consider that it is taking place across national boundaries and occurring between "strangers". This significance has been articulated by Ulrich Beck in his description of the move to a cosmopolitan perspective (Beck 2000) that replaces earlier forms of modernity based on the salience of the nation state for identity. For Beck, cosmopolitanism owes much to changing patterns of mobility and migration, which produces new bases of solidarity described as solidarity with strangers. This paper illustrates the way information and communication technologies have facilitated the development of this form of solidarity. It has enabled a culturally shared understanding of the category "backpacker" that potentially challenges commercial images of "backpacking". In Sacks's terms we are possibly witnessing "a shift in the rules for application of a category" (Sacks 1992: 14). The exchanges provide collective access to an expanding array of dispositions and practices associated with the "backpacker", where "feeling a bit scared", "nervousness" about travelling alone, and "finding your feet" in a strange city come to be heard as attributes associated with this category.

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Endnotes

- i While the data selected was oriented to sampling backpackers' online interaction, the extracts presented in this paper were screened for any obviously sensitive material. While the interaction was posted in a publicly available domain, it was still considered important to protect identities of participants in the research context. Thus the name and internet address of the specific notice board and the dates and actual names contained in the extracts have been deleted or changed.

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Dionysian and Apollonian in Advertising The Representations of Pleasure and Discipline in Finnish Television Advertisements

Abstract

The recent accounts of our era usually argue that pleasure, sensuality, and sexuality play essential roles in media and consumer culture. Advertising especially is regarded as a place where rational argument is displaced by pleasure and sex. However, it is hard to find systematic empirical analysis to verify these claims. In this article, I examine the pervasiveness of the ideal of pleasure empirically in television advertising by analysing 167 Finnish advertisements. The findings suggest that the prevailing discourse about hedonistic culture and especially the hedonistic advertising culture captures something essential, but that this discourse does not tell the whole story because it does not notice the flipside, the ideal of the ascetically-oriented body that appears as frequently as the hedonistic ideal.

Keywords

Apollonian; Dionysian; Embodiment; Gender; Representation; Television advertising; Semiotics; Content analysis

There is at least a 2500-year-old history of the dichotomy that has shaped the understanding of embodiment in Western culture. One side of the dichotomy emphasizes sensuality and the pleasure of the body, the other idealises rationality and ascetic control of the body. This dichotomy can be seen as the contrast between two powers, Dionysian and Apollonian (Benedict 1946; Turner 1994; Turner 1996; Nietzsche 2000). The recent analyses of our era (e.g. Lupton 1994; Turner 1996; Maffesoli 1997) usually argue that pleasure, sensuality, and sexuality play essential roles in media and consumer culture. In the other words, the claim is that culture is dominated by the Dionysian ideal. Advertising in particular is regarded as a place where Apollonian rationality is displaced by pleasure and sex.

There are strong claims in the Finnish debate as well (Karvonen 1998; Herkman 2001) that the Dionysian has overtaken the Apollonian in advertising. However, it is hard to find systematic empirical analysis to verify these claims. In this article, I ask whether this Dionysian thesis is relevant in the light of the empirical study of present-day Finnish television advertisements.

A short history of the Dionysian and Apollonian outlooks

The juxtaposition between the Dionysian and the Apollonian philosophies can be found in early Greek culture. The Cyrenaic school emphasised the meanings of the pleasure of the body. In contrast, the advocates of Orphism thought that it was better to live in the ascetic way and avoid carnal pleasure (Synnott 1993: 8–9; Henrikson 1999: 262–267). Later, the Christian tradition reclaimed the ascetic idea of Orphism, defining the body as a source of sin that requires regulation and control (Falk 1994: 47; Turner 1996: 11). This negative and ascetic attitude to the body became the ideal that has dominated modern thinking. Perhaps the best-known critic of this ideal is Friedrich Nietzsche, who wished to reconstruct the vision of human life centred on the body. He thought that all self-denying philosophies, from Socratism to Protestantism, contribute to the neurosis of the modern personality. In Nietzsche's view, all negative attitudes have to be replaced by the affirmative world-view that accepts and celebrates the body's life (Turner 1991: 12–13; Nietzsche 1993.)

One important dimension of Nietzsche's philosophy is the contrast between two powers, those of Dionysus and Apollo. Dionysus was the god of sexual power, ecstasy, and passion in ancient Greek religion. Apollo was the god of order, rationality and reason. According to Nietzsche, history and the human being are the arenas of the endless struggle between these two powers (Turner 1994: 38; Turner 1996: 19; Nietzsche 2000: 193–195.) Nietzsche is not the only one who has appealed to this dichotomy. The anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1946) reclaimed the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy as a framework for her classic research on North American Indian cultures. In addition, Freud's theory of psychic action can be seen in the light of such a dichotomy. Freud distinguishes between a primary mental process and a secondary process. In the primary process, the psyche is governed by the pleasure principle. The reality principle then dominates the secondary process of the psyche (Freud, 1990).

According to Bryan S. Turner (1996: 23–24), an Apollonian system which emphasized asceticism, discipline and work prevailed in early capitalism. Postponement was in the key position in that saving and work were more important than consuming, and the denial of desire was more important than its fulfilment (Bauman 2000). The Apollonian ideal of early capitalism can also be seen in rationalization, which is the main principle of the civilization process. This process requires self-control and the suppression of desire. Civilization generates the Apollonian, disciplined and regulated body (Elias 1982; Featherstone 1991a: 81; Turner 1991: 14–15.)

The assumption that the ethic of work and asceticism has been replaced by hedonism is frequently made by critics of late modern culture (Gronow 1996: 105–106). Turner (1996: 23–24) describes hedonism as a Dionysian principle. According to him, pleasure, sensuality, the meanings of the aesthetic, and youthfulness of the body are emphasised in Western culture, especially popular culture and advertising. According to Michel Maffesoli (1997), we live in a culture where Dionysus, the god of pleasure and passion, has acceded to the throne and is permitting a never-ending orgy.

Such claims about today's Western culture are common indeed. Many scholars analyse our era by claiming that pleasure, sensuality, and sexuality is emphasized in contemporary consumer culture. Advertising in particular is regarded as a place where Dionysus dominates and rational argument is displaced by sex.

My primary research procedure is to examine the pervasiveness of the Dionysian impulse in today's advertising culture. I ask how relevant it is to claim that the Dionysian dominates advertising. Is there any place for the Apollonian in advertising culture? To this end, I analyse how representations¹ of embodiment are constructed in Finnish television advertisements. I also consider how the representations of embodiment are divided by gender in the advertisements.

Data

Of the 400 advertisements in my corpus, I have selected all 167 advertisements which represented the human body for more detailed study. My data consists of advertisements broadcast on MTV3, the largest channel showing advertisements and clearly the most popular TV channel in Finland. I gathered research material during the autumn of 1999 by videotaping advertisements in the most common program genres (news, thriller series, soap operas, family series, entertainment programs, sportscasts, quiz shows, children's and youth programs, and documentaries). I wanted to ensure that I had advertisements directed at all viewers regardless of age and gender. Most of the advertisements were screened in prime-time (in the evening between 6 and 10 pm), and a few in the morning and late at night.

Food advertisements are the largest product group (26%) and cosmetics and the toiletries the second largest (13%). However, the advertisements promote almost everything from lottery tickets to tools. Both men and women are represented in most of the advertisements (41%); men without women appear in 33 per cent of the advertisements and women without men in 25 per cent. The young and young adults are clearly the largest age groups represented. Approximately 15 – 35-year-old men and women appear in 78 per cent of the advertisements. Representations of children can be found in 25 per cent of advertisements and representations of the elderly (about 65-years and older) only in 5 per cent.

Since fifty-eight per cent of these advertisements were produced in Finland and 42 per cent were entirely or partly made by foreign advertising agencies, the findings of this study also tell us about the representations of embodiment in Western television advertisements more generally. I cannot discuss differences between Finnish and other advertising cultures here, but it is obvious that Finnish advertising culture is part of the Western media culture.

Methods

Coming from the field of social sciences and cultural studies, I deal with advertisements as cultural texts by using a semiotic approach and quantitative content analysis. As such advertisements are texts which establish, recycle, crystallize and modify ideals, ideologies, models and stereotypes at the heart of consumer and media culture (Williamson 1978; Goffman 1979: 15; Fiske 1987: 15; Leiss, Kline and Jhally 1990: 5; Heiskala 1991: 40–43; Giaccardi 1995: 112–113). Overall, advertisements as cultural texts produce assumptions about what things are or what they should be (Giaccardi 1995: 127; Kellner 1995). As texts, advertisements are also important definers of meanings which shape ideals about embodiment and gender in today's culture (Twitchell 1996: 13; Blom 1998: 203).

In his book *S/Z*, Roland Barthes defines five semiotic codes which "create a kind of network, a *topos* through which the entire text passes (or rather, in passing,

becomes a text)” (Barthes 1974: 20). According to Barthes, although every text is interwoven with multiple codes, any text is marked by multiple meanings suggested by five codes, which are:

- 1) *The proairetic code* applies to action, its logic and to “what happens”.
- 2) *The hermeneutic code* refers to elements in a story that exist as an enigma and raise questions. This is the code of the dynamic of a story.
- 3) *The semantic code*, the code of semes, indicates elements in a text that suggest a particular meaning by way of connotation.
- 4) *The symbolic code* applies to binary oppositions that construct the basis of the text.
- 5) *The referential code* designates any element in a text that refers to our shared knowledge about the way the world works, including medical, psychological, physiological, literary, and historical elements as cultural systems.

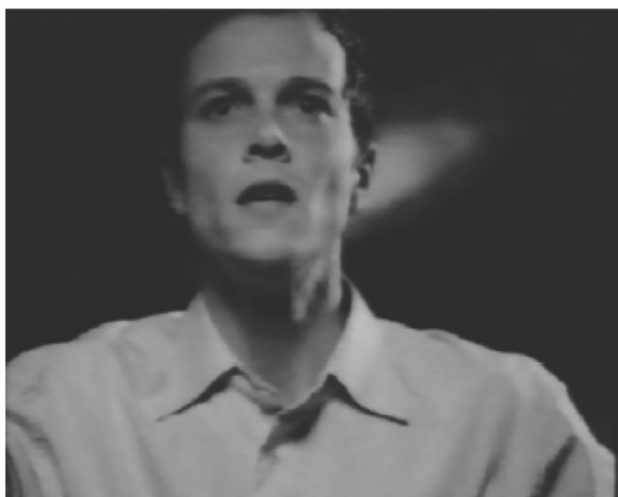
I have used these five codes as a method of analysing the significant aspects of television advertisements (Sarpavaara 2004). I have using the codes to investigate how cultural representations of the human body are constructed in today’s advertising. I have analysed the narrative aspects of ads by the proairetic and the hermeneutic codes. I have employed the semantic code to identify the smallest elements (“the flash of meanings”) and analysed their connotations. The “good” of the advertisements’ messages (Falk 1997: 83–86) I have examined through the binary oppositions using the symbolic code, and the referential code to look for the cultural ideals and assumptions in the advertisements.

Here I take two advertisements (Carte D’Or and Nokia- Sonera- Päämies) as exemplifying my data, analysing through them the signification of embodiment into Apollonian and Dionysian. For this I use Barthes’ five codes to ask how Dionysian and Apollonian representations are constructed, and how these ideals are expressed in two Finnish television advertisements. First I briefly describe these advertisements, and then analyse them code by code.

After this semiotic analysis I investigate quantitatively how common the Dionysian and Apollonian phenomenon is in my data. For this I use quantitative content analysis, measuring the frequency of Dionysian and Apollonian representations in these 167 advertisements. I also investigate by means of cross-tabulation how Dionysian and Apollonian representations are divided by gender. As Don Slater (2001: 244) noted, “semiotics and content analysis are opposites in almost every way”. However, they could be construed as complementary. For example, Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (1990) show how semiotic and content analysis can be combined in the study of advertisements. Like them, I try to combine the depth of semiotics with the rigour of content analysis in my own study.

Dionysian and Apollonian representation in two Finish ads: semiotic analysis

The Carte D'Or ice cream advertisement starts with a scene in which a young man sits by his desk at work, watching the office building through surveillance cameras. He keeps watch when employees leave for home. Suddenly, an unexpected movement appears in one of the monitors. The building is not empty, as he had thought. By pushing up the stick of the control table, he zooms a camera to see the cause of the movement. Now he sees a young woman eating ice cream in an office. The man focuses the camera on the woman's bare legs and the open ice cream container. The biggest monitor of the control centre displays a large piece of the ice cream in a spoon which moves slowly between woman's lips. The young man gulps and pants. Unexpectedly, the control system crashes and an elderly cleaning woman comes into the view of the monitor. The man shakes the control stick vigorously in order to get the young woman and the ice cream back onto the screen. He then turns around to see the cleaning woman with ice cream standing behind him. The man turns back to the monitors. This time the young woman is smiling at him suggestively from the screen.





Frames from the Carte D'Or advertisement

At the beginning of the second advertisement, produced for a telecommunicator and teleoperator (Nokia, Sonera and Päämies), fingers tap on the table with a punchy sound-effect in a big close-up.



The next shots disclose that the owner of the fingers is a middle-aged male executive dressed in a suit and wearing a tie. He orders a young male employee: "Fax the invoice to Singapore! For the whole delivery! Ok! Look for it on the Internet! Check the dollar rate! Deliver the picture of our new guy in the export department to them! Book a table for six! That's all." The chief accents his commands by non-verbal body language, pointing at the young man with his finger and pencil and looking him squarely in the eye.



The locale is an office with two chairs and a desk. On the table there is nothing but the communicator and a chrome-plated pendulum. The young, somewhat startled male employee sits opposite the chief and carries out the tasks with the communicator quickly and quietly.



When the commands come to an end, the young man closes the communicator and casts a self-confident look at the chief.



Up till now, the camera angles have changed quickly and the tempo has been quick.

Unexpectedly, the ambience completely changes. Now the chief continues his commands in a gentle tone and dreamy manner “Red roses to the girl” as soothing music (or muzak) plays in the background.



The punchy sound effect halts the peaceful music and the strict look comes back to the chief’s face when he continues: “(...) yellow roses to the wife.” The advertisement concludes with a big close up in which the logo of the company is flung in the executive’s face.

The proairetic code: What happens

Using the proairetic code, attention is paid to the logic, intention, and outcome of actions. The question is what exactly happens in the stories and how are actions integrated into a meaningful whole (Barthes 1974: 18; Blom 1998: 216–217) The action centres on working life in both advertisements. It is fast-paced work without pleasure or sensuality in the Nokia, Sonera and Päämies (NSP) advertisement. The chief gives strict commands and the young man carries out them by using his abilities and the communicator. In the Carte D’Or advertisement, however, work is forgotten and pleasure becomes the main principle of action. This advertisement starts with the episode where the young man watches as the employees leave for home. In the second episode, he looks at the young woman in secret. The woman is enjoying eating the ice cream. Although there is no verbal evidence, the woman’s expressions and gestures (her eyes are almost closed and her body motions are languorous and slow) shows that she is enjoying it. The man’s panting, gulping, and face show that he is aroused. Nevertheless, it is not completely clear what it is that excites the man; is it the woman, the ice cream or both? The episode concludes with the fault in the control system and the appearance of the cleaning woman. At the end of the story, the young woman looks at the camera, which can be seen as the indication that she knows that she had been the object of the man’s gaze.

The hermeneutic code: The dynamic of the stories

Television advertisements as cultural texts include elements that maintain narrative tension. In one way or another, texts impose enigmas and questions for viewers which demand explication. The hermeneutic code can be used to identify these elements. (Barthes 1974: 17)

The story of the Carte D’Or advertisement includes three surprising turns. At the beginning, the young man’s work of watching the building goes on as usual. The first surprise is that the building is not empty as supposed. There is a young woman enjoying her ice-cream. The story does not reveal why, like the other employees, she has not left the workplace. Is the reason overtime, the young man, or something else? The story goes on, and the young man focuses the camera on the woman’s legs and the ice cream. Is the ice cream or sexual passion the reason for his action? Again, answering the question is left partly to the viewers, but it is clear that the advertisement associates the pleasure of eating ice cream with sexual pleasure. The malfunction of the control system is the second surprising turn. At this point, it is not certain what causes the problem, but the third turn implies that the young woman may have control over the system, since after the malfunction she looks into the camera and smiles. She probably wanted to embarrass the man by causing the malfunction when she became aware of his gaze.

Narrative structure is more straightforward in the NSP advertisement. The surprising turn is the transformation of the strict chief into the romantic dreamer. The story does not say who “the girl” is who gives rise to the change. Why does the chief want red roses delivered to her? Is “the girl” the chief’s daughter, mistress or someone else? Again, answering the questions is left partly to the viewers’ interpretations, but it is clear that the chief has warmer feelings about the girl than about his wife. In the first place, the implicit question about how the young man carries out his demanding tasks maintains narrative tension in the NSP advertisement. In most of the advertisements, narrative structure is formulated as a question, a problem or an enigma which is resolved with the help of the product. The product becomes the face-saving actor who solves the problem. (Blom 1998: 214—

216) In the NSP advertisement, since the face-saving product is the communicator, the message of this advertisement seems to be that “with Nokia, Sonera and Päämies you can handle even the most demanding job.”

The product (the ice-cream) is the actor in the Carte D’Or advertisement, too; even though, in contrast to the NSP advertisement, the product does not solve any particular problem. The ice cream is in broad terms the actor that changes the workplace into a field of passionate emotions. The main message of this advertisement seems clearly to be that “eating this ice cream is sexually charged action; it is a pleasure like sex.”

The semantic code: denotations and connotations

In Barthes (1974: 191), semes are the smallest unit of meaning in a text, the places in text where the meanings start. The smallest elements of television advertisements – such as a camera angle, lighting, sound effect, style of dress, gesture, posture of the body, expression, and distance between characters – can be regarded as the audiovisual semes. Audiovisual elements of this kind construct the atmosphere and the traits of the characters in the advertisement. Cultural knowledge, knowledge of the visual conventions and the viewers’ own experiences inform the reading of the semes. However, shared, common, and institutional connotations in Western culture can also be discerned by analysing the semes (Veivo 1995: 76; Blom 1998: 212-213)

In the Carte D’or advertisement, the young man focuses the surveillance camera on the legs of the young woman and the ice-cream container. At the very basic level, the sight of the woman eating denotes nourishment of the body, but ice-cream is culturally set up as a pleasure-giving product. The open container is the seme that refers to a pleasure, connoting enjoyment of the taste of ice-cream. The woman’s short skirt and bare legs as the object of the man’s gaze clearly connotes sexual desire. Although ice-cream is associated with sexual pleasure by showing the woman’s legs and mini-skirt, it is not clear whether the man wants ice-cream, sex, or both. In any case, the man’s body-language, his gulping and panting, indicates that he desires something. When he sees the young woman in the monitor, he takes the hold of the control stick and brings it upwards. This gesture represents the action of controlling, the zoom, but it can also be seen as a signifier of sexual lust, an erection and the act of masturbating in this context. The reference to the visual conventions of pornography can also be found in the big close-up in which the woman licks the ice cream, as the connotation of this seme is the male sexual organ. The woman’s expressions, gestures and movement indicate that she enjoys it, and this enjoyment is associated with sexual pleasure once again.

Big close-ups, a common means of arousing a sense of drama (Selby and Cowdery 1995: 51), are used a lot in the NSP advertisement. Views of the tapping fingers, the commanding mouth, and the tough face construct the representation of a strict and demanding boss. The representations of discipline, self-control, and urgency are constructed by such close-ups of both the chief and the employee. In addition, the impression of haste is created by the rapid changes in camera angle. Urgency and endeavours at effectiveness are suggested by the chief’s and the young man’s body language. The decor of the workplace stresses ascetism. There is nothing but a table, two chairs and a chrome-plated pendulum on the table in the room. Although business culture is not slow and directed to the sphere of the afterlife, the ascetic style of the room evokes a monastery where the pendulum has taken the

place of the crucifix. As the symbol of dynamics, the pendulum suggests that dynamic business is practised here with dedication similar to that in the monastery.

The symbolic code: Binary oppositions and symbolic messages

The symbolic code is a structural principle that organizes meanings by way of antithesis. The symbolic structure of a text can be described as a series of binary oppositions, such as life and death, cold and heat, high and low, and man and woman (Barthes 1974; Culler 1998; Felluga 2003). The binary oppositions are the basics of all meaning, and are usually organized in hierarchical manner (Hall 1999: 82 and 154; Emmison and Smith 2000: 67). These oppositions are also helpful structural conventions which articulate the symbolic structures and the symbolic messages of the advertisements. The symbolic message may be things such as health, beauty, status, success, or undefined “good” (Falk 1997: 83—86; Blom 1998: 219—220)

The individual semes and the other significant units of a text take their place in the binary oppositions. In the Carte D’Or advertisement, the woman’s eyes are nearly closed while she slowly eats the ice-cream. Although the woman’s expressions, gestures, and motions do not inevitably suggest the same things to all viewers, we probably place them in “the right place” in one polarity: they signify pleasure, not the ascetic and control of passion. The opened ice-cream container is hardly a seme that suggests strict diet or restraints on desire. More obviously, the function of this seme is the promise of pleasure. The calendar on the woman’s desk can be marked as a seme signifying methodicalness, control, discipline, and rationality but, because it has been laid aside, it means that the things that it connotes are laid aside as well.

The boss’s gestures, expressions, and tone of voice are the semes that signify full activity (not unhurriedness), effectiveness (not ineffectiveness), and authority (not equality) in the NSP advertisement. The young man’s gestures and expressions signify effectiveness and urgency as well, but are dictated by the chief’s action. In addition, the employee’s body language connotes self-control, not bodily pleasure. It appears that the semes and other signifiers in this advertisement try to tell us that a good body is a disciplined one. Discipline, self-control, and effectiveness are the essential parts of good embodiment in this advertisement. In the Carte D’Or advertisement, however, pleasure, passion, desire, sexuality, and sensuality are signified as positive, being associated with good embodiment by the proairetic, hermeneutic, sematic, and symbolic codes. In the other words, pleasure is the shared signified of actions, narrative, semes, and binary oppositions in the ice-cream advertisement. In short, the same binary opposition between the pleasuring and disciplined body emerges in both: in the ice-cream advertisement, the good embodiment is marked as the pleasuring one and in the communicator advertisement as the disciplined one.

The referential code: Cultural ideals and assumptions

All Barthes’ codes are the cultural in a sense that cultural practices have instructed us to read them. However, the referential code is particularly cultural, because it indicates our shared knowledge about the way the world works, including properties that we can designate as “physical, physiological, medical, psychological, literary, historical, etc.” (Barthes 1974: 20; Felluga 2003)

This code stresses that every text is intertextual. According to poststructuralist theorists, there are no autonomous texts because they are always made up of citations and references (cf. Kristeva 1980: 69). Nowadays, intertextuality in television advertisements is manifest in references to movies, sciences, news, fashion, literature, and the history of the advertising. The referential code allows us to locate these references and read the comments advertisements make on them. Such comments may be assumptions like women having to be desirable in men's eyes (Blom 1998: 222—223).

The Carte D'Or advertisement is an example of the genre of erotic advertisements, alluding to a moral code about what kind of eroticism is permissible. This advertisement seems to suggest that the desire for erotic pleasure is natural for young, good-looking heterosexual people. Sex seems norm for interaction between people who have a young, trim, and beautiful body, not for interaction between the young man and an older woman. The elderly cleaning woman represents the antithesis of sex. When she comes into view, the erotic tension between the young man and the young woman dissipates. The aged woman, whose body deviates from the young and trim body ideal of consumer culture (Featherstone 1991b; Turner 1994; Turner 1996), is the signifier of the negation of the object of desire and the negation of attractiveness in this advertisement.

The traditional gender system is another referenced cultural system in the Carte D'Or advertisement, which plays with the connections between attractiveness, sex, pleasure, power, and control. Comments on the hierarchy of the gender system are clearly present. The young man has power over the control system that enables him to watch the young woman. Being the object of the man's gaze does not seem to be an uncomfortable situation for the woman; rather, she seems to enjoy it. The advertisement implies that the woman is in the dominating position after all, manipulating the man's action by her sexual appeal. The assumption seems to be that the beautiful and sexy woman has control and power, even if she is in the position of the object. The woman does not appear to be simply the passive object, but the active subject as well.

Intertextuality is manifested primarily as the references to working life in the NSP advertisement. Some of these references are parodic. The representation of the authoritarian boss is so overstated and stereotyped that it counts as parody. The last scene, in which the company's logo is flung in his face, gives the cue how to interpret this representation. The young man is not the object of laughter, but the real hero who copes with a demanding working life by his self-control, personal ability, and the communicator. Furthermore, the demanding atmosphere of the workplace is not called into question. It is taken for granted as a condition of success in business life. This advertisement tells that you must be disciplined, rational, self-controlled, energetic, competent and young if you want success in today's business life.

Dionysian, Apollonian, and gender in Finnish ads: content analysis

Dionysian and Apollonian representations

On the basis of Nietzsche's and Turner's arguments, the Dionysian ideal of embodiment can be defined as the ideal of pleasure, desire, sensuality, sexuality, passion and ecstasy. It is the ideal that also highlights the beauty and youthfulness of the body. The Apollonian ideal is the counterpart of the Dionysian and includes elements such as discipline, (self-) control, rationality, the ascetic life, and work. The

analyses of the representations of embodiment of the two advertisements discussed can be summed up in the dichotomy between pleasure and discipline that forms part of the broader Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy.

The results of the content analysis of my data shows that occurrence of the Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy is very common in the Finnish television advertising. It can be found in virtually all of the advertisements of the sample. Of the 167 television advertisements, 98 per cent include representations of this dichotomy. Table 1 shows that 38 per cent of the advertisements were based on the Apollonian ideal, that is to say, the representations of embodiment are constructed by elements like rationality, the control of desires and craving, work, discipline, and asceticism. More specifically, the “Apollonian” category includes representations of working bodies, sporting bodies, muscular and trim bodies, and disciplined bodies in these advertisements. There are also the representations of calculating, rational choice-makers.

Table 1. Apollonian and Dionysian representations in Finnish television advertisements (%).

Apollonian representations	38
Dionysian representations	38
Apollonian and Dionysian representations	21
No Apollonian or Dionysian representation	2
Total (N)	100 (167)

Similarly, as Table 1 shows, 38 per cent of the advertisements represent the Dionysian body ideal: in these representations the body signifies the site of pleasure, sensuality, sex, desire, lust, youthfulness, and attractiveness. This category includes the advertisements that represent enjoyment, partying, sexuality, and experience-seeking bodies. These representations may also emphasize the outward appearance of the body.

Table 1 also shows that 21 per cent of the advertisements include both Apollonian and Dionysian representations. In these representations, the body is depicted as ambivalent in that it is represented as an enjoyer and controlled and disciplined at the same time. This is manifest in a yoghurt advertisement, for example. Here a young, trim, and slender-bodied woman wants to enjoy food but, being worried about her body’s appearance at the same time, makes a rational (Apollonian) choice and chooses the non-fat yoghurt for pleasure (Dionysian).

Hence, the results of my frequency analysis indicate that embodiment is signified as equally Dionysian and Apollonian in these advertisements. The Dionysian representation can be found in most cases in cosmetics, food, and leisure product advertisements. The Apollonian representation appears in most cases in homecraft products, products by occupation, and health product advertisements. It is not unexpected that home and work are mainly the places for the Apollonian, and leisure is the site for the Dionysian in the advertisements. However, there are also advertisements that advertise “Apollonian products” by Dionysian representations, as

in the case of a vacuum cleaner advertisement in which the vacuum cleaning appears as full of sex and passion-laden action.

Gender representations

One interesting question about the representations of the Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy is how the Apollonian and Dionysian are linked with gender in television advertisements. There are many ways to reinforce and produce assumptions about gender and gender difference in Western culture. Advertising is one of the most effective, since nowadays more and more gender representations are mediated by advertisements. Gender is the issue that is almost unavoidable in advertising. As Sut Jhally notes (1987: 135), gender has become the fetish in advertising. Along the lines of Teresa de Lauretis' theory (de Lauretis 1987; see also Jhally 1987; Bordo 1989; van Zoonen 1994), television advertising can be examined as a technology of gender which produces gender by representations. As the technology of gender, advertising both reinforces and redefines assumptions about gender. It has power to control social meanings and thus the power to produce and convey ideals and codes about femininity and masculinity. Advertising produces gendered experience as the part of the flow of gender representations of consumer and media culture. It can be assumed that advertisements shape viewers' understanding about both womanhood and manhood (see de Lauretis 1987: 2–3).

I used cross tab analysis to study the relationship between gender representations and Apollonian and Dionysian representations in my data. For this I divided the gender representations into "male only representation", "female only representation", and "mixed representation" categories. The last includes advertisements that depict both male and female figures. I then cross tab these gender categories with the "Apollonian representation", "Dionysian representation", and "Apollonian and Dionysian representation" categories. The "Apollonian and Dionysian representation" category is compounded of the advertisements that include both Apollonian and Dionysian body representation concurrently. Table 2 shows the cross tab output.

Table 2. Apollonian and Dionysian representations by gender (%)

	Male only representation	Female only representation	Mixed representation
Apollonian representation	56	31	30
Dionysian representation	20	53	43
Apollonian and Dionysian representation	25	17	26
Total (N)	100 (55)	100 (42)	100 (70)

This table shows that representations in my sample of advertisements are obviously gendered. Women are often represented as Dionysian and men as

Apollonian beings. Although this division is not absolute, it is clear. In the advertisements that include female only representation, the Dionysian representation (construed by the ideal of pleasure, desire, sensuality, sexuality and passion) is more common (53 per cent) than the Apollonian representation (31 per cent). The division is even clearer in advertisements that include male only representation, 56 per cent of these advertisements depicting men as Apollonian (constructed by the ideal of discipline, control, rationality) beings and only 20 per cent as Dionysian beings.

The NSP and Carte D'Or advertisements are typical in the sense that the male representation in the first depends on the Apollonian ideal, and the female representation in the second one is based on the Dionysian ideal. However, the male representation in the Carte D'Or advertisement does not embody the typical male representation, because it depends on the Dionysian ideal.

More typically, the Apollonian male representation can be found in action figure advertisements targeted at children. These ads are full of the action and figures that represent Apollonian elements. More typical, the hero in these ads is the ultra-masculine warrior with a disciplined and controlled body. There are also Apollonian male representations, for example, in the beer advertisements, where the product is depicted as the reward for the hard, disciplined job-related form of body work (see Shilling 2005: 73–74).

As we see in Table 2, there are some Apollonian female representations as well. One of them is in the supermarket advertisement in which the housewives tell the interviewer how rational it is to do the shopping for the family in just this shop.

The findings suggest that pleasure is associated mostly with the woman's body and discipline with the man's body in these advertisements. The division is consistent with the traditional gender system in its binary gender model (see de Lauretis 1987; Hirdman 1988; Liljeström 1996). The Dionysian has been linked with female embodiment since early Greek culture. Since the Dionysian is the ideal that emphasizes the pleasures of the body and Apollonian is the ideal that rejects the body via control and discipline, the Dionysian can be seen as the "more embodied" ideal. Thus the bond between the Dionysian and female embodiment implies that women are seen "more embodied" than the men in the traditional Western gender system. As Myra Macdonald notes, the body has historically been much less important to the definition of manhood than womanhood (1995: 193). From this point of view it seems that television advertising maintains the traditional gender system by representing the woman more as Dionysian (embodied) than the man. Television advertising also maintains this system by linking the Apollonian and the man, continuing the Western tradition in which manhood is largely defined by emphasizing the significance of rationality, self-control, and work (Seidler 1989), that is to say by Apollonian elements.

Conclusion

This research enquired whether the thesis that the Dionysian ideal permeates Western media culture holds of advertising. I argue that it does not. In this study, the claim of the domination of the Dionysian ideal has been tested empirically. This research was needed as there was hardly any systematic research done to substantiate these claims. My research on Finnish television advertisements shows that these claims are only a partial truth. The Dionysian is not the ubiquitous ideal in contemporary Western television advertising; rather, my findings indicate that the dichotomy between Dionysian and Apollonian is so.

My findings also indicate that the dichotomy between Dionysian and Apollonian is gendered. Women are often represented as Dionysian and men as Apollonian beings in the television advertisements. This is not surprising, since gender representations continue the old Western tradition in which manhood is defined by the Apollonian elements and womanhood by Dionysian.

The Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy is found in almost every advertisement in my data. It seems that both the modern and the late modern ideals of embodiment flow in contemporary consumer and media culture, since today's television advertisements take advantage of the hedonistic late modern ideal of embodiment, but use the disciplined modern ideal of embodiment as well. Therefore, the prevailing discourse about hedonistic culture and especially hedonistic advertising culture captures something essential, but this discourse does not tell the whole story about Western consumer and media culture, because it does not notice the flipside, the ideal of the ascetically oriented body that appears as frequently as the hedonistic ideal.

My data has been collected from one culture and from one particular period. Finnish television advertising is, of course, only a part of Western media culture, but studying it can show that the Dionysian ideal does not dominate this culture. The result that the Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy dominates my data is not surprising. This dichotomy has been salient in literature, the arts, religion, and philosophy for so long that it would be surprising if late modern advertisements – as the texts which recycle and crystallize cultural ideals and models – do not use it to represent the human body.

Endnotes

- i Like Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1998: 6), I see representation as “a process in which the makers of signs ... seek to make a representation of some object or entity ... and in which their interest in the object ... arising out of the cultural, social and psychological history of the sign-maker, and focused by the specific context in which the sign is produced.”

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Special: An interview with Robert Prus: His Career, Contributions, and Legacy as an Interactionist Ethnographer and Social Theorist

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Abstract

I have used an extended, open-ended interview with Robert Prus as a means with which to consider his contributions to ethnographic research and social theory. Given the range of his scholarship, a fairly detailed listing of the topics covered in the interview is presented at the outset. In addition to (a) considering Robert Prus's own career as a scholar, attention is given to (b) his involvements in symbolic interaction as a field of study, (c) ethnographic research as a mode of inquiry, (d) generic social processes as a realm of theorizing about the nature of human group life, and (e) some specific ethnographies on which he has worked as well as (f) his critiques of both positivist and postmodernist scholarship and (g) his involvements in tracing the development of pragmatist social thought from the classical Greek era to the present time and even more recent thoughts on (h) the sociology of Emile Durkheim and (i) public sociology.

A professor at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, Robert Prus teaches courses in the areas of symbolic interaction, ethnography, social psychology, deviance, and social theory from the classical Greek era to the present time. A rather prolific writer with several books and over fifty journal articles and other publications to his credit, Professor Prus has written on various theoretical, methodological, and substantive aspects of sociology and human group-life. In addition to interactionist theory, ethnography, and generic social processes, he also has addressed card and dice hustlers, the hotel community, marketing and sales, consumer behaviour, economic development and, more recently, classical Greek contributions to pragmatist thought. In recognition of his scholarly achievements, Dr. Prus was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Literature from Brandon University in 2002.

I interviewed Dr. Prus in late June of 2006 talking with him about his career, research, and thoughts on the discipline. We met over the course of three interview sessions lasting two to three hours each. The interviews all took place at a deli in a local grocery store. It was a comfortable setting with just enough background noise and activity nearby to keep the atmosphere fresh. As others who know Bob can

relate to, when one talks with him about sociology it is difficult not to be taken and moved by his sincere dedication to, and vision of, the sociological enterprise. If you're unfamiliar with Prus's approach to understanding the social world, you will soon discover that he is a most astute, thorough, and thoughtful practitioner of interactionist ethnography. Having once been a student of Bob's at the University of Waterloo I've experienced first-hand his ability to get students excited about interactionism and ethnography. The opportunity to sit down and have him share his thoughts on such a sustained basis was a much-welcomed experience for me. As always, Bob was congenial and enthusiastically discussed his passion: Chicago-style interactionist ethnography.

What follows is the result of our conversations covering various aspects of Bob's academic career. This statement considers his approach to conducting sociological research, and his thoughts on the discipline. Along with many other things, our discussion covers: his education from rural Manitoba to graduate school in Iowa to the field of ethnographic research; interactionist roots and key sources such as Herbert Blumer and George Herbert Mead, as well as Plato, Aristotle, and Emile Durkheim; his thoughts on his previous and ongoing ethnographic studies; his insights on early Greek contributions to pragmatist thought; approaches to and suggestions for data collection and analysis; conceptual formulations such as "generic social processes" and "subcultural mosaics;" and critiques of quantitative analysis, positivism, and postmodernism.

Because the interview is rather extensive, reflects a series of three open-ended conversations, and covers a series of interrelated topics, some segments of the interview have been rearranged to foster flow and clarity for the reader. Whereas the following statement very much reflects our discussion as it occurred, I have provided a list of the major headings and themes addressed in this statement. This way, readers can more readily locate specific subject matters as well as connect parts of the broader conversation that deal with related topics.

PART ONE

In this section Bob and I discuss the early stages of his career. We begin by examining his very early days in rural Manitoba, Canada and move on to explore how he became involved in interactionism and ethnography. Following this we discuss his involvements in encyclopaedia sales where he started to become fascinated with negotiation and interaction and his graduate studies at the University of Iowa. We also consider some of his scholarly influences they played a role in his career.

Discussing a chance meeting he had with a student dubbed C.R.D. Sharper and another student named Styllianoss Irini, Bob revisits how he became involved in research on card and dice hustlers and the hotel community, respectively. As we follow his career path we begin to see how Bob started to gravitate towards interactionist ethnography to the point where it became the central focus of his academic career.

More recently Bob has become intrigued with the philosophical insights of Plato and Aristotle as he began noticing the linkages of their ideas to more contemporary pragmatist thought. As he notes, his interest in exploring Greek philosophy in particular, and tracing interactionist roots more generally, has opened up what he

views as nothing short of an academic treasure chest. Perhaps one of the most significant jewels Bob has discovered is Emile Durkheim's involvements in pragmatist scholarship.

Tracing Western thought from early Greek scholarship to modern sociological theorizing, Bob has taken it upon himself to highlight the historical development of pragmatist thought and interactionist scholarship, a point that is revisited in Part Two of our interview. Central to the development of the sociological enterprise, Bob indicates, is the construction of concepts. To be worthwhile, however, our sociological concepts must be grounded in the everyday experiences of human group-life and have a generic, processual, and transhistorical quality. Here, Bob echoes Blumer's call for a concept-oriented naturalistic approach to understanding the social world.

Getting into Symbolic Interactionism & Ethnographic Research

Steve: Let's start by talking a little bit about your early education. Where did you get started with your education? Let's even go back to your undergraduate years or earlier.

Bob: I grew up in rural Manitoba. In some ways our experiences with people, all these things, accumulate. So, that's part of what you grow up with. Now, in my case, my dad drank a lot. He was an electrician, but he drank a lot. He was able to find work, but he had a habit of drinking on the job and people don't always appreciate that. So, he lost work. As a result, as a family we ended up moving around to a number of small towns in rural Manitoba. Now, at the time of course I didn't really appreciate this. It was disruptive and embarrassing at times. It wasn't really a desirable kind of lifestyle. But now, looking back I realize it was an opportunity to see the backside of a lot of small communities. And, in small communities people basically do the same things that they do in larger communities, but it's there more right there in front of you and, since it's small, you can see things. That was just part of my growing up experience.

At that time I had no knowledge that there was such a thing as sociology. I had no concepts beyond the most general kinds of concepts that people would use to make sense of things. I knew what "the wrong side of the tracks" meant because that's where I spent most of my time. Fortunately, I did well in school. So I had a sort of marginal existence in a sense. When I was in high school I did well in physics, chemistry, and math. I went to university initially with the idea that I would study in those areas. I didn't really know that there was such a thing as sociology and psychology. I had seen some television shows and such, but I thought that was like a hobby people had. I thought no one would get paid for doing something that was that interesting. But when I went to university they had these courses – psychology and sociology. I ended up switching from the sciences into the arts. This was just much more interesting to me. But at that point, I still had no idea what symbolic interactionism was.

Steve: Were there some courses that piqued your interest at that time?

Bob: There was one course that stands out. It was a course in social psychology taught in the psychology department. It was very thorough. They used a book by Secord and Backman published in 1964. The reason I can say that so precisely is because they put out another volume of the same book in 1974 and it was very much

a Mickey Mouse version of the 1964 text. The 1964 text was very, very thorough. My own undergrad education was really quite weak in sociology, but this book, however, was very useful and it basically carried me on to graduate school.

Steve: Even early on in your career, even at this stage, were you thinking that you might become a professor?

Bob: No, no, no...

Steve: I know when I first started out I was thinking that I was going to be headed to law school. So, I thought the best way to get there was to take some criminology courses, so I ended up studying sociology. What were some of your early directions in that regard?

Bob: Well, I really didn't know that I would even finish the undergrad program. So it was quite the discovery process. I had no intention of going to graduate school. The idea that someone would actually pay you to go to school seemed unfathomable to me. I just did a three-year undergrad degree and in my third year a couple of professors suggested that I might go to graduate school. They said you would get a teaching assistantship or something. And I said, "Do you mean that they are going to pay me to go to school?" That was an unusual idea to me. Now, I have to tell you we have many students that I talk to about that don't know about that either. The other thing that happened that was very interesting was I took a job selling encyclopaedias. Did I ever tell you about that?

Steve: No, I don't think so.

Bob: It was a summer job and I didn't do very well at it. In part, I felt sorry for people. I realised when you go to their homes that they don't have this kind of money. I could relate to my own experiences, right? We didn't have money to buy an encyclopaedia set, but if somebody came by, we might buy it. But it was kind of a waste of money. Anyways, that was part of it.

We worked neighbourhoods in groups. After doing a presentation, we would meet up, often getting picked up in the car. I would get back in the car and they would say, "Well what happened that you didn't make the sale?" You know, they were very good in that sense. "Why didn't you finish the sale?" And they used to chew me out. They would say, "You need that killer instinct!" "The money is there, it's your money, and you let these people walk away with your money."

Much more importantly than that, and what I found so consequential about the encyclopaedia salespeople was that they knew how to relate to people. They would go and set up appointments, and it was all about impression management. I didn't have that term then, though. It was all about the presentation, not just "of self," but a whole educational package and connecting with people.

I was taking courses in psychology and sociology, but most of them didn't have that kind of realism to them. I found this very interesting, that I was hanging around these encyclopaedia salespeople and learning a lot more about people than I had been from my sociology and psychology courses. But I wasn't making money at it. I didn't have that killer instinct or monetary disposition, say. Still, I needed a summer job. After a while I took a job in a steel factory where the money was much better than selling encyclopaedias. But the encyclopaedia experience stayed with me. So did the factory work, but differently.

When I went to grad school I was looking for something that connected with what I had learned and experienced while working with the encyclopaedia salespeople. I went to the University of Iowa. Iowa is not that far from Manitoba. They offered courses in social psychology and that's what I thought I wanted to do. I went there and found that it was very much a quantitative, mainstream sociological program. At Iowa, the expression that they often used was, "If you can't measure it, it doesn't exist." So they had that very pronounced positivist emphasis.

At Iowa I was able to use this book on social psychology that I mentioned to you before – not just the book, but also the ideas and concepts and such. I ended up doing an M.A. thesis on dating relationships. It was a questionnaire type of thing. I don't suggest that anybody read it because I don't like it. But at the time it was something that I felt would allow me to complete the programme and I didn't feel as if I had many options. They really wanted a quantitative thesis.

In the M.A. programme we also had comprehensive exams. It was actually very interesting. I was studying for this methods comp and one of my fellow students said, "Well, you know, we could get asked about ethnography." I said, "Ethnography, what is that?"

Steve: So, you hadn't heard about ethnography at this point?

Bob: I might have heard it, but it hadn't registered. In the methods courses I had been taking there was nothing of that sort at Iowa. He said, "It's like *Street Corner Society*. So, I went and I read *Street Corner Society*, but it didn't seem like it really had a sense of direction. It was interesting in a way, but really, to my mind, there was nothing to it. Now, I would say that in *Street Corner Society* the best part in the whole book is the appendix where Whyte talks about the methodology... Nevertheless, I read it and I thought, "If they ask me a question about ethnography, I will tell them about *Street Corner Society*."

Carl Couch, who did symbolic interaction, was at Iowa. But at that time he was a very structuralist type of symbolic interactionist. It was the Iowa School. They also liked structuralist and quantitative types of models. That was their emphasis. I had been getting more exposure to the Chicago people – but only in part. It was really just this sort of structuralist interactionist analysis. So I really didn't pay much attention to symbolic interaction at that point.

Now, when I did my PhD I had become interested in how people acquire images, reputations, identities, and things of that sort. I had read Goffman's *Presentation of Self...*, Becker's *Outsiders*, and Blumer's *Symbolic Interactionism*. I had been reading these basically on my own. I realised that at Iowa there was really nobody doing this kind of work. So I tried to find someone that I thought would be the most reasonable person to work with. I selected John Stratton as my advisor. John was a student of Don Cressey – Cressey was into "differential association" from Edwin Sutherland – a related kind of emphasis to symbolic interactionism. John was interested in prisons more than anything, but I did not want to spend time hanging around prisons. I thought about it and eventually I decided that I might do a study of parole officers. That was pretty close to prison and John might like that. But in Iowa it was to be a quantitative thesis. So that's what I did. I asked my committee, "Would it be okay if I interviewed some of these people, parole officers, as well?" They said, "Oh yeah, you can do that as well, if you want." Do your questionnaire, but if you also want to do the other, you could do that. So, that's what I did.

Along the way I also took a course on the sociology of religion. The fellow teaching it was basically a Weberian scholar. But it occurred to me that people

recruited other people to religion somewhat like these encyclopaedia salespeople did. So my idea for a paper for this course was to go and talk to clergy. I talked to clergy from different Christian denominations to see what they did to try and get people to come to their church and intensify participation on existing members, keep people from leaving, and if they dropped out what might they do to bring them back into the fold. Also, how did they deal with people who had doubts about their religion? I started doing some interviews, but I really didn't know what I was doing in a more formal sense because I did not have any training. I hadn't taken any courses on doing ethnographic and field research.

Steve: So, you were sort of self-taught at this stage?

Bob: Yes, with the books I was reading. They were my teachers in a sense. When I finished grad school I had a job teaching at Windsor. I was teaching a criminology course and I had my students write papers on different aspects of crime, but I tried to get them to write on something they knew about. So you know, petty crime, speeding on the highways, just more commonplace types of activities.

This one student asked if he could do a paper on pool hustling. He was older than I was. I said, "Do you know any pool hustlers?" He said, "Well yes. My dad ran a pool hall and so I could go and talk to the people there." I told him to read Ned Polsky's *Hustlers, Beats, and Others* and Goffman's *Presentation of Self...* and see if he could connect with those sorts of things.

As I say that, I also realize that I had a good education in Iowa in many ways because it was quite rigorous. We had to know a lot. If you were in deviance, you had to know a fairly wide range of the deviance literature. Although their social psychology was more structuralist, they still expected you to have a range of familiarity with things. Their social theory was quite extensive. I mention this in part because as I am talking, one of the people we spent time with was Georg Simmel on "form and content." I see Simmel as one of the precursors to what would become "generic social processes." Another source that might strike people as kind of funny in a round about way... The person teaching the social theory course at Iowa was Jim Price. He was a student of Robert Merton. Robert Merton had the term "codification" and we had "codification" pounded into us. It was basically the idea of establishing categories of things. You would see where things were similar and different, and you put them in categories. It required some comparative analysis. That was stayed with me as well... That sort of comparison process is basic to Generic Social Processes.

Steve: Was there a specific point in your career where you actually started to think of yourself as a symbolic interactionist?

Bob: Yeah, basically between my M.A. and PhD. I started reading more of these Chicago interactionist materials on my own and I realized, "Hey, I'm one of these people." Then I wanted to read everything I could. They had all these great concepts. They had labelling theory, perspectives, and identity. So that was part of it. I realized that they were closer to these encyclopaedia salespeople I had been hanging around with, but they had these concepts such as Becker's "career contingencies," Blumer's "intimate familiarity," activity, just interactionist thought more basically. Really nice concepts! In grad school, we had this instructor, Richard Woodworth. He was at Iowa for just a short period time, but he introduced us to

Alfred Schutz and that was very good. So, Schutz, Berger and Luckmann, and Garfinkel. That again became part of my conceptual package. These things became resources. These things accumulated over time and that was part of what I had to work with.

To go back to Windsor and this student that was interested in studying pool hustlers. I'll show you how this connects. This student's paper wasn't very good. I gave him, like a C or a C- or something. But in this paper there were a couple of things that were just so authentic. I didn't know where he might have gotten these from. So one day after class, I said to him, "Do you have a few minutes? I'd like to talk to you about your paper." He said, "Yeah, it wasn't very good was it?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, my wife helped me with it." I thought "Well, C-, I'm not going to worry too much about this." Later on he told me his wife was a psychology major and had told him to take lots of things out because she thought that these might offend the professor. I think he took some of the more realistic aspects out. Anyways, we got talking about hustling pool and it turned out that he was putting himself through university hustling pool. He had been hustling pool for some time. So I thought that it might be interesting to do a little study on pool hustlers.

We started talking about hustling pool on a more sustained basis and he became increasingly comfortable with me. Then, one day, he started talking about card and dice hustlers. I thought, "Card and dice hustlers, what is this?" Basically, as he described them, they were like professional thieves. Well, I knew Sutherland's text (*The Professional Thief*), but I also knew that Ed Lemert, who was considered an expert in the area, had said that these professional thieves are things of the past, that they do not exist anymore. Well, Ed Lemert was wrong about this. This fellow, whom I later called "Card (C.R.D.) Sharper," it was really from him that I learned to do ethnography.

For the hustlers to find parties (events in which to set up card or dice games) and effectively fit in with the people there, they would need to develop some really good social skills. That was something, again, that I could connect with the encyclopaedia salespeople. I realized that ethnographers are doing the same sorts of things. They just hadn't labelled it or identified it in such explicit terms. Later on, I wrote a little paper called, "Hustling the Hustlers," which reflected some of these things. But that study was, for me, really a major education!

Steve: In that research were you out there in the bars and doing the observation?

Bob: No, at this point I wasn't in the bars. I hung around with C.R.D. Sharper. But, if you go to one of these parties, you can't just sit in there and watch because you become too obvious and besides you don't see anything. You just see people playing cards or drinking, or whatever they're doing. The moves, though, are all secretive. They try to do everything in a way that looks so natural that no one thinks anything is going on. In fact, that's the point they emphasize. It has to look natural!

Later when I talked to magicians about this sort of work, they told me that they divide people into "box magicians" – people who buy tricks or people who develop tricks – and those who do what they call "natural magic," which is essentially sleight of hand. The natural magicians liken themselves to the card and dice hustlers. They say, the idea is that things have to look natural, like nothing unusual happened, and all of the sudden you produce this wonderful effect! Now, you see, with card and dice hustlers they produce this same effect, but they can't show people what the effect is, right? They conceal credit for the effect, the outcome. So the emphasis is entirely on managing impressions – in both cases, actually, but in different ways.

With the hustlers, you're basically stealing from people, but you're trying to do

it in such a way that they feel very comfortable and don't know what's going on, and ideally will invite you to come back again. They have events that they will go to year after year. They have a book, like a listing of all the places, listing the events which are good and which are not. It's very systematic with the more professional hustlers. If there's some kind of event and it's in this area or wherever it happens to be, and it's on July 31st, for example, and it was a good party, they'll be there next July 31st and the next July 31st. And, in some ways, it's even easier because now they know a few people and they're just part of the whole thing. So there again, a lot of impression management – fitting in with people and relating to them.

You know, I was talking to Anselm Strauss about this later and he asked me, "Where did you learn to do field research?" And I said, "Well, I learned to do it from a card and dice hustler." He kind of laughed and said, "You know, that's very interesting because our tradition really has that kind of basis. You know, Nels Anderson's *The Hobo*, Clifford Shaw (*The Jack-Roller*) hung around with this delinquent named 'Stanley,' and Ed Sutherland (*The Professional Thief*) had Chic Conwell. It's just part of our heritage." I thought his commentary was very interesting. So, I teach these courses on ethnographic research, but I've not taken any courses on ethnography.

Steve: That's interesting. So, it's basically all come from learning from others in the field.

Bob: Yes, and books. Because whenever you read an ethnography, a good ethnography, you're going to learn some things about people and doing research and analysis. I've learned a lot in that way. Then, as you go to conferences, again you talk to people about their projects. Like Peter and Pattie Adler were doing a study of drug dealers (*Wheeling and Dealing*) at about the same time I was studying the hotel community. I ran into them at a conference and it was really very nice, great actually, because they were telling me things that they were involved in – activities, dilemmas, strategies – and of course I could relate to those so readily because our work was in many ways so parallel. So you do run into others that are doing similar things and you can talk about methodology and research dilemmas and things of that sort.

Steve: Have you found that being able to dialogue with other scholars over the years has been important for you?

Bob: Yes. In fact, one of the nice things about being a symbolic interactionist is that there's a community of people that you can tap into. This, of course, I didn't realize at the outset. It's really tough to do something entirely on your own and try to sustain something entirely on your own. Most people aren't able to do that. So it's great to have that community.

As you know there are some factions and splinters within, but nevertheless it's been very good in that regard. If somebody says, "Well I'm an eclectic," I'm not really sure what to do with that person. But, if they say, "I'm a functionalist," okay, I can look at them in terms of that perspective. If they are in that community then they would have some realms of research and concepts, basically like the interactionists do.

Early Ethnographic Research & Insights

Steve: Would you consider “Road Hustler” your first ethnography?

Bob: No, actually it was a very small, class related study of the clergy in graduate school. That was my first attempt at ethnography in a sense. And somewhat concurrently I was hanging around these parole officers, working on the dissertation. You know, now, of course, I would try so hard to do the parole study ethnographically on a much more consistent basis. So I started doing things of that sort, but nothing very sustained.

But, you know, we’re all sort of long-time ethnographers from when we were kids because, to participate in this world, we all have to understand some things about the people around us. We might not have taken notes and we might not have had concepts that were very sophisticated, but we have to come to terms with other people. That’s just part of the socialization process. It’s an ongoing thing.

Steve: So doing ethnography in a more sustained sense is kind of a natural extension?

Bob: Yes, basically. And you want it to be authentic. The idea is that we want to be as close to our subject matter as we can. Herbert Blumer uses the term “intimate familiarity” in much the same way. We need to establish contact with the instances and examine the ways in which the instances are developed and take place.

If you’re doing quantitative analysis and looking at variables, you’re really not looking at the instances. You’re looking at, and they probably wouldn’t like this, but you’re sort of looking at what’s left over. “Did they do this or did they not do that? Did they commit a crime or did they not commit a crime?” That’s your dependent variable and then your independent variable is something like class or gender, or whatever. But there is no connectedness between the two.

If we’re going to talk in terms of things impacting on something else, or influencing, or shaping, or whatever, I think you need to be really mindful of showing exactly how this takes place. The only way to really do this is to study the instances in detail and then, from those instances, develop some sort of comparative analysis looking at where things are similar and where they’re different.

It’s in the instances that group life takes place. Like in this conversation, or those people over there giving an order of coffee, or whatever. Those are the instances. So by authenticity that’s part of what I mean – that we get as close with our concepts to representing what is going on as we can.

Steve: In terms of your career path, let’s go back to talking about that for a moment. You had left off by talking about some of your early experiences when you were at Windsor. When you were teaching your courses there, did they have this sort of interactionist emphasis?

Bob: Yes, I think they did. Still, my intention when I was at Windsor was to do a parallel study on Canadian probation and parole officers. It would have been informed by quantitative analysis as well, so it would have been very similar to what I had already done. I’m really glad I didn’t do that. It would have been boring in the first degree! So, running into C.R.D. Sharper turned out to be a wonderful break.

Steve: A key turning point then?

Bob: Yes, in terms of understanding not only what ethnographic research was about, but also what you could do with it – how potent it is! That’s something that just gets overlooked because there’s so much emphasis on quantitative analysis as if it were somehow scientific. But, having the potency and the ability to see how things take place, how they connect, and what parallels you find across situations that was something that I became increasingly aware of as I went through that project.

Sometimes people will say, “What about your major education?” I say, “Well, there’s *Road Hustler*. There’s the hotel study (*Hookers, Rounders, and Desk Clerks*). There’s the marketing and sales stuff (*Making Sales and Pursuing Customers*.” A lot of times I just take my formal education for granted because I’ve learned so much in these other settings.

Steve: Which is something I think a lot of people can relate to – that is, by getting out into the field, this is actually where we learn about what it is that we actually do.

Bob: Yes, it’s true. In the hotel project, *Hookers, Rounders, and Desk Clerks*, that was to my mind such a worthwhile project. At the time I really didn’t know how it was going to take shape. At different times I wondered if we were ever going to get finished. But, looking back on it, we basically studied a little community, with all of these different roles and sets of actors, and how they connected with each other.

A lot of the research on deviance will look at people involved in one role or one field of activity, but it doesn’t look at the interconnections. But you can’t understand one without the others. So, that was an interesting thing to realize.

Steve: At what point were you doing your research on the hotel community?

Bob: I had just arrived at Waterloo and was just finishing up *Road Hustler*, and this fellow, we call him Styllianoss Irini in the book, came by. He was interested in graduate school at Waterloo. He wasn’t accepted at Waterloo. Why, I don’t know. Nevertheless, we talked about what he was doing. I found out that he was working in this hotel and they had hookers, strippers, loan sharks, bookmakers, and just about everything else. I said, “You know what? You should keep notes on this.” I said, “Do you have a tape recorder?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Well, just talk into the tape recorder and don’t worry about being repetitive. Just talk about the things that happened. Don’t worry if you repeat things, it’s okay.”

Anyways, he sent me a couple of tapes and I listened to them and it was very, very interesting. He was coming up with things that I hadn’t thought about. I was teaching deviance courses and I thought well the least I can do is go down and see what this situation looks like for myself. So we met and he introduced me to some people. They basically seemed quite accepting of me. I went back a few more times. It was a very interesting situation.

After a few weeks or months, I began to realize that this is like nothing that’s ever been written, at least that I knew of in sociology... Now, later I would learn about Anderson’s *The Hobo*, Cressey’s *The Taxi-Dance Hall*, and Wiseman’s *The Stations of the Lost*. Those are the closest studies I know of now. But we focused even more on the interconnections of the various participants, the different identities, and the transitions people would make from one role to another. Also, it wasn’t just one bar. It was a series of bars with a number of interconnected people. They had relationships, activities, and identities. It was all part of a much larger process. It was really important in terms of getting away from an emphasis on individuals, even

within particular categories, to a focus on the community.

As it turned out, it was really easy for me to connect with these people in lots of ways because I had spent a couple years hanging around C.R.D. Sharper. They were into hustling, so it was made easier in that regard. It was difficult in other ways, though, because these people had very erratic lifestyles, some were emotionally up and down, and some had very unsettled lives. These were things that I had to work around. You didn't set up appointments like you would with a doctor or a clergyman. There was a looseness to it or a fluidity that you would have to keep adjusting to. Again, for me, it was such an important education.

Steve: What were some of the key things that you learned from that research?

Bob: A stronger appreciation of community as a concept and the fluidity of the human group – how people could move back and forth... Most of the things that I had read about from Howard Becker, Herbert Blumer, Paul Cressey, and others were things that allowed me to make sense out of what was going on. It was having concepts and having other ethnographies and thinking about "What's going on in this situation and what are we learning here?" Notions of career contingencies, intimacy and distancing, trouble and regulation, and various kinds of hustles. Those were all just part of it.

Steve: So the past reading offered you somewhat of a framework to work with?

Bob: Sure. It gave me some things to compare and assess to see whether these things would fit in this situation and in what ways. How do people initially become involved in roles? When are they likely to continue them? It was a study, in a sense, of a broader subculture, but subcultures within as well. It had that quality.

Steve: What were some of the key things, methodologically, that you learned from doing these projects?

Bob: The biggest thing was just about how to relate to people. As a researcher you're not there to prove anything to them. You're there to be open to what they have to tell you. This might seem like it's a little bit off your question, but it's very important! I can't remember if it was in *Road Hustler* or someplace along the way in the study of the hotel community, but I began to realize that *activity was the key!* You want to see what things people are actually doing and how exactly they are doing them.

So, methodologically, instead of people's views about things being the most important, activity becomes your centralizing element. If you are focusing on activity, all those other things – identity, relationships, perspectives, and emotionality – can be envisioned as activity.

I didn't know about Aristotle's views on activity at that time, but he argues that when we're studying people we really need to focus on activity. That was something that really struck when we were studying the hotel community, but you'll also see that *Road Hustler* was developed around activities.

Activity becomes the methodological emphasis. What exactly is going on, how does it take place, how do people enter into the process, and what do others do? You're following the flows of activity along. Comparative analysis also is so important. Where is it similar and where is it different?

Steve: So, by comparative analysis you mean you're comparing communities and seeing how they are the same and different from one another?

Bob: It could be that. It also could be that you just did one interview with one person and now you're comparing it to an interview you did with another person. You're comparing cases. It could be the same person, but just two different instances of the same activity. Say you're doing a study of smoking and you talk to the same person and ask about the last time they smoked a cigarette and maybe the time before. You shouldn't assume that whatever you did once will be the same. In fact, I suspect that for most smokers having that first cigarette will be a different experience for them than the next one. What they actually do is likely to be different. That would be another instance. And, you see, with Glaser and Strauss when they talk about "grounded theory," in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, that's basically what they're talking about. Aristotle uses the term "analytic induction." It's a comparative method. Plato uses the term dialectic sometimes, it's more or less a constant comparison process, where you are focusing on the similarities and differences and asking about the implications.

Key Influences & Interactionist Roots

Steve: How do you see yourself fitting into Chicago School interactionism?

Bob: I remember talking with Howard Becker about Herbert Blumer. He said, "When we were at Chicago it was just such a large cohort. Most of us learned our symbolic interactionism from Herbert Blumer. Most of us worked with Everett Hughes, but we learned our social psychology from Herbert Blumer."... I learned my symbolic interaction from reading Blumer's text (*Symbolic Interactionism*) more than anything else. It's the best statement we have... I spent one afternoon talking with Blumer at Berkeley. At that time I think he was 80 years old or so, but still very coherent. I wasn't wise enough at that time to tape record him.

Steve: What were some of things you discussed with him?

Bob: We talked about different people. We talked about Erving Goffman, Anselm Strauss, Ed Lemert, and Ed Sutherland... We talked about a lot of things. Not so much issues from his writing. We understood that we had that base. Also, I didn't know what to expect. Looking back, I would have liked to have been more prepared...

We talked about the hotel community. He had read *Road Hustler* and my work on the hotel community. He understood it well. Amongst other things, he spent some time in the waiting room of one doctor who had a lot of underworld clientele. Herbert Blumer would go there Saturday mornings and talk to the people in the waiting room. It was my impression that he thought he might do some research on this group, but he never did. He did tell me that he introduced Broadway Jones to Ed Sutherland, but in the book *The Professional Thief* he is named Chic Conwell.

Herbert Blumer, to me, epitomizes Chicago sociology because, better than anybody, he indicates the linkages between pragmatist scholarship and ethnographic research. Blumer has been a constant conceptual inspiration for me.

You know, as I read my own stuff, the things I'm writing, at different times I will say, "What would Herbert Blumer or Erving Goffman think of this?" I'll sort of invoke the role of the third person. Or, if I'm stuck on something I'll say, "How might Herbert

Blumer deal with this issue?” Now, of course, I also consider how Aristotle might deal with certain things. They’re very helpful in that sense.

It’s very useful as a strategy for writing and analysing because, within oneself, we’ll have certain ideas and we start to think of something in a certain way. But, if we take the role of the other, we can bring in different ideas that obviously were somehow stored in our minds, but that we haven’t made explicit. So, I find that very helpful. And, you’ll have dilemmas, like how might I sort this out? Is there a better way to approach this? I can say to myself, “How might Herbert Blumer deal with this?” Of course, you have to know that author fairly well to invoke their ideas.

Steve: You mentioned Everett Hughes. I think he might get lost sometimes in our thinking about contributors to ethnographic research. How do you think about Hughes and his contributions?

Bob: I actually don’t spend a lot of time thinking about Everett Hughes. I think his greatest contributions were to encourage people to do studies of occupations. If you wanted to study occupations, Hughes would let you study it in all sorts of different ways, not solely just as an interactionist. Where Blumer, I think, was more concerned with maintaining an interactionist emphasis. So it’s easier for me to identify with Blumer than Hughes. With my students I tell them that they can study a whole wide range of things, but to do it with an interactionist viewpoint.

Steve: So, the interactionist viewpoint is key for you.

Bob: Yes. Where it seemed that Everett Hughes’ primary emphasis was with the sociology of work. He had other interests, of course, and interactionism was prominent, but it was only one way of approaching the study of work.

Steve: Do you think the same way then about Park and Burgess?

Bob: Herbert Blumer seems to have been influenced very much by George Herbert Mead and by Robert Park. From Robert Park, in part, he gets an emphasis on ethnographic inquiry. Blumer also has this early material on collective behaviour that, to my mind, is not very good at all. But it keeps getting reprinted over and over and over again. Now, in 1971 Herbert Blumer wrote “Social Problems as Collective Behaviour,” which is an excellent article. To me, though, it seems like it’s written from the viewpoint of George Herbert Mead, whereas the earlier material on collective behaviour, I think, is much more influenced by Robert Park.

It seems that that sort eclecticism belongs more to Park and then Hughes, both of whom have somewhat similar styles. At Chicago, I guess, all of these people more or less interacted with each other, with fragments and splinters. It seems that Blumer and Hughes didn’t get along all that well, but nevertheless that’s part of our legacy. But I don’t find Robert Park’s work to be all that useful. I think part of it is his conceptual mix. Everett Hughes’ work has this conceptual mix as well. He does some things that are more consistently interactionist, but other things were more mixed. So those two don’t have a particularly prominent position for me. Burgess, even less so. He was really more interested, I think, in family relations from any perspective, rather than being an interactionist per se.

Steve: So then with Blumer’s later work on collective behaviour, you could see the interactionist focus coming out more there than in his earlier work?

Bob: Yes, it was just an entirely different statement on collective behavior. It's so very good! But it's a statement based on Mead's approach to community life rather than Park's approach. It's very different. So much more attentive to what people do in collective contexts.

Steve: You've also mentioned pragmatist scholarship. Now, I'm assuming Mead would be part of that group. Perhaps you can describe how you see Mead tying in? Do you see Mead as influencing your work directly or is his work somewhat mediated for you through Blumer?

Bob: I would say it's mostly Mead mediated through Blumer. I find Blumer's material much more direct and clear. All of Mead's texts were written from students' notes, so that might account for some of the differences. If I had to recommend *Mind, Self, and Society* or Blumer's *Symbolic Interactionism* for somebody just to read one, I'd recommend Blumer's *Symbolic Interactionism* because it gives you so much more. Still, Mead is so good!

One of my big surprises with regards to Mead was when I read more material from Wilhelm Dilthey. The surprise was to see just how much Mead's work resonated with some central tenants of Dilthey's thought. As it turns out Mead had gone to Germany and spent some time with Wilhelm Wundt and then with Dilthey. It's not clear what the lines of influence are, but I remember reading some passages from Dilthey and it was like déjà vu because the ideas that were in Mead had earlier been expressed by Dilthey and sometimes in much more crystalline form in Dilthey. The Americans who went over to Germany wouldn't have had a very good command of German, so it's hard to tell how they comprehended these materials. Still, they learned things. In a memorial statement to George Herbert Mead, John Dewey says that when Mead came back from Germany that his mind was preoccupied with the relationship of the individual to the group. So there is that aspect.

There again, you know, a lot of people tend to see symbolic interaction as individualistic, and it's not. Mead clearly emphasizes the importance of the group. While the group consists of individual people – discrete organic entities, they are entities that collectively develop language and other practices of sorts. The idea is that there would be no meaning, no thought of a meaningful sort without the community and without the symbolization process. This is in Dilthey and this is in Mead. I have great respect for Dilthey, Mead and the pragmatist tradition.

Now, one of the things I have found more recently in reading the Greek material and going back to the American pragmatists is that James, Dewey, and Mead had very little familiarity with Aristotle's texts. That surprised me! You'd think that, being philosophers, they would be familiar with his work. But, you know, a lot of philosophy has been written in the intervening centuries and, in trying to keep up with what is contemporary, people often lose track of what happened earlier.

They will acknowledge that the Greeks started pragmatism – James does and Dewey does -- but they don't seem to have studied the classical Greek texts that carefully. They apparently know Plato much better than Aristotle, which is very, very common in philosophy I've found. Most philosophers are Platonists. And, a lot of those who call themselves Aristotelians are logicians. Some know Aristotle's work on ethics, which is quite incredible, but most really don't pay much attention to Aristotle's work on rhetoric or politics or poetics or memory. They just isolate themselves more into analysis. That broader neglect of Aristotle was a surprise to me. I thought the philosophers did a better job of that, but they don't actually. Most really don't know

Aristotle very well. Mead is very critical at times of Aristotle, but I don't find his critiques justified. I also have difficulty understanding the basis on which Mead is being critical because the affinities in their works are so striking. But Mead doesn't know Aristotle well at all. If he knew Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, or even *Nicomachean Ethics* well, he would see the affinities.

Steve: Who have some of your more contemporary influences been?

Bob: One of the nice things about being a symbolic interactionist, as opposed to doing something parallel, but working on your own, is that you do have a community of other people that you can connect with. You can go to conferences, you have literature in common, and you have people in common. It is a social world and that's so important. For some people, such as our grad students and undergrads, we've been able to help connect them to that community. For me, it was really after finishing graduate school that I became part of that community. At Iowa, they had symbolic interaction, but it was a very different kind of symbolic interaction. So, I ended up meeting a lot of people, Chicago-style people, essentially on my own. Nevertheless, it was very useful to meet these people and something that I believe is invaluable.

If I think back over the years, I've met a number of people that have been very helpful, such as Peter and Pattie Adler who were doing research on drug dealers when I was doing my hotel research. You know, Clint Sanders, Tom Morrione... Gary Fine I haven't had so much contact with, but I like Gary and he's there doing things. Of course, Billy Shaffir and Jack Haas, Lonnie Athens, and David Karp. There are just a whole lot of people in this tradition. You see them here and there, but they sort of become your intellectual family. You talk about things with them. You debate things with them. The community, that's really part of where you are.

Confronting Criticisms of Interactionism

Steve: I was going to talk about this later, but I think we can talk about it now since you brought up a criticism about interactionism. One of the criticisms is that interactionists are psychological reductionists. You had gotten to that to a degree by talking about the criticism that interactionists focus too much on the individual. But, as you point, that really isn't the case.

Bob: I would say that *we absolutely are not psychological reductionists*. There's no equivocation on that! The reason I say that is because the symbolization process isn't something that people develop on their own. It's a group thing. It requires some sense of mutuality. Language is not an individual thing.

So, without the group, there would be no concepts, no meaningful thought. What could you possibly think about? Where would these ideas come from? I guess maybe one could say we're born with these ideas. We don't!

As symbolic interactionists, we are definitely not psychological reductionists. It's always the group. Still, having said that, we're also very mindful of people's capacity for agency. But, agency is also a social process. All of those things are effectively products of group interchange. Even notions of individualism or subjectivity, those are group-based concepts.

Steve: How do you think of those as group-based concepts?

Bob: In terms of language. Without that, without language, you wouldn't have a his or her, he and she, you and me, they and I. How would this person become an individual apart from the other? You would have no sense of "whatness." Here again, Aristotle says that things only have meaning relative to what we compare them with. I think he's entirely correct in that. So, without a sense of what is hard, we wouldn't have an idea of what is soft. Without a sense of a group or the other, does it make sense to have an individual? There would be no advantage to having the concept of an individual or a self if you're there all by yourself.

So, it's this notion of "whatness." And, whatness doesn't come from physical sensations. It doesn't come from within. It seems to be linguistic. I was struggling with this in developing a paper on memory. There are different modes of memory. We realize that other animals have memory, but do they have recollectable memory – you know, where they can recall or reflect back on something, where you deliberately pull something from your past experience into your immediate consciousness? Aristotle says, "No they don't." Once again, I think he's entirely correct about that. The reason people can do this is because of language and language is a group thing.

Early Greek Contributions to Pragmatist Scholarship

Steve: Let's talk a little bit about some of your more recent work – the work you've been doing on the Greeks.

Bob: Yes, the Greek project. How did it get started? In 1998, I was basically finishing the manuscript for *Beyond the Power Mystique*. I had been going through the literature on power, more specifically to see if anyone had written on power as an enacted social process. I wasn't finding very much, but every now and then I'd find references to Plato or Aristotle.

These were just brief, cryptic references. They were just short, mostly oblique references and I had gone back to the 1700s or so and it looked like things just kind of flattened out or there wasn't much there. So, I was a little reluctant to go back even further and start reading these things, but I decided I'd do this because I should know, right? I read Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and "Wow, is this ever good!" I thought, like "Holy Moly, I'm supposed to be some kind of expert in labelling theory, and here this guy has given us a version of labelling theory that just is so incredibly good!" I realized I had to learn more. So, I started reading more of Aristotle's texts and also Plato's materials because I realized that there were these interconnections between Plato and Aristotle. At that time, the power mystique book was in press. I had one last chance to fix some of the errors or typos or whatever else. I decided that before it goes to press that I would have to talk about the Greek material because what I had found was so good.

I experienced some trepidation because I hadn't had much of a chance to study this material and bounce my ideas off people who were really knowledgeable in the area, but the material I found was just so important. So, I wrote a statement up. I pulled some other material out of this text and put the material in from the Greeks because it seemed to be so consequential, so important. So, that was the beginning.

After that I just kept reading more and more material from the Greeks, following some conceptual themes along over the millennia. I began to realize that various people had pragmatist themes that they would work on, but these didn't have a nice consistent flow. At certain points it might be people in rhetoric who were talking about these issues, but at other times it might be people in poetics or religion

or education. As I read this material, initially on the Greeks, I began to realize that American pragmatism was so parallel to some Greek social thought, especially from Aristotle.

The two also seemed too parallel to just be separate things. So, what were the connections? I knew I could trace Mead's pragmatism back to Dilthey, but could I go back further? That was sort of the question. I was working my way back in terms of history and then working my way ahead from the Greeks towards the present time in these different areas. I was mainly focusing on pragmatist themes or emphases in the literature but that was just one of a number of things that the Greeks talked about.

In getting involved in the Greek project, however, I put two ethnographies aside. One is on shopping behaviour – the sequel, basically, to the study of marketing and sales – and it's quite a well-developed study. In fact, I think I pretty well have two volumes of material. Maybe I need to develop another four chapters. So, it's really quite extensive. Then I have another project on economic development, not as far along, about halfway through. Both of these I thought were important projects. But, when I came across this Greek material and realized how good it was, I thought, "Lots of people can do ethnographies, but how many people are going to go and actually trace the routes of our tradition?" It wasn't simply a matter of saying, "Well, you can find it in Greek thought" or "There are these authors here and there throughout history that talked about similar things."

People, theorists in sociology, have talked about American pragmatism as if it was this unique, frontier, democratic type of development – only in America could such a theory develop. I realized that this argument was completely nonsensical. But, in addition to that, this material offered great potential for comparative analysis.

We're more used to thinking of comparisons on a horizontal level. You might do a study of the Mennonites and somebody else might do a study of hookers, and somebody else on the police, and somebody else on blogging, or something. We can sort of compare these and, in our broader analytic quest, we might go back to the 1920s or so, to the beginnings of Chicago ethnography, say. Or, we might go cross-culturally with the anthropologists where they have material that's more comparable. We think of the value of doing comparative analysis in these regards. But what I realized was that there was something else going on here. If we can locate these texts from the past, we can do transhistorical analysis and a lot of it is also transcultural. It means that there are these jewels scattered throughout history, the problem being... to find them.

Steve: What do you see, then, as being the intellectual payoff in doing the Greek project?

Bob: There are lots of payoffs. One of the more immediate payoffs, for me, is a realization that if you know Plato and Aristotle, you basically know Western social theory as it's going to develop over the next 2,500 years. You don't know exactly what people are going to talk about or what they're going to lose in the process because they end up losing lots of things. There hasn't been a nice consistent follow through. We have lost so much. You don't know what they're going to emphasize, because people will pick up on little themes and emphasize them. But, you know the basic parameters of what will become Western social thought.

So, you can read lots of material that comes along later comparatively quickly because you're not reading everything separately by itself. You're reading it relative to the base. And, once you know the base, it's so much easier to see what's there

and what's not there and where they're going. That's one kind of payoff, which I hadn't anticipated. In terms of understanding our roots, that's another important thing to know. Otherwise you keep reinventing the wheel.

As it turns out, again to go back to the Greeks, Plato and Aristotle have some incredible insights to offer us, things that 2,500 years later we haven't appreciated in a direct explicit sense. So, there are those kinds of things as well.

There's also the advantage of comparative analysis. Say we want to understand relationships. We could understand relationships between dating couples, bikers, the Mennonites, whatever group you want. But, we have texts that have been written 2,500 years ago and they also talked about relationships and they look at it in process terms and it's quite descriptive. A lot of the material that I work with from the past has a quasi-ethnographic quality to it. So you can look at and see what it suggests about relationships.

I'll give you an example. Ovid wrote a book on the art of love. It looks at how people get involved in relationships, how they intensify them, when they break up how they deal with the loss of the relationship, how they deal with jealousy, so many things that we experience, yet at a different time, a different location, and a different lifestyle. But, what are we learning about relationships? So, it has that incredible comparative payoff.

There's really so much work to be done in this area. I can go through and track some of these articles and talk about them, but there really needs to be a lot of sustained comparative analysis using these as resources. I've done a lot of synoptical statements of these texts because I realize that most people aren't going to go and read all of these books. But, if they have a synopsis that's fairly accurate, with "chapter and verse" references, they can find things that they are looking for and compare it with this other material. So, if they're studying emotions, or identities, or acquiring perspectives, or whatever, they can go here and there, and across different substantive fields as well, because these people wrote on many different topics.

If we just discovered some community out there, I don't know, in Africa or South America, that we haven't heard of before, you could see all these anthropologists converging on it, or trying to. You could say, "Well, look at all the resources we have here for comparative analysis." As it turns out, the anthropologists don't do much comparative analysis, but nevertheless they have that idea.

But, instead, I could say we have to look at all the material we have from the Greeks and from the Romans and various other communities. It's not consistent, but the material is here and there. It's just an incredibly valuable set of resources. Because these materials are cross-cultural as well as transhistorical, if you find the same sorts of things going on there, it makes a stronger case for some generic concepts... Plus we can specify things more precisely. That's really the intellectual payoff.

It's also something that I realize that I can only do a little bit of myself. There's a lot of history, historical materials, to work with. It's fun, but at the same time there are a lot of texts out there. And you see, in part, people have dismissed so much of the past because they think that if you really want to understand today you have to look at today's people. Durkheim was developing a text, *The Evolution of Educational Thought* in his lectures. It's not a very well-known statement. But he explicitly and forcefully makes the argument that you can't understand today's people without comparing them to yesterday's people. He says, moreover, that you don't want to limit your comparisons to the last three or four centuries. You want to go back as far as you can. His idea is that you want to go back as far as the Greeks because, in terms of the foundations of Western social thought, as much as any place, it began

there. It wasn't as if the Greeks suddenly had all these ideas on their own, but they were the great compilers. They got materials from the east, west, north, and south and they started to put it together. So it became this incredible goldmine!

When people talk about the cradle of Western civilization, this is what they're talking about. I'd heard this phrase many times, but never really appreciated how entirely viable it was. The Greek material is just so good, so precise. And, Plato and Aristotle, to their credit, are very concerned about defining their terms. In fact, they insisted that if you're going to talk about something, be sure to define your terms. They have different styles of writing, but nevertheless, they are quite precise.

That's something that I hope that I can give to the social sciences because the social sciences have so little history and so little awareness of the value of transhistorical material. It's something that I think we can do, as interactionists, in ways that people could not do as quantitative scholars. Again, to go back to Durkheim and this text, *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, Durkheim really works in a very parallel way to what I'm doing. I was really quite surprised to find that.

Durkheim's Contributions to Pragmatist Scholarship

Steve: That is interesting. The way you talk about Durkheim is quite different than the way in which he has been talked about by other sociologists.

Bob: Yes, because you see, the books that he is best known for are going to be, *The Division of Labour in Society*, *Rules of the Sociological Method*, and *Suicide*. So the books that he wrote in 1893, 1895, and 1897, those are what he's best known for. The materials that he wrote later on such as, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, *Moral Education*, *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, and a statement *Pragmatism and Sociology*, which is very, very good. In those, he is much closer to us. I would say he effectively adopts a sociological pragmatist viewpoint, it is much better than William James who reduces things to psychology. See, Mead doesn't do this; Mead really differs from James here too. For Mead, there is the group. The group is irreducible in quality. Durkheim says that, too. Durkheim, in his later works, is much more attentive to language, concepts, and activity. He says you can't reduce a complex, dynamic thing like society to some simplistic, abstract variables. Now, interestingly, he doesn't criticize his earlier texts, but his later works are really very different. So, I've been learning from Emile as well.

Steve: You had said earlier that you work in a somewhat similar fashion as Durkheim writes some of his later works. In what ways, then, do you see the affinities?

Bob: First, in his later works, Durkheim is very analytic. He is interested in speech and meaning and how people develop and use concepts. In his later works, he also emphasizes the importance of ethnography and history, which surprised me. In his *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, he builds extensively on ethnographic materials. So, in those ways there are similarities. The emphasis on the group and activities within are further similarities.

In a lot of ways, the later Durkheim is quite consistent with what we think of as Meadian social thought. I hadn't realized that until just a little over a year ago... I'm writing a text on Durkheim's sociological pragmatism. It is another extension of the Greek project actually.

The Scientific Merits of Symbolic Interaction & Qualitative Research

Steve: It's interesting to think of how our careers and focuses change overtime. Until about halfway through my undergraduate degree I didn't really think of qualitative research as being scientific or that there could be a real science to making qualitative observations. I had thought that it best served to find variables to be tested with quantitative measures. That changed after I took your class and read some interactionist and qualitative research texts.

Bob: The point that you raise – that is, “is symbolic interaction a science?” – is a very important question. Herbert Blumer, in his 1928 dissertation, talks about this directly. He doesn't use the term symbolic interaction. He talks about Cooley's method of sympathetic introspection, which effectively is ethnographic research. He says that, if by science you mean the type of inquiry you find in the physical sciences, where you can be very precise and rigorous, it doesn't seem that we can do that. But, he says, if a science, a human science, is to respect its subject matter, then we need a different type of methodology than that which is used in the physical sciences. Basically, you see the rudiments of his arguments for interpretation and the idea that a science of the human condition needs to take into account people's use of language, concepts, agency, and reflectivity. This is part of the reason that he argues that if you don't respect the things that are most distinctively human, how can you say you are doing a scientific study of the human condition? That is effectively what he says. But yet, a lot of people presume that because they are counting things and running statistical analyses that they are doing science.

In the papers that I did with Tony Puddephatt on causation and the one with Scott Grills on the myth of the independent variable, we say that if you're going to proceed scientifically with things, shouldn't you look at instances of things and shouldn't you look at the ways in which these develop? So, it's a different notion of science. It involves studying human group life in great detail.

If you're going to talk about causation, you should show the linkages between the things that are presumably involved. So, if we say that age or race or gender or class causes crime or is really consequential for crime, well how exactly is that? Did age cause crime in itself? Well, we know that it never did. But, even if it did, what exactly is the linkage? If you went to a courtroom and you said, this is my evidence, they would say, “Listen, forget it. You don't have a case!”

Independent, dependent variables, they would say, “What kind of proof is that?” It's like saying that guns cause death or something. You know, it has to be more than the gun, unless it spontaneously blows up or something and bullets go all over the place. You see what I mean? It's this idea of a connection.

That's probably an argument we could pursue a little more. Well, what exactly is the connection of these things? If you can't establish a connection, what would be the value of just talking about it? You would have to speculate on connections, right? That's what people, so many social scientists, do.

And many people out there want simple things, they want promises, hopes. They want to be able to control their destiny. They may know that these things are not possible, but they want them all the same. If you come along and promise that you can tell them the six, three, two, or whatever factors that cause this or that, people want to listen.

The interactionists and, Blumer more than anybody, took issue with on those sorts of things, claims. But, a lot of people haven't. I think even in our own part (as

interactionists), there is a tendency to assume that since other sociologists are doing things scientifically then that must have some integrity without actually looking at the science they are actually engaged in. Once you do that, it starts to look quite different.

The Centrality of Concepts

Bob: To go back to this idea of the community, and Durkheim makes the point that it is in the community – in the course of human interchange -- that people develop concepts.

Concepts enable us to do things. If you have to reinvent the concepts all the time, you may not even develop concepts that are anywhere near as good as what has been developed.

That's a problem with a lot of ethnography. People don't seem to understand that there's a technique to doing it and they think that they can go on their own little trip and other people can read it and gain all sorts of insights from it. But, insofar as it doesn't parallel things in other ways it's harder to draw comparisons. If you have studies that talk about identities, it could be on almost anything, any realm of human group life, but you can build on those.

If you have someone that "talks about my experiences with a new car" and another one that talks about "my emotional trauma," and they're working with different concepts, there aren't any linkages. But, if you talk about my experiences with a new car and my experiences with some emotional setback as a set of definitions, emergent definitions, you might have something that you could at least compare. That's an important thing.

If you're not in a community where you share concepts, you can't tap into mutual reference points. You can't really assess any concepts because you don't have shared comparison points to assess things. Even if you could create some concepts on your own, you would have all these people creating new concepts that are just bouncing around somewhere. You need some way of getting people to focus on things together.

Steve: Do you ever find that there are a number of concepts out there that are saying the same thing, but are labelled differently? There almost needs to be someone going around putting all of them together. It's like having a bunch of different languages and we need to bring them together.

Bob: Two things. One is to what extent are the terms synonymous? If they are more synonymous, then you can more readily bring the two together. However, if one is coming out of this paradigm and the other is coming out of that paradigm, even if they're the same terms, they are different because of the connotations that each represents.

At the same time, are there some more basic themes? Again, Durkheim, even though he doesn't know Aristotle really well, he goes back to Aristotle's categories and he says every human group needs categories like this in order to do things. He's arguing for some basic themes there and, of course, our notions of generic social processes would be very parallel to that.

It's almost like a magic carpet. Once you have these concepts, you can take them with you any place. That's the nice thing. You have some points of comparison. Herbert Blumer also talks about that. He says that concepts do not eliminate the unique qualities of things, but concepts provide a way of establishing or knowing

what's unique and what's common. Without the concepts we wouldn't have a basis of comparison.

PART TWO

In this section we discuss a variety of different topics ranging from ethics and research funding and the notion of Generic Social Process to the need for comparative analysis in and across the broader field of ethnographic research. We also discuss the difficulties and benefits of co-authoring papers and juggling multiple research projects, consider whether or not Plato and Aristotle can be considered ethnographers, and have a short dialogue on animal-human relationships and the dualism debate. We conclude part two by discussing the "meaning-making process" and the role of habits in human activity. Throughout our epistemological discussion Bob emphasizes the human capacity to develop and share meanings for objects, the processual and generic features of group-life, and the value of concepts to both human understanding and the sociological enterprise.

Comments on the Discipline

Steve: One question that comes up for people and one that came up for me in my ethics review is, "What type of contribution will this research make to the community you're researching?" What do you advise on this sort of question?

Bob: What I tell people is that we're really not there to change people's lifestyles or tell them how to live. We're basically there to learn from them. The idea is to leave the community relatively unscathed and let them develop their lives as they figure it ought to be, not to have some sociologist, or some outsider, or perhaps even somebody from the ethics committee tell them what they should be doing. This is not our agenda. If it turns out that our work is of some use to them, well that's fine, but that's really up to them.

Steve: How do you think about funding agencies, like the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), wanting researchers to have some sort of community outcome from their findings?

Bob: SSHRC has lost a sense of scholarship. SSHRC is just trying to become a bigger empire and they think the way they do it is to, at least on the surface, indicate to people that we are doing these wonderful things. That we are going to eradicate crime or effectively deal with social problems. It's not going to happen! It's just obvious that these things are around and will stay around.

Most of the research that SSHRC funds won't be of much benefit anyway because it doesn't really look at what people actually do. If you are not doing that, you don't even know what is going on. It's rather pretentious to propose to tell people how they should live a better life. At the back of it there seems to be some idea that there is this sort of ideal set of criteria that will define a better life for people and that we should somehow find that. It is an idealistic emphasis taken maybe from Rousseau and possibly even as far back as Plato.

It's a strange thing that SSHRC is doing. To my mind it is an anti-intellectual stance. There is this emphasis on, "How can people out there use this information?" Well, people out there don't have one set of interests. The questions they may want to have answered might have very little to do with scholarship.

We want to understand human group life generically. If we don't do that, we lose our sense of theory and a sense of perspective. To say simply we're going to give them whatever they want, that's okay, but it doesn't mean that they, the public, know what scholarship is or how scholarship is best developed. We're going to give them, I suppose, what you might call "public social science" because it is somehow engaging the public. It is a very bad set of policies and I spoke against SSHRC when they proposed this. To my mind it is just a very anti-intellectual stance. Nevertheless, they went through with it and the universities will adjust to whatever SSHRC wants because that's where the money is. So, that is going to create some problems for ethnographers and other serious scholars along the way because instead of concept-oriented social science, we are going to get who knows what kind of emphasis, depending on, I suppose, local representatives or whoever is speaking loudest at that point.

Steve: At the same time, I see us as being well positioned as ethnographers to offer insights into public issues. I agree completely with you that we're not out there to immediately affect people's lives, but in the end if we produce a well-written ethnography there probably will be groups that are interested in it. The way I look at it, I put something together, I'm not giving advice, I'm saying these are the perspectives of the people that I spoke to, this is how I analysed it, these are some concepts that I developed out of or refined in my research, and then in the end, say if a policy-maker gets a hold of it and wants to use my findings to develop directions for further research or for policies or whatever they want to use it for, then that's fine. But as a researcher, I don't see that as being my immediate goal.

Bob: I quite agree. And again, we can make the argument for authenticity, which underlies a lot of what you're saying. So, I have no problem with that. I think we should be trying to learn things for people, but to learn things for the people does not necessarily mean that we should be following the people's notions of what social science is at this and that point in time.

We want to follow the people's notions of what constitutes their life-worlds. Then, we need to try and develop a social science that connects the different themes and activities across these life-worlds. That's the sociological enterprise. We have to go one step up, even though when we do the research, we need to get right in there and see what is going on and explain to people that we really are interested in the things that they're doing. We need to take those things apart piece-by-piece.

Now, they might not be interested in actually looking at the more sustained research that we develop. They may want some simple idea of what the factors are and some simple solutions to things. Well, we don't have those things. There are no simple solutions to those things. But, some academics will promise that.

Steve: When I propose new research I always try to point that the benefit of the type of research that I do is that of getting close to people and seeing firsthand what they do. What better way of understanding social life than by getting close to it and interacting with people, discussing what they do, how they do it, and when they do it? You know, those sorts of things. It's more difficult to promote ethnography, say in terms of convincing a group that it's worthy research and worthy of funding when that

group has a specific form of research in mind to begin with and will only accept a certain type of research. When I first started doing ethnography and employing interactionist ideas, I said to myself, "This type of research makes perfect sense." It resonates with me and a lot others who first start to pick it up. Why wouldn't you do research this way? This seems to be just a logical extension of the human condition. If you want to understand social behaviour, hang out with people.

Bob: I agree. There's no better way of putting it.

Steve: I think it does or at least can resonate with people in the funding agencies, too. Even when I tell people who don't understand what sociology is per se, while some of it can seem pretty esoteric, on a lot of levels our approach (SI and ethnography) resonates with the common person as well.

Bob: Yes, it does have that quality to it.

Generic Social Processes (GSPs)

Steve: The idea of "Generic Social Process," can you describe what it is and how you came up with it?

Bob: Sure. You know, while we work with the idea that everything is in process, the idea of GSPs is really to look at human group life and ask, "Are there any systematic processual regularities? Is there any way of looking across at the things that people do at different times, at different places, different settings, and different contexts and seeing if there are some commonalities?"

It is based on notions of comparison, thinking in terms of where things are similar and where they are different. Even though as an analyst or a scholar or whatever, when we are studying situations, we tend to think in terms of what the relevant concepts are. In that respect, I really don't know when or how I started thinking in these terms. Is it from elementary notions of science? Is it from just experiencing things that people would say over the years? I truly don't know.

At one point, however, we had a conference (1985). It was a conference on symbolic interaction and ethnographic research. This was one of the early ones we did. I was trying to find some way of organizing the papers because, as you know, in this area people can examine virtually any substantive area and we have all sorts of angles or processes that we can deal with....

So, I was trying to find some way of putting this conference together and I decided what we really needed to do was to organize the conference around "process." I tried to sort out the paper topics. You know, what sorts of things were they talking about overall? At that point, I think I ended up with five notions: perspectives, activities, identities, relationships, and I think the fifth was making commitments. Overtime, I've increased the number of GSPs and I don't know what the actual number of them is, if there is a number. It became a way of organizing things that made sense to me. I ended up writing a paper on GSPs for this conference as a means of trying to introduce the other papers. That eventually was published. That was sort of the more formal beginning of it.

Who was I indebted to? Well, I was indebted to Herbert Blumer, of course. He talked about generic processes. I was indebted to Georg Simmel, for "forms" and "content." But also John Lofland and Ed Lemert, and other interactionists like Howard Becker and Erving Goffman, who had talked about these notions in process

terms. So, it wasn't as if I did anything so exceptional. It was really just taking things that were there in different ways and refocusing them somewhat. Also Glaser and Strauss and there are others that I talk about in the 1996 text.

Comparative Analysis

Steve: Was there something from Glaser and Strauss' text that inspired some of your work?

Bob: Their material on grounded theory basically is a variation of analytic induction. The idea is, again, you work with similarities and differences, which seems like such a simple thing, but we don't really encourage our students to do that much comparative analysis.

But, Glaser and Strauss talk about the importance of developing theory based on data -- observations, interviews, whatever, wherein one starts to ask where are these materials similar and where are they different? So, that book was important. It really isn't a theory as such. It's a procedure. The idea is that you would ground theory in the instances.

While Glaser tended to be somewhat more quantitative, Strauss, as a Chicago-style interactionist, was more ethnographic in his emphasis, but they certainly agreed on that comparative aspect. There's a nice little quotation there, I think it's from Anselm Strauss, 1970, where he says something to the effect, "If we don't develop some concepts that transcend these situations, all we are going to have are just isolated islands of ethnography." You need some way of connecting these studies and that's really the value of grounded theory.

Now, sometimes ethnographers feel that that's being too restrictive. They think that with ethnography that you should be able to do anything you want. But, if you're not comparing things, how can you possibly know what you have there? Because, again back to Aristotle, we only know things relative to those things that we compare them with.

Blumer makes a similar point in his "Science without Concepts," which I believe he wrote around 1931 – it's in his 1969 volume. He says that concepts do not destroy the unique features, but instead they enable us to appreciate what's unique relative to other things. Still, there is the idea that some ethnographers have this idea that if you start to focus on concepts you'll destroy the unique features. On the other hand, you have nothing that you can take with you if you don't have concepts. Concepts are really the key to knowing.

Steve: So, perhaps an undue emphasis on just thick description?

Bob: You could have it, but what would you do with it in the end? It's only of value when you have something to compare it with.

Process & Activity

Steve: Another thing that appears to be standing out is an emphasis on process. Where does this come from?

Bob: Probably from the Chicago tradition. In my own work, I become so much aware of the relevance of activity. If we have to start with anything, that would be where I

would start in every ethnography. What are the things that these people are doing? Then, sort of follow those along because everything develops around activities.

In social psychology, there is this idea that you have beliefs and then you have activities. I think the much more accurate way of looking at it is that you have activities and, as you develop notions of what the activities are, beliefs and activities become so interconstituted. All meaningful activities are tied up with concepts and all concepts have relevance to the things that people would do. Even in terms of, I suppose, fictional concepts. And, you might say that nobody would really do this or go there or whatever, but we also envision fiction... as a mode of entertainment or whatever, relative to lines of activity.

Co-authored Ventures

Steve: You've written some co-authored papers, such as your work with Scott Grills. I think you and Richard Mitchell did some work on technology together. How did these projects come about for you? For example, *The Deviant Mystique* that you did with Scott.

Bob: *The Deviant Mystique* really goes back to teaching this course in deviance over the years. Along the way, at some point, Scott was my teaching assistant for that course. So, that worked out quite nicely. Later on I was working on this project and I asked Scott if he would like to be involved with it.

If you're working with someone on a project, especially something bigger, it's so nice for you to have a mutuality of perspectives. I realized over the years, having tried some things with people who, let's say, worked from different intellectual centering points, that things don't develop very well over all. But if you have people working on a project that have mutual viewpoints, then you can focus on the project rather than get involved in side issues. So, that was very nice. Working with Scott was quite enjoyable. Working with most of these people has been pretty good. They have certain interests or fields or whatever, but if you can develop something around those interests it works out nicely.

I also think it is so good for a person to have multiple projects on the go. If you can avoid it, never work on just one project at a time because there is a great intellectual pay-off, even for people on their own to be working on multiple projects. As they go back and forth, say between two or three projects, they'll be making the comparisons that are so valuable to them; they'll see things. You don't get bored as readily because you always have something going on. It's sort of like these daytime soap operas where they have about eight plots going on at once. It's something like that. Then, different people have different interests and if they intersect at some point in time you might end up doing a project with them. Then, depending on them and their timing and the other things that they might be doing, you might in some cases do more things with them. Or, that might be it, because they're off doing other things and you're off doing other things. It is nice if you can find that person you can work with.

The ideal really is, let's say I take a run at something and I give it to you, and now you just rip into it. If you think something's good, you keep it. If it's something you think should be changed, you change it and add whatever you think would be viable. Then, you give it back to me and I do the same thing. I'm not so concerned about saving it, but just "What's it worth, what can we do, and how can we make it stronger?" Are there things to drop out or things to add? When I get it back to you, hopefully, it'll be a stronger paper. Then, you do the same thing again and we'll just

go back-and-forth. In part, depending on when something's due, say for a conference or other things, you might be working on, you'll decide when to wrap it up. That's really my favourite way of working.

I like working with someone who isn't worried about having to re-write something to make it better. My idea is, "If you can see a better way of writing it, write it that way." We want to have clarity, precision, comprehensiveness, and authenticity. Again, we want it to be generic and pluralist. I do that when I work with my own material, which is fine, but having that other person working with you is nice because they'll bring in these other variants. It's the best when that person attacks the paper and isn't worried about saving the paper, but is concerned with making it better... Lorne Dawson and I have worked on projects like that. Tony Puddephatt, too.

Early Greek Scholarship and Pragmatist Thought

Steve: Okay, on that note, perhaps we could talk about some of your work on the Greeks. Plato and Aristotle are obviously great thinkers. And, I know that you make it clear in your writing about them that these people are not ethnographers per se, but definitely great thinkers. And, I know you stress that it's necessary to get close to the social world in order to understand it. So, I see Plato as doing a lot of talking about the social world, but is he observing it? They meet in groups and discuss different issues and work through them logically. They're philosophising. So, to me, they don't really appear to be engaging the social world. They're not really observing it. In *The Republic*, Plato is working with an ideal type of society. It seems to be good philosophy and they're great thinkers, you know, the way they work through things. But, are we perhaps getting caught up in a bit of a "Greek mystique?" Do we get caught up in emphasizing these scholars too much sometimes because there's this mystique that surrounds them? That is, we have this fascination with them because it seems so amazing that they were thinking these great things 2,500 years ago. They were thinking of the types of things we're still thinking of now and, in a lot of ways, we haven't even approached this type of thinking in over 2,500 years. So, my question or concern is that we get caught up in placing too much emphasis in a group of people that weren't really directly interacting with the social world. They weren't observing it or getting close to it. Now, I don't know the Greek literature as well as you do, but I thought maybe this is something that we could discuss.

Bob: That's a really important question, set of concerns, Steve. I'm not sure where to begin because there are so many interrelated things. I do not know just how Plato and Aristotle learned so much about people. But, the Greeks seemed to have spent a great deal of time going to court and listening to cases and debating about things. They spent a lot of time dealing with rhetoric and poetics. So, to be a scholar in those days you wouldn't be as narrow as we are now.

Plato's idea, and he talks about this later on in *The Republic*, is that before you could teach philosophy you spend the first 30 years of your life learning everything you can about everything, just getting the best education you possibly can. Then, you spend the next five years studying dialectics, which is this comparative analysis and taking everything apart piece-by-piece, seeing where things are similar and things are different, and looking at what the implications might be, and what the interlinkages and connections are. Now, you're like 35 years old. You now spend 15 years say, running the family business, in the military, in a trade, or something. He says that we wouldn't think of you becoming the principal leader of

the country, but you could get into bureaucracy and politics. But, after those 15 years of experience, now at about fifty you can go teach philosophy.

Steve: So it seems like they had to be very much a part of the everyday world before they could be philosophers.

Bob: I think they very much were. Plato sets up this ideal society, but when you go through his text and you look at the ideas that they're dealing with, you realize he didn't start out with some ideal and then create all sorts of contingencies. He obviously spent a great deal of time inquiring into the ways that people were doing things and their relationships with one another. I have the impression that Plato tends to deal in prototypical instances, if that makes sense. You have instances and then you say, "What is generic about these instances?" He seems to be thinking in that way. Aristotle does this as well. The most sustained ethnography from that period is actually Thucydides' *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. How good is it? It is amazing! It is as good as anything we've ever produced. In fact, you might even make the argument that it's better than any single study we've ever produced as contemporary ethnographers.

Steve: What makes it such a strong ethnography?

Bob: It's very thorough. Thucydides considers the history of the Peloponnesian war. The Peloponnese is the southern peninsula of Greece, basically covering the region around Sparta and Athens... It's an account of the war, and the peace, and treaties, coalitions, and whatnot between Sparta and Athens and their shifting allies over a twenty year period... He basically tries to trace the overall developmental flow of these relationships, alignments, strategies, and such.

Thucydides was an Athenian. At one point he was an Athenian General, but after his group was defeated in this battle he was banned from Athens... But, he said, it worked out well because now the Spartans would talk to him quite openly. So, he could add more aspects to his study. He basically tries to look at the things that the people involved did and from the perspectives of the relative players in the setting. He said he talked to people as much as he could because he wasn't there during all the events, but nevertheless he tried to be thorough. Now, I don't know how he financed the project, but he didn't do this for a dissertation or anything of that sort. It just seems to have been a genuine quest for knowledge.

It's a very highly detailed statement that social scientists really haven't yet appreciated and yet there are lots of things that could be learned from it. So, he gives us a statement that is extremely valuable. We could go and pull out the concepts and sharpen them a little more. Nevertheless, there are many things that, as you go through it, you could say, "I'm going to look at the coalition process. How do coalitions come about? When are they sustained and intensified? What are the limitations? When do they break down?" Well, he gives you lots and lots of instances. So you can start to study that.

There are a couple other Greek ethnographies that are very good. Herodotus writes, *The Histories* just before Thucydides. Xenophon talks about a Greek expedition into Persia, but he also wrote about other things. The Greeks, remember, were students of rhetoric and for them rhetoric wasn't just talk about things. It was a realm of influence work and activity. Although a lot of rhetoric was developed in the courtroom, they also realized that it had great relevance to the military and in the political context – and in ceremonial contexts where people were being honoured or

chastised. They take this apart piece-by-piece. Now, someplace along the line you need instances.

So, are Plato and Aristotle ethnographers? No, I wouldn't call them ethnographers in what we take to be a more conventional sense of the term. But, they certainly were active participants in the world and certainly astute observers. They don't connect things quite the way we do in the Chicago School tradition. But, they are obviously concerned about developing concepts that were linked to what people did. It wasn't pie-in-the-sky stuff. It's very precise and thorough. When I read Aristotle's *Rhetoric* I couldn't help but think that most of the stuff that we've done on labelling looks pretty limited compared to his text. It's just so good!

Now, there are people that say, "What could we possibly learn from the Greeks? I mean this is 2,500 year later. Surely we've progressed a great deal since." They have the idea that knowledge just keeps developing exponentially and that there's this great continuity. But, there isn't that continuity. Many things have been lost. People often attack the value of history or lessons from the past. Durkheim talks about this in, *The Evolution of Educational Thought*." He deals with it quite systematically. It is apparent that, for various reasons, people don't always like ideas from the past... We have lost so much that way.

The postmodernists now will tell you that you don't need the past. The past is all just an illusion. The only thing that has any truth-value, somehow, is postmodernism. Of course, if you say that nothing has any truth-value then that would presumably include postmodernism as well. So, you do have detractors of various kinds.

Some people might say that I'm glamorizing the past. I don't think I'm glamorizing it at all. What I'm trying to do is to connect what we do with the past. I place great value on contemporary ethnography, but it can be more valuable when compared to other places and times. It's especially valuable when you can compare to other ethnographies that are more detailed and have more of a pluralist quality to them. So, I've been trying to go through the literature and find texts where people have dealt with instances of human group life in more detailed and sustained terms. Not where you get a little quotation and make a big deal out of it. Rather, I'm looking for statements that are developed in more sustained and detailed terms.

Comparative Analysis & Generic Social Processes (GSPs)

Steve: So, what often gets lost in our individual ethnographies is that we have something that becomes a statement unto itself, that doesn't really have a lot of value unless you make, not only the contemporary comparisons to similar types of work, but also comparisons across history.

Bob: It's this basic idea that, if your concepts are any good, they really should reflect a wide range of subject matters that yet are somehow related. So each time somebody does a study in the present time, and you're interested, say, in the relationship process, you'd like to look at that study, if you're addressing relationships, and see what else you can learn about the relationship process. Are the things that we said earlier still valid? Do they need to be qualified? Are they questionable, based on this additional piece of information?

If we can go back in time and, say, find something from Ovid and *The Art of Love*, where he talks about relationships. Or, we can go back to Thucydides and look at relationships or alliances between different city-states. Or, we can go back to Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* and look at his notions of friendship or some other

notions of love in Plato's *Symposium*. These texts give us a number of comparison points that we simply would lack. The idea, in part, is to make our generic social processes as informed and robust as we possibly can. I guess the idea is to make the strongest claims that we can make. But, to make the strongest claims, let's make sure we have the strongest range of materials with which to work with.

Steve: How generic can we take our generic social processes? I'm thinking of something like relationships. Should we qualify it and indicate that we're only referring to the generic aspects of *intimate* relationships? Or, can we just say we're looking at relationships in the broadest generic sense? For example, can we apply it to people's relationships with technology? Or, should we keep it to purely social relationships?

Bob: To have a relationship with technology, that's very different. In a sense you do. People do engage technology, but technology isn't just a physical thing. It's a whole social process. Nothing has any particular value in itself. It's part of all the other things that we deal with. So, I have a pen here, but a pen would have no value without paper or something to write on. A pen would be of no value for writing text if we didn't have an alphabet, some symbols. A pen would be of no value if we didn't have something that we as a community thought was worthwhile recording. We might use it for artwork or something, but the physical elements are all connected with what we do in the life-world more generally. So, we're part of that process.

It's a different use of the term to look at relationships between people. And, of course, we can look at relationships between two individuals. You might even talk about a relationship that a person has with him or herself. Once you're a social being, you have a relationship with yourself. Aristotle talks about this. He asks if someone can be his or her own best friend. He says, "Yes," which is an interesting idea. He actually develops this idea and it's very, very thoughtfully developed.

Also, when you relate to two or three people, you change the dynamics from one on one. If it's relationships between groups, then many more situations can develop. And, what we would want to do is to try and qualify the concept, "relationship," so we can ask questions. How do relationships come about? When are they likely to intensify, stabilize, dissipate, and become reconstituted? Those kinds of things seem to be entirely generic with that process aspect. But then when you start to break it up and look at it with multiple people, then you realize that you have to qualify or specify, somewhat, your use of the concept. Again, it depends on what you want to do with that concept "relationship." So, it's an ongoing process in itself.

The idea is that each time you have another ethnography, assuming that it's detailed, representative, and has a pluralist or open quality to it, or at least it has a lot of those features, it becomes like a little treasure chest to me. The idea is that you'd like to get all these treasure chests and open them up and compare them to see what's going on. That's my notion of social science I suppose.

Human-Animal Interactions & The Dualism Debate

Steve: I know more people are getting into the area of studying human-animal interactions. I know some symbolic interactionists looking at this. Clint Sanders is one.

Bob: Audrey Whipper is another one. She's retired now, but was very interested in horse-rider relationships.

Steve: I know *Qualitative Sociology Review* is running a special edition on this topic. How do you think about studying human-animal interactions? And, how do you think symbolic interactionists should be approaching this? I'm easing into another debate: the object-actor debate or the dualism debate. And, the proposition that objects can have agency.

Bob: Presumably we're talking about animals that have the capacity for memory. That is, animals that can be taught things. Still, I also would make the argument that, other than humans, it appears that other animals don't have the capacity for recollectable memory – that is, to remember things when they want to remember things.

People seem to have a different kind of language, if you want to use that term. If you accept that difference, which is a very consequential one, then you realize that when we're talking about, say, people and dogs, people and horses, people and chimpanzees, that the people are doing most of the intellectual work. I would say virtually all of the conceptual work.

It's the people that are giving meanings to the relationship. The animals are reacting and they're sort of part of the environment, but I don't believe they have concepts. People do. While people can teach them certain responses to words or whatever, that's very, very different from having a concept of the word or thinking of objects in more abstract, recollectable terms. I think that when people talk about their animals, and even with infants, they tend to assign qualities to those beings that are not merited. But, you can also assign qualities to inanimate objects. People will do this with ships and automobiles. It seems that we can assign agency to these other objects. Do these other things or animals have agency as people do, as linguistic beings? I would say, no, they don't. They seem to be able to initiate things, but they are not conceptually meaningfully or knowledgeably doing so.

Steve: With regards to the debate of whether or not objects have agency, wouldn't the interactionist answer to this reside in Blumer's idea of "obdurate reality" and the fact that we live in a world of objects which we give meaning to? We interpret them and give qualities to things. Like you said, we can treat our pets as if they have human qualities and give our cars names and such. For interactionists, doesn't it come down to the idea that we are the ones assigning the meaning?

Bob: Yes. Again, for all the things out there, excluding people, there is no source of meaning, no concept of what things are. There is no reality. Reality is a humanly constructed process. It's a concept. Other animals may engage in behaviour, they may have some memory, and we may assign them agency of various kinds, but they don't have a concept of "what the world is." They don't have the concept of, I'll use the term "whatness" – what is and what is not – that humans in every group seem to have. That, I think, is absolutely critical. So, do they live in a world of objects? No.

There are no objects except as people define them as such. Does that mean that everything is a blur or a process? No, it doesn't mean that either because these are human concepts as well... I think that other animals operate in terms of signs and images but not concepts. And humans don't either, until they acquire language.

Steve: One idea that I've heard is, what about the automatic door that closes on you? You're halfway through the door and it closes on you and impedes your movement. Therefore, doesn't that object have agency?

Bob: Does rain have agency?

Steve: The idea doesn't resonate with me. The door doesn't have agency. We react to this door closing. We say the door is closing. The meaning we associate with it is that we cannot move forward or perhaps we have to push the door open more. We're interpreting the situation. So, we're the ones interpreting and assigning agency.

Bob: I'm with you on that. We could talk next about the ideas of object and subject. The way I would look at it is that, as humans, there is no objective world and there is no subjective world. It's an intersubjective world. Nothing has any meaning or value apart from the group context. It's the group in which concepts develop. In order for things to have meanings, we have to be able to attach concepts to them.

Even notions of individualism or subjectivism, there are no individuals apart from the group context. It's a concept within. There is no community apart from the concepts of the group. It's within the group that all notions of "what is" and "what is not" develop. As children are taught a language they basically are taught concepts. They acquire concepts – notions of "whatness." It's by invoking the notions of "whatness" that they become active meaningful participants of the world. They could be active before, but not in a meaningful sense because what meanings could they assign to anything if they don't have some concepts or a sense of "whatness?"

In the paper I wrote on memory [*Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 2007], I talk about the pragmatist metamorphosis. I think that compared to the metamorphosis of the butterfly, the acquisition of speech is just an incredibly spectacular phenomenon because in the process of acquiring language people not only undergo a transformation, but they go from a state of a non-knowing object to a knowing object. So, they go from a non-knowing essence to something that can assign meanings. They are now something that has a sense of reality. But the reality doesn't inhere in the objects; it inheres in the concepts of the group.

Emile Durkheim, whom we don't think of as a symbolic interactionist, actually provides an important statement on this in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. It's very explicit and a very, very nice statement. This is central to human memory. The human memory is imbued with this notion of "whatness." We make sense of things by locating them relative to the community's concepts – the "whatness" of the community.

The Meaning-Making Process

Steve: In your book, *Beyond the Power Mystique*, you talk about some of the myths of symbolic interaction. Something I thought you worded quite well and I can't remember which "myth" you were referring to, but relates to what you were just talking about, was your discussion of being born into a pre-existing culture. You basically discuss how we are born into a pre-defined world and then we acquire culture and understandings through the socialization process. And, in another book, and I can't remember its title, but it's an earlier book on symbolic interaction, the author discusses abstract thought. He basically states that once we have some concepts to work with we can relate these concepts to one another and in doing so in our mind we can develop new concepts of things. Then, perhaps, when we come across a similar situation to what we were in before, we can draw upon our understandings of the previous situation and apply our previous understandings, through abstraction, to these situations. The human capacity to think abstractly or generically is definitely an interesting area to examine.

Bob: I think it might be in the memory paper where I talk about this. Some people say that our notions of reality are limited by our words, say our concepts more specifically. I take issue with that because once you have a concept you can start to do things, extend things. The concept becomes like a tool or resource for developing more concepts. So, the limits are not defined by one's language per se.

The other idea is that it's the pre-existing world of the group that is so critical for comprehending people, what they know and do in the present. But this is really just right out of Mead. Durkheim too. And Aristotle. That is often overlooked, but again, it's nothing new. I have to just say I've had lots of great teachers!

Steve: I had thought about this idea, too. That is, the idea that as soon as we acquire knowledge and as soon as we have concepts for things that we are in a sense limited by pre-existing knowledge because it's hard to move beyond and challenge a pre-existing way of thinking about things. People's minds are set.

Bob: Again, you see, the resistance is not just on an individual level. If you're trying to influence a particular person, it's not just that person that you're dealing with. You're dealing with their senses of the other, what they've learned, and the activities that they've engaged in. So, it's really all of those things. That's part of the reason why it's really so difficult to implement change. It's difficult because of all the things that the people at that point in time are connected with. That's what, in part, enables us to remember things more effectively because words are connected not just with the dictionary meanings or people's verbal meanings, but they're connected with some sense of emotionality, activities, relationships, and occasions or events. All of those things facilitate the memory of those things, but at the same time, if you want to change that item it's harder because of all the connections.

Steve: Here's another thing: habits. So, we develop habits out of a way of reacting to similar situations. Some would argue that it's not a minded process. That is, it's a process that doesn't involve us actively thinking about it. It's something that we do habitually. So we're not really assigning meaning. What do you think about this?

Bob: It's all of those things, actually, because before you get language, you can certainly develop habitualized ways of dealing with things. You don't know what's

going on, but you have tendencies and resistances. So, even as you acquire language, you have this set of tendencies and resistances that you're bringing with you. You don't know what they are. As you're encountering language and people are trying to get you to develop these other habits, it's all part of a process and no one can really separate out how this or that will develop. So, even if you are trying to condition, say, a young child you don't know how effective this will be or if other things will show up later on. But, once you acquire language, you have a way of giving things meanings and that changes the character of habits for that being and for the others around him. But, again, it's not just that person him or herself, because the other people are also acting towards you and some may be encouraging and discouraging certain things even as you're being encouraged and discouraged differently by other people.

So, you may have a couple small children in the family and they're used to entertaining each other. They might develop habits in terms of bouncing around or whatever. And, now, the mother is saying, "Settle down you two. Settle down!" But, the two are looking at each other and they're used to just bouncing around together or talking to each other. They've developed that style. Similarly, when they go to school and the teacher tells them to settle down, but they're in the habit of bouncing around together, disattending, and talking to one another. So, you have all of these habits.

You have habits becoming established. Some that people are more aware of and some that they are not aware of. Some they can do things about, some they don't seem to know how to change even if they wanted to. And then there may be these resistances from, say, the teacher's or the parents' viewpoint, but those things may be encouraged by people's peers, siblings, or whatever. So, this is a very interesting topic. Tony Puddephatt and I have talked about doing a paper on habits and a paper around the concept of character because these are all related.

Who is very helpful? Well, Aristotle again. You know, I've been surprised to see just how helpful the Greek literature has been to me. As I've thought about different things, I've had access to these resources. They present ideas, often quite clearly, that presently aren't recognized, like Aristotle's notion of a recollectable memory. I've not seen anybody other than Aristotle deal with that. He does it so well. GSPs, the Greeks would have had no problems with this whatsoever because they think at an analytic level... Also, most also think in term of process. Maybe that reflects their training in rhetoric, I don't know. But most contemporary philosophers don't have a good sense of process. They're structuralists mostly. They're weak on intersubjectivity and interpretation, reflectivity. They miss activity, speech... So, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* presents basically the GSP of influence work. To Aristotle, more generally, everything that people do is to be understood as an activity.

Even later, when we find Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) influenced by Aristotle, we see that emphasis... Aquinas says that the conscience is not a thing, it's an activity. I found that very interesting because we usually think that theologians as seeing the conscience as a thing. Aquinas split the Catholic Church. The traditional viewpoint is that people are born with a spiritual soul, like this divine presence enters into them somehow and they have a soul. Aquinas takes Aristotle's viewpoint that people are born with a "psyche" – a life-energy in Aristotle's terms. But, there's nothing mystical about it. There's nothing divine about it. People have a life-energy. Rabbits have a life-energy. Carrots have a life-energy. In some ways it sounds pretty close to what we would think of as DNA. Nevertheless, Aquinas takes that viewpoint. So, he splits from the traditional Catholic, Judaic, and Islamic notions that people are born with a spiritual essence. He says no, they are born animals and

develop habits. He says that later on, when they die, if they had developed good characters, he believes as a matter of faith, that they may acquire heavenly souls. Aristotle doesn't make that kind of connection or assertion... That's where Aquinas splits with Aristotle. There were people that tried to have Aquinas excommunicated because of this radical idea. It was amazing that he was allowed to stay in the Catholic Church and later was sainted!.. Like Aristotle, there are a lot of pragmatist features in Aquinas's writings.

PART THREE

Building on our earlier discussion on Bob's substantive research, we discuss the ethnographic approach in more detail. Bob offers a number of experiential insights, personal strategies, and advice to scholars concerning what he's learned about participant observation, conducting interviews, and analysing data. He advises researchers to continue to engage the ethnographic literature and involve themselves in more than one project or field site at a time during their own primary data collection. Such an approach, he maintains, allows researchers to more fruitfully develop transcontextual and transhistorical concepts. Bob also presents his viewpoints on advising new scholars, suggesting that it's important to encourage students to consider graduate studies early on and get them fully involved in collecting their own ethnographic data early in their academic career. We also consider the concept of subcultural mosaics and its relevance for the study of community life. Towards the end of the interview we discuss some of the shortfalls Bob sees within quantitative, positivist, and postmodernist approaches within sociology. He argues that such approaches simply do not offer an authentic representation of how group life is actually accomplished. We also consider Herbert Blumer's emphasis on intimate familiarity as well as analytic induction and grounded theory as aspects of the sociological venture. We conclude by discussing Bob's viewpoints regarding the viability of sociology. Here he maintains that an interpretivist approach, which builds on pragmatism and interactionism, and employs ethnographic techniques, is the most viable way of developing a more authentic study of the social world. A list of Robert Prus's book publications is provided at the end.

The Ethnographic Approach

Steve: What sort of methods do you advocate in terms of collecting data?

Bob: What we think of as the standard ethnographic package. We have participant observation and then other kinds of observation when we aren't able to participate as fully or directly in a group's activities. But, to my mind, the most essential feature is really extended open-ended interviews. That is so consequential! However, people have done well and have generated valuable materials sometimes without much extended interviewing. The value of the interview, though, is that you can ask people for more detailed accounts, variations, hesitations, reservations, excitement or boredom, and everything else that goes on. Sometimes, though, people aren't as willing to cooperate with the interviewer or they don't have the time, but ideally, extended, open-ended interviews are what you would like.

Steve: So, really the opportunity to sit down with somebody and talk to them in-depth about their viewpoints and activities, and discuss these things with them?

Bob: Yes. Now, the materials that I've been working with are the Greek and Latin ethnographies, which are historical documents. I'm thinking of Augustine. He writes a book on rhetoric called, *On Christian Doctrine*. It's basically a text for preachers, but, in the process of giving this account of what you could think of as an army of rhetoricians for God, Augustine talks about the limitations, the challenges, the conditions and such with which these people are working. He doesn't give you interviews, but nevertheless he provides this very valuable account of early Christian missionizing activities, recruitment practices. There are certain claims that you can't make about it as an ethnography, but in terms of understanding the life-worlds they were in, the activities they were doing, the way they were presenting things, the dilemmas that they experienced, and the challenges they faced, it's still very good. In the process Augustine also gives us some things that you don't find in a lot of other ethnographies. It's quite an amazing statement on influence work. It's about how people can try to develop charisma for themselves as speakers, but more especially Augustine wants them to develop charisma for God. So, the speakers, as they're presenting ideas, he wants to indicate how they could use rhetoric to enhance the image that people have of God.

Working with Multiple Ethnographies – Past and Present

Steve: So, when you're going over these historical documents, given your background in ethnographic research, do you find certain techniques helpful in approaching some of these documents?

Bob: Yes, extremely. I basically approach them like I'm an ethnographer. I use the entire stock of knowledge that I have about contemporary ethnography as I'm going through them. I'm asking myself, "Is this authentic? Is it pluralist? What sorts of issues are they raising? How are they dealing with these or those concepts?" So, I'm trying to bring that in as a comparison point. As I read these things I have that as my base. Is this material similar or different? What does it offer us in comparison to contemporary ethnography? I'm not trying to make it incredibly wonderful, but I'm not trying to diminish its value either. The idea is that we use these historical works as part of our whole package of resources. Why would we want to ignore them?

I really like reading ethnographies, especially those that are done more extensively. So, I could take, for example, Gary Alan Fine's *Gifted Tongues*, which deals with high school debates and is a very nice book. I would say, "Here's Gary dealing with influence work." I can look at John Lofland's *The Doomsday Cult*, which presents another instance of influence work, but in a religious context. I could look at say some work that Billy Shaffir has done on the Hassidic Jews and their notions of leaders and who is authentic and related concerns. Then I could take those things and read Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* and ask how his ideas compare with these other contemporary materials. Why not play with a whole deck of cards instead of limiting ourselves to just the cards that came up in the last five or so?

Steve: I agree. I guess most of us just focus on the contemporary data and look at just a single study.

Bob: That's another thing. Many people get so caught up in whatever area they're working in that they think that that's really the ultimate. They don't seem to realize that other people, often their very contemporaries, are doing the same thing. But, if nobody ties them together, what are they worth? And some people think that if something isn't the newest, the most recent, how can it be very valuable? They say things like, "Well, we now have computers, cell phones. What did they have?" Karl Marx made the same kind of mistake. He proclaimed basically, "We have the steam engine. What did they have?" Now, we look at the steam engine and it seems pretty obsolete, just like how people will later look at our cell phones and computers as obsolete. On the other hand, if we can produce some elaborate well-developed ethnographies that deal with the things that people actually do, not what we think they should do, but what they actually do, then those will be valuable over the long term.

When Thucydides wrote *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, he said there'd be some people that will be very disappointed with this book because it lacks a romantic, poetic element. He said, though, "I'm writing this to last forever, so that people centuries from now who are involved in wars and related matters will be able to read these set of accounts that I have and relate to them." So, he had these images of developing ethnographies that essentially last forever.

Norman Denzin and I disagree on this point. Norman is very concerned about developing things for the present, to achieve some sort of evocative, present-oriented scholarship. I'm really concerned about developing things that people might use now but also centuries and millennia later when they might want to know what was happening in this or that situation or what was really going on. Then you have the goods, right? You have the activities. Are these detailed and relatively clean? That is, they're pluralist and not biased, not moralist, not prescriptive, but essentially an attempt to indicate what this group was doing. Presenting their viewpoints on things rather than promoting or defending one or another sense of morality. So, that's in part my idea.

Strategies for Conducting Ethnographic Research

Steve: In terms of particular strategies when conducting ethnographies, are there any particular kinds of strategies that you find useful during your interviewing or when making observation?

Bob: Yes, there are lots of strategies. I guess number one, if there was a number one, would be to focus on what people are doing – the "what" and "how" of the activities. If you could have a single number one, that would be it. Patience is really important. If you're going to be a good ethnographer, you have to be patient. You have to be willing to take your time with the people and listen to them and not presume to know. You have to be persistent. You have to stay with things and follow them up. You have to increasingly ask people for more detail and elaboration. Ask things like, "Can you explain this? Can you tell me more about this? How does that work? Have there been times when you didn't do that?"

I place a heavy emphasis on "how" questions – the process – and try to avoid the "why" questions. "Why" tends to put people on the defensive. It promotes motive talk. It encourages people to give you simplistic answers. Sometimes I'll ask people a question and they'll say, "Well, you mean why, right?" And, I'll say, "Well, I'm really interested in the whole process, everything." Sometimes I'll tell people that I really need to know everything about what's going on and don't worry about boring me with

the details. It's very different from "keep it short, make it sweet, and keep it to the point." No, no, no. We really need all the detail!"

So, just take your time and try to pursue things as comprehensively as you can. Keep records of things, all the things you encounter. The interlinkages people have with one another are important. The sequence or natural history of events is important. You want to follow things along. It's also very important to keep asking people for instances. "Can you give me an instance of this or that?... Can you tell me about another time?" You are not just asking when people are more or less likely to do certain things. Ask about times when it's been easy, fun, boring, tough.

If it's a sensitive topic, you might ask them about things that other people do. Once they start to see that you're really not uptight about the things that other people do, they're more willing to tell you about the things that they do. It's very important to be non-judgemental. If somebody's kicking his or her dog, well, isn't that interesting? You're not there to be offended. If you're going to be a more adequate ethnographer, you really can't have concerns with morality that you take into the field or concerns about pride or trying to be somebody.

When you're there, they are the stars! My job is to learn about them. I'm not there to explain sociology, tell them what Herbert Blumer thinks, or impress them with what I know or have done. No, it's all about them! I try to spend very little time talking about me in the field. I let them talk. If they are talking, you're just going "Ah hah," "Uh huh." Indicate an interest. You'll ask things like, "How's that? What did you do then?" You're interested, but you're not moralizing with them. You can laugh with them and cry with them, whatever you want, but remember that you're there to learn from them. You really want to be careful to maintain a stance whereby they can give you all sides of things. You're not really there to be one of them and they don't expect you to be one of them. But, you can't let your differences be threatening to them. So, it's very important to have them, as much as you can, feel comfortable with you.

I'll tell people, and especially newer people to the field, don't worry about you being uncomfortable. Worry about them being comfortable with you. They have to connect with you. Then, of course, when you concentrate on that then you sort of forget about you trying to be comfortable with them. That's not what's important.

It's like when I was doing the study on the hotel community. As you know, I'm not a bar person. That's not my lifestyle. When I'm there, though, I'm intensely interested in everything that goes on in the bar. It's a matter of relating to people so that they know they can tell you things, that they have your confidence. But, they don't expect you to be them. I don't try to impress them. They're the stars. I try to make that apparent to them. So, when they're talking, I tell them, "That's very interesting! So, what did you do then?... Had you thought about doing other things?" You always want to flip it around so they have an opportunity to indicate the full range of possibilities. So, if they're kicking their dog you might say, "So, your dog's giving you a little trouble today is it?" Then you might spend a few minutes talking about the dog and then you get on with other things. But, you can't be there to moralize with them about the dog because, if you do that, then you're just jeopardizing the whole situation. As I say, you're not there to express values or morals or pride or whatever. You're just there to learn. Learn as much as you can!

Make every interview as worthwhile as you can. I don't go in with a list of questions. But I do like a list of points or topics to discuss. I've found that a good thing to do with people is just to have this on a clipboard and pass it over to them and say, "Here are some of the things that I'd like to talk about." So, they look at it and see that there's nothing threatening. They're sort of relieved. Then I say, "Is there

any place you'd like to start?" Then they could say, "Well, maybe here." "Okay, good, tell me about that." I can go back later on and pick up on things, but in the meantime get as much as I can from them. Something else I do, if I just have a few minutes with them or a half hour, I try to get something in detail rather than trying to cover a whole lot of stuff on a superficial level. Even if it's something small, let's do a good job of it.

If I'm doing an interview I'll maybe spend four or five minutes, maybe more, kind of warming up with the person, just letting them feel comfortable with me and being more relaxed just talking with me. For example, when I did the study in shopping activity, I'd often ask, "What's your favourite kind of shopping?" Just start out with something like that – something very easy.

Another thing that's not a bad idea, if you know you are going to meet with somebody, you can say, "Well, here's a list of things I thought we might talk about. You can jot down some other things. So, when we get together we'll just go through these and see what we can do and take it wherever it goes." I'll leave that sheet with them for them to think about. They don't have to be hit cold every time. That can be very good actually!

Again, when doing the interviews I like to ask, "What can you tell me about this?" Just leave it open. I like to do that rather than reading them some long question where they have to take thirty seconds to sort out what you just asked them. Then, in your approach you can be more specific and ask for more detail. It's like if you were writing a book, you would first introduce people to the basic concepts of the book and then the more detailed stuff. So, just let them get used to the idea. Also, when you're presenting your research project to them, present it as fundamentally straightforward as you can – just a very basic variation of what it is that you're doing. You want them to feel comfortable with what it is that you're doing. You don't want to give them some sort of deeply academic, highly analytical statement.

A problem that is becoming more and more bothersome is dealing with ethics. Ethics committees want you to be very technical. A lot of participants in the field don't like the ethics part of it because everything is so austere and formal. So, I explain to people, "At the university, this is what the ethics committee wants us to do, so we'll go through this and you can see what you think. Then we can just talk about things." They like that. You can just talk about things. So, the idea is that you have to humanize it and unfortunately the ethics concerns dehumanize the interview. I don't think that's their intent, but they really do put additional kinds of stress on people in the situation and invite a lot of inauthenticity as a consequence of that. People feel the strain of the whole process.

It's so important that you just take your time with people. How long should an interview be? If somebody that says they did an interview in half an hour I tend to think, "What kind of an interview could this possibly be?" It's probably not worth much at all. In half an hour you've not gotten much past getting acquainted and telling the person a bit about the project. Of course, one interview is never the same as the next. That's something else that ethics committees don't really understand. To them everything should be standardized. In a good interview I'll spend hours and hours with people. I'll spend as much time as they will possibly give me. If you have less time, though, try to be as thorough as you can possibly be on the matters that you cover. Again, if you can't cover all the topics, do a good job on the few that you can cover. Then overall, you end up with more material, better material.

Another thing, of course, is that your interviews wander. If it's a long interview, with a lot of things you want to ask about, you might find that it's maybe good to start halfway through your list of topics so that you're getting a fuller range of materials

covered in-depth over a series of interviews. Sometimes you can go back to the same people, which is great, and you can pick up on things. Sometimes you don't have those opportunities, say, if people are more mobile or unsettled. So, you get what you can at the time. Like in the hotel study, we never knew when we were talking with somebody how long the interview might be or if we'd ever see the people again. It was just a very unpredictable and somewhat volatile setting because people were into so much action and had such unsettled lives. We wouldn't use the phrase, "Let's make an appointment." We'd say, "Could we maybe get together tomorrow? Okay, well what time might be good for you?" Even then, you never know. You have to adjust to the people and try to relate to them in terms with which they feel comfortable. If you don't do that you might be getting answers, but I don't know what they'd be worth.

Steve: Such good advice.

Bob: You'll also find that when you're talking to people that there may be certain areas that they are more sensitive about and who knows for what reasons. So, I tell people, "If there are certain things that you'd rather not talk about, just let me know, but whatever we do talk about I'd like you to be as sincere as you can be and be as helpful as you can be. If there are things that you'd like to keep confidential that's your prerogative." That usually works out pretty well.

Another thing, if we're taping, again depending on the situation, I'll often put the tape recorder close to them, depending on the pick-up and such, and I'll say, "This is how you put the pause button on. Anything you'd like to have off the record, just push this down." Then they can feel like they're more in control of the situation, which is good... The idea is to connect with them so that they're talking to you, like you're having a conversation. You're not just doing question, response, question, response. You have to get beyond that!

There will also be certain people that you will have difficulty with and that's just how it is. Sometimes you can get them to open up after awhile. Other times, they really don't. They may not be used to talking very much or who knows what. You'll just run across that. It could be your very first interview. It could be your third or your nineteenth or something. But, those sorts of things will happen. You'll also run into people who don't take you seriously. Often this tends to be friends. Friends can sometimes be really good sources. Other times, though, they're used to giving you the business or just being non-serious with you. So, sometimes, friends can be the worst of interviews and sometimes the best. But, with each interview, it's good to let it assume its own course in terms of tempo and style. You adjust to the person, not the person having to adjust to you. Some people are quicker. Some people are more relaxed or laidback. You have to adjust to their styles.

As we're talking, I'm thinking of this one woman from my research on economic development. I said to her, "Here are the sorts of the topics I'd like to work on" and gave her my clipboard, but she held onto it. She says, "Okay, first topic" and she basically interviewed herself all the way through. I would just say things like, "Yes... How about that? Could you give me some examples?" She would cover one topic and then just move to the next. It was really quite interesting. She seemed to feel comfortable doing that, so that's okay, she can interview herself.

One of my most difficult situations involved doing an interview with a guy that was a heavy chain smoker. He was another economic developer with a large office. I'm talking to him and the interview is going on and on. He has his coffee and whatnot, great! It's like five hours and we're still doing the interview. He's enjoying

talking to me. But, later on I'm becoming more and more incoherent. I'm not used to all this smoke. I also knew that my questions weren't very good at this point. I thought they were rather incoherent. But, it doesn't matter, he's going on. He now had a very good sense of where we're going with things, what kinds of things were important, what kinds of details I was after. All he basically needed me to do was to be there and nod. It was just some phenomenal material. The secret, though, was not the questions that I asked him. The key was that he was just enjoying describing all of these aspects of his life-world to someone.

You see, the nice thing about our role is that a lot of times people who are insiders are not really that interested in talking to other insiders about these life-worlds in the same kind of detail. We come along and we're interested in all the things they do – the shifts, the transitions, the boring things, the exciting things, the uncertainties, and all that. So, they really like talking to us. That's so important! Once they become accustomed to the idea then, since they have such a strong stock of knowledge about their realm of activity, they can just go on. So, I try to let them talk just as much as they can. A good interview will be one where I talk maybe about 5% of the time and they do the rest. So, I'll have transcriptions where I ask, "Can you tell me about this?" and they're going on for maybe a couple pages. Then I'll say, "What about this?" and let them go again.

Steve: I can definitely relate to what you're saying. For example, I have this really good quote from my research on computer hackers. Towards the end of my interview with one computer hacker, I remember saying, "You know, I really appreciate you taking this time to share your experiences with me." And he said something like, "No, I thank you for taking the time. You're willing to sit down and take the time to talk to me about something I love doing."

Bob: Oh yes. Doing research on the marketing and sales project, I had some very similar experiences. I'd set up an appointment initially and they might say something like, "Time is money" and maybe give me an hour. So then I'll go there and keep track of my hour because I know I might not have any more time. So, at the end of the hour I might say, "Would you like to continue because we've been here an hour and I don't want to take advantage of your generosity" and they'll say, "Oh no, no, we'll keep going!" Then, people will say, "I'm really glad you came. I would have paid you to do this interview!" It's because they have a chance to talk about things, sort of like your experience with the hacker. It's a very common experience.

Something else I wanted to mention is that when you're in the field, it's really important that you keep confidences of people relative to other people. Sometimes newcomers in the field want to show people how much they've learned or how much the other person has told them... And they'll go, "Oh so and so told me this." It's a big mistake, though. Just keep everybody separate. If they ask what someone else said you just say that you'll have to let them talk to the other person about that. It's important that you keep everyone's confidences.

Steve: Have you ever had an interview where people are just giving short, quick responses? If so, how do you handle it?

Bob: You can try and ask for instances. It may be the case that they just don't feel comfortable in the interview and this just may be their way of putting you off. It may be the case that they're worried about other things and that their mind is not there. Sometimes I'll say, "You probably have a lot of things on your mind that you need to

do today. If it seems worthwhile to you, perhaps there's another time that we could come back and follow up on this?" They might tell you about some of the things that are on their mind. Then you can give them a call later to see how they're doing, but it may or may not work out. Still, you're better to do that than just keep them in that situation.

It may also be the case that they don't know what they're talking about. I remember when I was doing the study of the hotel community that there was this one young black guy, a sociology student, who told me that he really knew a lot about the players and pimps and such. So, I asked him to talk with me about this. We're talking for a while and he's giving me these vague answers. So, eventually I asked him if he really knew what was going on or if he was just getting stuff off television. And, he told me that he had seen some stuff on the show "60 Minutes." Again, that's another good reason to ask for details. By doing this, you find out if people know what they're talking about or if they're just trying to impress you. That can happen, too. Sometimes people just like to seem knowledgeable about things.

Another thing that's good to have with you during an interview is a pen and paper. When people give you answers, they tend not to give you nice linear answers. That's because in the human group, in real life, things are so interrelated. So they often discuss a number of things when explaining one aspect. So, if you have your notes, then you can jot down different things that you want to discuss and follow-up as you go. You can't do follow-ups on six things at once.

It's also good to have things tape-recorded because then you can listen to them and you realize that you should've asked about this or that. Maybe you can get back to that person for more sustained interviewing. Or in the next interview, you can attend to those things so that your interviews become increasingly better.

Some people will say that if you're changing the questions, how can you do an analysis? My idea is that you ask as much about as many things as you can and as you're going along, you're learning things. That's part of what you're dealing with. So, you're not trying to establish standardized notions of reliability, but rather more thoroughly learn what's going on in the situation. If you knew everything that you needed to know at the beginning when you're making up the questions, you probably wouldn't need to do the study. So, it has this openness to it and it's important to adjust to it and be as open as you can, wherever you are. It's almost a relentless pursuit of information.

Another point that I sometimes make in class is that of overcoming any mystique in the setting. Suppose that you're going to be studying nurses. Well, maybe it doesn't really feel like there's too much mystique there. Then you say, "Well, what if you study some hookers?" People seem to think that there's a sort of deviant mystique there. Now, when you're actually doing the research. You can't spend your time saying, "This is a hooker! This is a hooker! Oh, my gosh! Oh, my gosh!" You have to put that aside, just like you would if you were studying a nurse or a teacher or the person next door. So, you just say, "So, tell me about your business, the things you do." You can't let that mystique or aura get in the way.

Say you're studying scientists. It's the same thing. You have to recognize that they are people first and foremost. They're doing things and you don't have to understand all the technical features of their roles. They don't expect you to be scientists. They've spent a lot of years studying things and working on these projects. They don't expect someone to come in off the street and suddenly be an expert in their area. If you're interested in what they're doing and how they got started, the dilemmas they had, concerns with staying on top of the field, accessing technology, now they can tell you about those kinds of things. Usually they're quite

happy to do that. Once again, they don't expect you to be them... You have to put that mystique aside for whatever group you're studying. If you can't do that, it tends to generate problems for your whole interview. Say you're studying executives and you're all in awe of executives, it's going to be tough! It's not a big deal that they're executives. You're not trying to be one of them. You're just there to learn about them.

Steve: I ran into the "mystique" issue when studying computer hackers. I got the idea to study this group of what, I thought, were computer criminals while working for the Department of Justice. But, when I started the research and was meeting with people that called themselves hackers, none of them fit this deviant stereotype. So, I kept looking. However, I kept finding that the people I met with weren't fitting my initial definition of the hacker. I realized fairly soon, though, that I had gotten caught up in this sort of deviant mystique that surrounded their subculture and therefore had to adapt my perspective.

Bob: That's a really good point. More generally it means that even when you think you know things about the field you should try to put those aside as much as you can and try to get their explanations of things.

Now, sometimes people will say, "Well, you know." You really have to get past that one. If you're a student, you might say, "I think I understand what you mean, but my instructor wants to hear everything from the people themselves. Would it be possible for you to explain that a little more fully?" If it's me, I might say, "I think I know what you mean, but it would really be helpful if you could explain this. I'm putting this study together for other people who need to know. So, it's probably better if they hear it in your words and not mine. That way it'll sound more natural and more authentic." They often like that idea – i.e., that it's in their own words. It's something you really have to watch because there's an easy tendency to want to appear smart when you're the interviewer... The idea is not to try and impress people with what you know, but rather to get them to explain things to us.

Steve: I guess this comes up a lot when doing interviews with people you know well. They'll say things like, "You remember when. You know this." I guess then it's up to you to get them to help you refresh your memory by talking about those things.

Bob: Or, they'll say something like "As you know," like everyone should know this. You really have just say, "I'm really not that sure about that. Could you tell me a little how that works?" Or, "What's involved, so that I'm a little more certain." It's also a good idea to get them into explaining things early. A lot of times they'll use certain terms as if everyone in the world would know the meaning of these terms. You have to ask them what they mean when you don't understand the terms. Certain words or phrases in this or that setting could be very common, but they're words that outsiders don't understand a lot of the time. Or, certain words could be used in different ways. Even though it may seem like any bozo would know, you need to ask just to ascertain exactly what it is that's going on.

When I'm doing an interview, I try to be the best student that this person has ever had. I'm curious. I like to know things. It's like an apprenticeship for me. Which really it is, because I'm there to learn from them. It's not a bad idea to say, "Even as we're doing the interview, I'm sure I'm going to have some dumb questions. I hope you don't mind, but I need to know what's going on."

Steve: I guess it also shows your humanness, which makes it easier for people to relate to you. It gives people an extra level of comfort. You had talked a little bit about some examples from the field. Were there any other sort of interesting examples from field that you can recall that were, say, particularly enjoyable moments or trying times when maybe you felt the research wasn't going to go any further?

Bob: I'll speak a little more generally. A big thing in the field is maintaining composure. That is, don't get stressed out over things. Don't get anxious about things. Don't get annoyed about things. There may be times when people are rude to you. Again, we don't have the privilege of pride. Be as nice as you can to people and treat them as well as you can. But also try to be mindful of your own emotions. This is not the place to be discordant with their viewpoints. You may be talking with somebody about politics and they may be making statements that you think are totally ludicrous. But remember, as a sociologist, their viewpoints are not ludicrous; they're interesting, important actually. You put those other definitions, your personal views aside. Or, they might say things that sort of hurt you in a way, but that doesn't matter because you're not there to defend anything or to get hurt. Just keep going as if it was the most natural thing. If you start getting uptight or annoyed, the interview goes down the tubes.

Steve: What do you do in a situation if you get the sense that someone is just stringing you along? Maybe they're just telling you something that they think you want to hear.

Bob: I did an interview with a city economic developer and it was like he did it for the camera. Everything was good. Everything was polite. Everything was technically correct. It was somewhat unrealistic, but nevertheless that was the interview that he wanted to give me. So you try asking for details, but again here's someone who is an accomplished city politician – mindful of his words, not going out on any limbs. I did the interview and thanked him, but I couldn't do much with it because it had that quality to it. It was like a public relations document. You realize, though, that it is their job and people have been stung and they've dealt with newspaper reporters that have created all sorts of problems for them. This in turn has created all sorts of problems for ethnographers. And maybe some ethnographers have been pretty ruthless or inconsiderate or moralistic and they create problems for others, too. We just have to recognize that there will be these kinds of concerns. You also don't know if they're getting heat from others in their job. In this case, he was a very nice guy and set up other people to speak with me. But, from him, it was really a stereotypic presentation-type interview.

Steve: So, there are some things you can take from it, but you don't really worry too much about getting the "real" goods?

Bob: It's a public relations statement. Really that's what it was. So, I have a really nice example of a public relations statement that someone would give you. It didn't really deal much with the activities or dilemmas. The other people in the same office, though, did indicate that there were these sorts of things going on. And, as the manager, most certainly he would have been aware of it. Also because he's been in the field for awhile.

Steve: That was what he wanted to give you.

Bob: Yes. Well, I really couldn't get around it. If people seem uncomfortable with me for some reason or if the interview just seems like it's not going anywhere I'll just say, "Maybe I'll just ask you another question and we'll call it a day." That's not something I like to do... But I'm not going to come away empty handed if I can help it. I try to be thorough when I'm in the field. I'll try this angle and that angle...

And other things will happen. You could be doing a nice interview – nice in the sense that the person is talking and explaining things rather fully– and they get a phone call or we get interrupted somehow and that's it. So, you pack it up and maybe you can give them a call tomorrow. Sometimes that works out. Sometimes you lose the connection with people. When you're doing an interview you're developing a bond with somebody. Sometimes those interruptions will break that bond.

Steve: At the opposite end of the spectrum, how do you call it quits when doing an interview?

Bob: Sometimes you do it based on the time they have. Maybe they have to pick up their kids at this time. They can't leave their kids walking around the school ground for two hours. Other times, we'll just go until we're kind of exhausted. There have been times where I've done these two and three-day things and it has worked out well. They just feel so comfortable that I can hang around.

In the marketplace study, there were some people that liked to be interviewed in the store. Okay, great. Maybe I'm talking to the manager and she might have another couple staff people, but now another customer comes in the store. So, the manager says to me, "I'll just give this person a hand." She does, but meanwhile I can watch how she relates to this person and I can relate to what she's doing. Then she'll come back and we'll talk about this person and their style and how typical it was or wasn't. We can talk about some other things. Then maybe a staff person comes over and they have a question about this or that. This is fine. We're doing well and getting lots of stuff. I can say, "It's been a fun day. Can I come back tomorrow?" "Well, sure come on back. We open at 9:30 and I'll be here." "Okay." I remember doing this in a women's dress shop. People are coming in and out and I'm sitting there with her, right next to the ladies' change room. At first I felt a little bit uncomfortable, but she (manager) didn't seem uncomfortable, so why should I worry? We're just going on with the interview. I imagine that they have other salespeople, salesmen, coming in that might sit there and talk... That's where they sit.

Gaining Entry into a Field Site

Steve: In terms of gaining entry into a certain setting, can you recall experiencing any significant obstacles?

Bob: The one research project that I started and didn't, actually couldn't, complete was one on illness and wellness. The problem wasn't finding people to talk to. The problem was really me. I did a couple interviews and I found that when they were talking about their pain and operations, I was feeling a lot of pain. When I'm doing interviews, I try to put myself in that person's situation, think about it, and take the role of the other. Here, taking the role of the other was really quite painful and I

realized that this was not the study for me. So, thank you to Kathy Charmaz for being able to write, *Good Days and Bad Days*. It's a wonderful study. I don't know how she did it, but she did it. To go back to the earlier question about the SI community, here's another person that means so much. But, that was a project that I bailed out on. I think it's an important study and studies like that need to be done, but it wasn't for me.

Steve: Again moving to the opposite end of the spectrum, have you conducted a study that was really easy to get into? Perhaps there was a key informant that came along and helped you out.

Bob: Well, all the studies that I've done have tended to be big projects and I didn't plan them to be that way. In the card and dice hustler study, I met C.R.D. Sharper. Otherwise it never would have happened. Then later on, in the hotel study, Stylianoss Irini came by and that wouldn't have happened if I hadn't done the card and dice hustler stuff and became familiar with that lifestyle. That was another project that I didn't think I'd be doing. But later on, as it developed, it seemed more and more worthwhile to do from the point of view of studying deviance.

Along the way, toward the end of the hotel study, I also realized that when we had studied a lot of businesses. The hookers are businesswomen. We had the entertainment business and hospitality industry and other things. I thought, well, this is very interesting. Has anybody done an ethnography of this sort on the marketplace? It must have been done. So, I looked around and couldn't find much of a sustained sort. I thought maybe I'll do this, but it wasn't as if I had this fascination with it. It was there and it was interesting... And you can't understand contemporary society without understanding the marketplace. It's a whole set of activities. I realized the marketplace consisted of a whole set of social processes. It wasn't just setting a price and collecting money. It was a whole lot of things. After that, I started the study of consumer behaviour. That again was sort of a natural extension.

With regards to the marketplace work, as well, I kept running into these economic developers. People would go to trade shows and they would sell cities like somebody else would sell shoes or factory products or some travel programs. Here are these people selling cities. They want businesses to locate in their cities. So, this was another interesting idea, but I didn't have an intense desire to study it. It was just something that would take us into so-called "macro" sociology. It's not just cities doing this. It's provinces, states. It's countries. Economic activity is a big, big deal! I knew that we could start to show just how profoundly relevant symbolic interaction is to economics.

It's economics, politics, all of those things. If some major auto manufacturer is interested in locating in your community. It's a city matter. It's a state or province matter. It's a national thing, often. They all might get involved. It's a big deal. Then you have your developers, realtors, and bankers. There are just so many things going on. I realized that with this study I could do something like I did with the hotel community. We have all these subcultures and we could show how they interact. This effectively is the community and I could do this on a bigger scale, sort of like a live, super complex Monopoly game.

Those are two ethnographies (consumer behaviour and economic development) that I've not finished. They're well on their way and I have lots of material. I've been away from them for a few years now. But, it would be really easy to go and do some more interviews. Then you have that other data from before that

you could compare it to. You see, the problem of collecting something right now is that you don't have comparison points with the past, whereas I have lots and lots of stuff.

After reading Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and realizing just how incredibly good this text was I realized that I had to make a transition. I really debated about this in my mind because I realized what I would be leaving behind. At the same time, I also recognized that somebody needed to do this study on Greek material and connect it with the present day material, contemporary scholarship. If someone were going to do it, it would have to be somebody like me. There didn't seem to be a lot of people willing or interested in doing it.

I thought, "Well, there are lots of people who can do ethnographies, how many can do this other work?" Almost no one has this particular mix of backgrounds and interests. So, that is where I went. Looking back, I would do it again. Even though I think those two studies – the one on consumer behaviour and the other on economic development – are really important I don't think they compare to the Greek project. It just has so much potency!

But, whether others will believe it or not, we'll find out in time. Maybe in a thousand years from now somebody will say, "There's something here. There's something worthwhile." And some one else might say, "No, no. It's a thousand years old. What value can it have?"... We can give things to those who follow but we can't determine what they will do with these things.

Steve: I'm curious about this, so maybe others will be to. Your earlier work is fairly well situated in the field of deviance. How did you become interested in deviance studies?

Bob: I think most people experience some kind of intrigue with the concept of deviance, especially students in psychology and sociology. So I had that general interest, but it was sort of an interest in social psychology and group life more generally. I remember as an undergrad taking a course in abnormal psychology. It focused on finding out what it is about the person that made them deviant or strange. I was quite interested in this material, but I never really followed it up.

Later on, I was certainly glad that I didn't because as an interactionist you realize that the strangeness is not in the subject matter. The strangeness is in the eyes of the audience. That was one of the sociological insights that I had to acquire. For me, in sociology at least, it was deviance as an instance of social psychology or a more general set of social processes. It wasn't that persona-fixated approach.

Data Analysis

Steve: How do you approach the analysis of your data?

Bob: I think that if you're in the field the first thing that you'd really like to consider is, "What's going on here?" It sounds rather funny, but I really think that it's an excellent place to start. I immediately bring in this concern with activity. So when I say, "What's going on here?" I really mean, "What are the things that people are doing? And how are they going about doing those activities?"

That's where I like to start when I interview people. I like to ask, "Can you give me an idea of the sorts of things that you do?" Then my job, in part, as I'm talking with the people there, is to get some idea of what the central activities are for people in that situation or role.

In doing that, I'm actually framing my analysis because the analysis is going to revolve around the things that people do... Then I try to take those activities apart, piece by piece, and see how these take place and what the major variants are at each point in the process...

Later, when I'm writing things up and doing more sustained analysis I will be saying, "How does this compare with other people's work?" For example, how does it compare to Howard Becker's jazz musicians or Jack Haas' high iron steel workers, or Billy Shaffir's study of the Hassidic Jews? I was rereading Billy's study a little while back. It's very good!

When I'm in the field, though, I really put those things in suspension because, first and foremost, I want to know from these people what they think they're doing, how they go about doing it, and all the things that they find difficult, easy, boring, frustrating, repetitive, unique - the whole range of things. How do all of these people enter into those activities? How do they adjust? As much as possible I like to have people tell me about instances because I need the instances to see what's going on.

I can observe some things, but their stocks of knowledge are so much more extensive than what I could observe even in a very extended period of time. I try to let them tell me about their experiences, ask about instances and things they did and didn't do, things they thought about but didn't do, things that might have worked out differently than what they had initially anticipated... There are many important things you simply can't observe. I'm trying to follow the natural sequence of things along.

In terms of giving the analysis some overarching order, I look at how these activities seem to fit together. Can I give it some sort of natural flow? But again any order you give it - we use the term "natural history" - may not be the precise way things work on all occasions, but nevertheless this is the more common set of ways things work out. We want to be attentive to that.

When I'm collecting the data, I focus on the full range of activity - all the variants. I'm not trying to focus on something that I think is more fascinating or alluring or intriguing that will knock somebody's socks off. The idea is to get the whole package!

If there's something that's alluring, that's fine, but we also really need to know about the more mundane things and the things that they might be more inclined to take for granted or think inconsequential. I'm after the full range of activities and how these things fit together. Also, over time, do people change the ways in which they become involved in this or that or how they do these things?

Steve: Has it changed for you, over time, in terms of how you go about your analyses?

Bob: Probably the biggest change was when I was doing *Road Hustler* where I was working with C.R.D. Sharper, I think it was there that I became so attentive to the importance of activity. Then doing the hotel study it was so helpful to use that same frame, except recognizing that instead of one set of actors there were a number of sets of actors - subcultures embedded within the broader hotel sub-community. The focus was on realms of activity, which became a more and more central theme.

Activities also allow you to make comparisons because you can say, "How did people get started with this? When were they likely to continue or drop out? How did they deal with ambiguity and challenges?" You have things that you can compare both within and across contexts. Hopefully then you have some material on parallel activities, either from the literature or your own research, which you can compare with other categories of people and people in other settings.

Steve: Since the idea of generic social processes came along a little later on was that something for you that became a more central organizing feature in your work?

Bob: Yes, very, very centrally. The idea was to develop comparisons and to follow things through on a process basis. So, you'd say, "How do we move from this point to this point?" Then, as we look across cases and instances, can we see parallels such as where things are similar and different? Then, how can we begin to specify the elements that seem to be more consequential at this point and that point in the broader process? It really is a comparative analysis procedure.

In the last few years, since working on the Greek material, and I think this procedure (analytic induction) is a product of Aristotle more so than anyone else, I've really been stressing comparative analysis. That's what Glaser and Strauss were talking about, of course. Blumer also talks about that. The great value of comparative analysis became, I suppose for me, even more crystalline in reading Aristotle. That is, we only know things relative to that with which we compare them. So, notions of knowledge are derived from the comparative processes and the inferences that we make.

Steve: I can see that even in the type of advice you've given me with my own research. Instead of focusing on one religious community you've suggested that I compare the activities and processes of different religious groups such as the Mennonite, Catholic, and Jewish communities. Is this the type of advice that you give your students?

Bob: Sure, very much so. I was just going over Danny Jorgensen's book, *The Esoteric Scene...* that looks at the occult – at people's involvements in tarot card reading and such. It's largely a participant observation study where he builds on his experiences or, more centrally the experiences of his wife who became more involved in this first, and he provides various field notes and such things.

It's a very thoughtful study, but one of the things that I made note of as I was going through this book is that he doesn't really do much comparative analysis. He talks about the literature on the occult, but he doesn't really talk about other religious involvements and he doesn't talk about other subcultures in which we also find concentrated points of devotion such as ballet, drug use, or motorcycle gangs. He misses out on that.

So when he concludes the book he doesn't contribute to the broader generic understanding of religion or subcultures. Instead, he looks at the question, "What about the occult in the modernist world?" He sort of goes off on this and is more nebulous in the process. That is why I try to get people to make those comparisons. It also means that you can see a lot of things.

Even if the contexts are different, you have some comparison points. A lot of times, too, people have struggled to articulate certain concepts. Also, people may re-engage the same concept over and over again just calling it by some different name, but they don't make the connection. Our scholarship is not as productive then, as when we can look across these studies and see if there is something that transcends those particular substantive contexts.

Steve: Does this relate then to one of the goals you stress for sociology, that is it is to be a cumulative discipline? What do you mean by this?

Bob: I believe that we really need to develop concepts that have a transituational and transhistorical quality. We need concepts that address the nature of human group life anywhere, any place, any time, and for any group. That I think is really important. It's not unique to me. Herbert Blumer and Georg Simmel were talking about that. Aristotle was certainly so attentive to the generic features of human association. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, he has a couple of chapters on friendship where he asks how friendships become constituted, intensified, and what sorts of things might create problems for friends. If you're looking at relationships, you can go back and look at what he had to say. Cicero also writes on friendship and asks, "What is this friendship thing?" There's also Ovid on *The Art of Love*. Hopefully, in bringing together those resources and the studies that people might do these days, we can develop a more adequate appreciation of what friendships are and more broadly what relationships are.

Steve: So, cumulative in the sense that we're not just working with one piece of data or one field site. We're bringing together past with current materials to inform our understanding of a certain feature of human life. When we bring them together we have something better than what we could have had if we had just focused on one site of study.

Bob: Yes. That is what Glaser and Strauss emphasized in "grounded theory," the potential to develop these concepts. Also, each time you encounter a study – one that you do yourself or one that someone else has written, assuming it's fairly detailed and attends to process – you can take your concepts and assess them relative to this new body of material.

Hopefully, in developing the analysis, you can make adjustments, looking for things that are more common or something that needs reworking or further examination because you're finding a number of contradictions here. In that way you're engaging scholarship in a more comprehensive sense.

It can't be all about *me* and *my* ethnography. It really has to be an ethnography that people in the community can share somehow. Then it takes on some genuine worth. If it's just me, on my own, maybe I can learn things and feel like I was creative or expressive. But, if it can't be compared with other things in some ways, it doesn't have much of an enduring value.

Steve: A key feature of the analysis is, obviously, coding the data. Are there any techniques that you use for data coding? Perhaps you could share some insight into some of the practical techniques that you use.

Bob: I do focus so much on activity, but even as you study activity, people are going to be talking about identities, relationships, dilemmas, in-group out-group relations, perhaps stigma, and a lot of those sorts of things. I like to have everything transcribed and make a hard copy of that and read it over and make little notes to myself on what this is and what that is. You can do something very similar on the computer by inserting tags here and there. I like to work with the hardcopies myself. I have all my statements coded so that I know where they're from. I'll put an identity tag at the beginning of all the major breaks within the text. I used to go and take an exacto knife and cut all these things up in pieces. Then I'd physically sort things out. Now, I do the same things with separate files on the computer. For example, if I find stuff that deals with identities it goes in the "identity" pile. Here is something else on

influence work, put it in that section. Here's something that most directly seems to deal with emotionality...

So you get all of these things in each of these different files where you can print them out and see what you have here or there... Now, in actuality, you'll have many things that deal with two or more of these things in various ways, but I try to sort things in terms of the major emphasis of the particular statement. Usually the statements I work with are fairly extensive. If you have mostly one-liners, to my mind, it's garbage. If you're getting one-line answers, you need to go back into the field. So most of these things will be fairly extensive. It will be people telling me about this, when, and how. I try never to ask "why," but ask people to tell me more and give me instances and such.

So I build up these piles of materials and then I will go through, say, the material on emotionality and try to see what these people are telling me about emotionality. What are the variations? What are the major themes? Is there some sort of flow to it? What are the major points in the process? What is the range? I don't have pre-established categories. Even where I might have written on some sub-processes, say on a GSP relating to emotionality or influence work, I try to put that in suspension and concentrate on what I have before me. Later on, I might make connections with what I had written. For the time being, though, I want to see what I have here as a package unto itself. I want to make comparisons within.

It's not hypothesis testing and I'm not trying to find illustrations of things that I might have talked about or somebody else has talked about. Rather I want to see what I have here and, as much as I can, screen those other things out so that they don't interfere with that. Then I will go through and write things up around those themes... Once I know what I have here, then I can do more direct comparisons with other things, but first I need to see, in some detail, what is here.

The other thing that I find really useful, even as I'm doing the analysis, is to keep doing interviews with people in the field because it gives me a chance to ask more about the things I'm considering, ambiguities that I'm running into, or things I missed. It's rather inevitable.

You might think that you're pretty conscientious and thorough as you do a study, but when you go over that material you're going to find that you missed things. Some of them are going to seem so obvious that you'll think, "How could I have missed this?" Nevertheless, it happens. Things that now look very obvious, earlier on you might have been focusing on other things. You just didn't attend to them. Now you're reading through your material and it strikes you that you need to learn more about this or that thing that you've uncovered. You want to go into the field and be able to ask people about those things. Of course, whenever I'm doing an interview I'll try to get as much as I can about everything else as well. I find that so useful. Even in the last stages of writing, I'll still be doing interviews.

The other thing that I do, which may sound rather funny, is that I read ethnographies while I'm working on my analysis – because people talk about similar and different things. Maybe they didn't develop their study in what I think is the best way, but seeing what they did it's now easier for me to think of a better way of developing something. Or, I might be struggling trying to sort something out and here's an ethnography, say, by Jackie Wiseman or David Karp. They have come across something very similar and they've addressed it, but in more viable terms. So I ask myself if this fits with what I'm doing. I think it's very good to keep reading ethnographies and to keep doing interviews even when it feels like you're down the homestretch with your analysis. I think that when grad students take longer to complete their projects it's sometimes because they've limited themselves too much

to what they already have and they feel like they have to force this into some boxes. They're not making use of the fuller set of resources they have.

Some people also think that since they've done a certain number of interviews that they shouldn't have to do anymore. It's like somehow they've hit their number and no one should force them to do anymore. Where with me, it's not about being forced. Many of the studies I've done, like the marketing study where I did over a hundred interviews, I never became saturated. Some people say that you should go until you've run out of things. Well, I've never run out of things. There are always more things to learn about. The more you know about something, the more you can follow it up. I don't think that it's good advice to tell people to do a set number of interviews or just go until they've become saturated with information...

Now, you can't just go on forever, so time becomes an element, but you still do as much as you can. The interviews really keep your mind flexible. It's an opportunity to ask people about things. You might wonder how common something is. You've seen other cases of this sort, but in your data you only have one or two cases, but perhaps you really didn't pursue it and now you can ask a few people in the field if this is something that seems more common overall. They can give you an idea. You still have to check everything out, but at least you have this chance to talk to people in the field about things. That's so good!

Conducting Ethnographic Research

Steve: It's obvious that you're very thorough in your approach to research. Sitting here as a grad student I wonder, "How does Bob Prus overcome the practical limitations?" How do you find time to do what you do? What are some strategies that you use?

Bob: I'm sometimes really reluctant to start new projects because I know I have a tendency to follow everything up as much as I can. That often means that things just become more and more extensive. For example, when I started the Greek project it wasn't with the intention of staying in that area, but I thought I should learn a little more about this literature because I was running across Plato's and Aristotle's names every now and then when writing the text on power. These usually were very oblique and superficial references. I didn't know the Greek literature thought but I should at least take a look at it. It turned out that it was so good that I just couldn't leave it alone. I realized that this is really, really consequential material!

With the hotel study (*Hookers, Rounders, and Desk Clerks*), I had no intention of doing this as a full study but something to learn about a little bit since I was teaching courses on deviance. Then as you learn more you say, "You could develop this and this and this." I would've done many more studies, but I didn't have the time or energy to do them. There are many things that I've been tempted to do. I'm never bored with sociology or ethnographic research. It's like a continual learning experience. Plus, I really do enjoy reading ethnographies.

I think that what happens, in part, is that over time you develop a stock of knowledge that makes it easier for you to more quickly digest a lot of materials. More recently, with the Greek project, I realized that once I had read a lot of Plato and Aristotle I knew the basic parameters of Western social thought for the next 2,500 years. What I didn't know was which of their ideas might be picked up and pursued and debated and which might be lost and which things might be emphasized more selectively or where people might misconstrue their materials. Those sorts of things I didn't know. But it meant that I could go and read a lot of authors that would come

later like Cicero, Augustine, Aquinas, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Emile Durkheim, and many other authors because the issues that they and we deal with are the same basic issues that the Greeks struggled with. Postmodernism also turns out not to be something new. There were Greeks that talked about the impossibility of knowing anything, totalizing relativism, and the multiple viewpoints we could take on these things. The basic premises of pragmatism go back to Aristotle as much as anyone.

Once you have that core, you can absorb materials so much more readily because you have reference points to locate them on. So, you're reading Jean-Jacques Rousseau and you realize after awhile that Rousseau was basically a Platonist. Once you've established that you can ask yourself, "What is he doing with these ideas?" Other people come along and you recognize that they have this or that notion of Aristotle's *Categories* or something. To know Aristotle's *Categories* is such a useful thing! That's been very helpful!... I have to write something up on that too.

Likewise, if you know, say, Herbert Blumer and a couple ethnographies, you can go to one of our conferences and you can connect with a lot of materials that are there because you have that base. If someone were to come without that, all of these things would look so different. For us, we can go there and our research can be different in certain ways, but we understand the common themes of the theoretical, methodological, and conceptual literature that ties these things together. There are certain sources that are just so valuable to know, which can save you a great deal of time and anguish. It allows you to have sort of an analytic fluency.

The other thing is that the more you write, the more fluent you get with writing. For me, I do a lot of re-writing. I sometimes have people tell me, "I really like the way you write." And I'll say, "No, no. You really like the way I re-write." I tend to go over things and if I can find a better way of saying it I will. I try to be clear and direct, define my terms, and be thorough. That's the other thing I suppose. Once you think that way, then with the projects that you work on you're able to bring that into play in each case. You can say, "What are the issues at hand? What are the central emphases? What's going on here?"

When I read a book, I will usually flip through it to see what the book is about overall. I'll go to the table of contents, scan the introduction, and look at the different chapters. Some books you might decide early that they're not worth reading, but if something looks good then put some time into that book and really make it your book. Learn whatever you can from that author. That's part of it.

Another part of it, I think, is that any area can be interesting. Whatever people are doing, it's the people that make it interesting. It's not whether they're playing cards, riding motorcycles, or whatever, it's really the people and how they actually do the things that they're doing. That's the interesting part to me... With students, if they come to me, I'll tell them that I don't really care so much about what they study, but do it from an interactionist viewpoint and I'll be happy. The other thing that I mention to people, especially students, is to pick something that's accessible – something where you can readily go and talk to people. There are just so many things that one can study. To me, everything, anything, can be worthwhile to study if you take the time to examine it carefully and try to be as thorough as you can be. When you're there, just keep going as long as you can.

I suppose, to get back to your question in another way, I've also been quite fortunate to have good health. It's like many other things, if you're feeling healthy or if you tend have more stamina and energy things go better. That's part of it, too. So, here's to good health! But, another thing is "do you have a vision of what you want to accomplish?" What you might be able to contribute to scholarship?

To me, the emphasis is on the study of human knowing and acting, to help open that up to everyone. That's why I've been able to pursue the Greek project and other things with such intensity. I know that a lot of people don't care about Greek scholarship or what we can do with it; they just want the latest, whatever that is. But I realize that Greek scholarship is so important and I need to do what I can to create a greater awareness of this material, because of what we can do with it.

Juggling Multiple Projects

Steve: I know you recommend working on multiple projects rather than keeping something on the backburner while you focus all your time on one study. I think many people, myself included, find it difficult to focus on anything other than the one main project that they're doing.

Bob: The big challenge I have is trying to delimit the projects I'm working on. In a sense, though, they're all kind of related because they all deal with people and the things people do, but some are obviously much more theoretical and conceptual and others have more of an ethnographic quality. On a given week I really don't know how many different things I might be working on. Another thing is that I've found that as you work on something here and there, even occasionally, eventually you can develop something that's more extensive, more worthwhile overall... I will often have an idea that might come to me when I'm having a shower or driving someplace. I'll jot it down, take a look at it, and maybe add a few more words to that at another time. Later, I'll be doing other things and I'll pick this up again and maybe write down a few more thoughts about it and stick it back in the file.

Steve: Organization is obviously key.

Bob: Yes. I really don't know how many computer files I have. I wouldn't want to count them. Many of them are in various states of development. With a lot of them, I'm sure I'll die before anything else happens to them. In the meantime, I'll have many other things that I'll be working on and things that I'll start. It's just an ongoing process, but it's nice to have that change. It keeps your mind active and you start to see connections. Again, this comment earlier about reading other people's ethnographies while you're doing your own, I think it's so good! It's also good to know when during the day is your best time for writing. Then when you're a little wrecked or weary, you can do some reading or pull out something else you don't need to work with very seriously. For me, it would be really boring to work on just one small project for an extended period of time. I've done that occasionally because I've had to. Generally speaking, though, I really like the ability to move back and forth between different projects in a given day.

Mentoring Students

Steve: What sort of advice do you give to students who have just started on their undergrad or masters thesis? Maybe they've done a bit of other qualitative work and they know it's a huge mountain to climb. For some students they'll put it off because they're finding it too daunting and are having a hard time getting started on it. Is there any advice that you give to students when they're first starting out their projects?

Bob: You sort of hope that they will want to get at it. There's a line from Meredith Wilson's *The Music Man* that goes something like, "There's no point warming up if you're not going to get in the game and pitch." I really do believe that. I tell them to try to find a project that they'll feel comfortable with. I'll often ask people about the sorts of things that they're interested in. Whether it's playing golf, getting involved in dance, going to bars, or whatever, try to find something that they have an interest in. Still, it should be something where the interest is not going to be so pronounced that they lose their sociological focus. Nevertheless, that would be one way of getting them involved in it.

Sometimes people say that you shouldn't do research in an area that you have some experience or greater familiarity. I don't agree with that. It's not that there's anything wrong with going into a new area. It's just that, wouldn't it be better to go into an area with which you already have some familiarity? But, be mindful of what you already know and watch that that doesn't trip you up where you take too many things for granted. That can be a big problem. My own viewpoint is: "Go and do it! Don't wait around. Little elves aren't going to come and do your project for you."

I think that if you're encouraging someone to go to grad school, you would look for someone who has that sense of dedication or application and persistence. That becomes so important. It's not a matter of how brilliant somebody is. It's really a matter of staying with something, being patient, and not trying to be brilliant along the way, but just trying to learn as much as you can about things. What you'll find, over time, as you're going over your materials and working with it, you'll have a lot of insights – things that people have pointed out to you, things that you've observed, things that you've compared. So, the project takes on its own brilliance. Just concentrate on doing a good job – be thorough, collect your materials, take your time, and relate to the people.

Steve: That also speaks a lot to the sort of mentoring that you do. What are some of the things that you stress in mentoring new, young scholars to go on to pursue this area of research?

Bob: Something that occurred to me a few years ago is that you don't want to wait until graduate school to develop graduate students. Ideally, you want to develop graduate students while they're undergrads so that when they go to graduate school they already know what they're doing. You're sort of preparing people for the Masters at the undergrad level. When they're Masters students, you're preparing them for their Ph.D. When they're doing their Ph.D., it's really for a lifelong program of study. That is just something that occurred to me more recently. I wasn't bright enough to think about that years and years ago.

When I teach my undergrad courses I mention this to my students. I'm not sure what they think because they may be in a second year course, say. I tell them, "I'm going to teach this course like you're all going to graduate school." Now, I know they're not all going to do that, but that's what I tell them. I tell them, "If we don't teach it at that level, no one's going to be ready to go to grad school and we really need that. This country needs good grad students a lot more than it needs some more lawyers." I've been more explicit in doing that the last few years.

I try to make sure they have a very good sense of theory, the intellectual community, and the research so that when they go to other schools they can go and talk to instructors in the area of symbolic interaction and be very much at home.

That's sort of my idea. When you're finished these second year courses, you should have something that you can take with you. I'm not just there to get them through the course and give them their grades. Rather, I try to give them something that they can take with them. They know who Blumer, Goffman, and Becker are. They know the core of the field.

Subcultural Mosaics

Steve: I'd like to hear from you a bit about the concept of "subcultural mosaics." At what point and how did you come to developing this idea?

Bob: I realized that I never could have written the book on subcultural mosaics without having first done *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research*. The reason I couldn't was because I needed to establish a base where I talked about what symbolic interaction was, how it developed, its variations and premises, and how it was similar and different to positivism and postmodernism. I also realized that the generic social processes, as we talked about them in the *Symbolic Interaction* book, had great utility. I think of them as a magic carpet that you can get onto and get dropped off any place and you have all these incredible resources to start with. What about perspectives, identities, relationships, emotionality, collective events, and such? Wherever you are in a church, a hospital, a playground, or an airplane factory – it doesn't matter. You can start to ask, "What are people doing? How are they making sense of things?"

But I also recognized that students seemed to be having trouble thinking generically. They're so used to thinking in terms of substantive fields. Someone is interested in crime. Another person's interested in family. They then go and read the literature in those substantive areas and limit themselves, typically, to that. I thought I should write another book – one that opens up the whole world for people to study. It would be built around the earlier 1996 book. The idea is that we could present people with a whole series of topics that they could connect with, but to locate those in process terms and to give them a sense of how they could bring generic social processes into studies of religion, politics, manufacturing, science, whatever. Basically, anything that people do, we should be able to study that. So the idea with the subcultural mosaics book was to set things up in those terms.

Subculture is a term that we've been using in the social sciences to refer to these life-worlds. It was also becoming more evident to me that we have all these life-worlds in a community. It's not a new idea. Anselm Strauss talks about it. Blumer talks about it earlier. There's Georg Simmel's idea of "webs of association." The idea is that communities or societies aren't these homogenous blobs, but rather they consist of all of these groups that are interacting with other groups. Some groups are bigger, some are smaller, some last longer, some are very fleeting. They have varying connections, affinities, disjunctures. There can be a lot of isolation in some cases, but nevertheless, this is what community is.

That was really the idea of *Subcultural Mosaics*. All societies consist of these subcultures and they overlap, impinge on one another, they can be in conflict with one another, but they also can cooperate, ignore, do anything they want essentially, with respect to one another. That was the idea. Then to give people some resources that they could use to study anything that people do in these life-worlds. When I say "anything" I really mean *anything* that people do.

The first few chapters in the book basically set up what symbolic interaction is. What are the premises? What are the generic social processes? Then we get into the substantive applications and provide some literature that people might look up, but it's all process-oriented. The last couple of chapters are written with Mary Lorenz Dietz and Billy Shaffir. The idea in these chapters were to indicate two things: First, how one might go about doing an ethnographic study in more extended terms, but still just a chapter. And second, how one might do an analysis of those materials. What we ended up doing, in writing those two chapters was to let everybody speak about what they did. So, it's sort of like mini-ethnography in a sense. We don't really talk about it that way, but it has some of those qualities. You can see where we do tend to have somewhat different kinds of emphases and yet all of us are doing ethnographic research. It's good for people to see some of the differences as well. Yet, we were writing it together as a package that somebody less familiar with the area could build on. We did the same with the last chapter in terms of how one might analyze these materials. The book was written with the idea that somebody, like a conscientious student, could learn to do a lot of these things on his or her own.

Quantitative Research, Positivism, & Postmodernism

Steve: It definitely does have that quality to it. It also brings in a nice experiential touch when you introduce quotes from Mary and Billy. Also in the subcultural mosaics (1997) and the text on symbolic interaction (1996), you do get into some of the debates within the discipline. Perhaps we could discuss some of your disaffections with the quantitative approach and positivism.

Bob: Oh my, disaffections! Where do we start? I went to graduate school at the University of Iowa and it was a very quantitatively oriented school, which was good in some ways because I did achieve some fluency with what it was that they were doing. As a student I didn't appreciate that so much because I really wanted to study people a little more. But I really didn't know how to go about doing this because I didn't have a background in this area. It was really only when I finished graduate school that I became more competent in that regard. Having worked with the encyclopaedia salespeople for a while and realizing that they had knowledge of people that sociologists didn't have, I didn't have great confidence in quantitative analysis. But, it was something to be done so I worked my way through my M.A. thesis and then the dissertation, largely from a quantitative viewpoint. The more research that I did, though, the more convinced I became about the shortcomings of quantitative analysis. It didn't seem to have that sense of realism that you could develop by spending time with people. Of course, Herbert Blumer makes the case as strongly and as clearly as anybody on the limitations of variable analysis -- that it doesn't look at people as agents. It doesn't recognize their capacities to interact, to think, to adjust, to learn, to teach, and to act.

Very recently, I've become more explicitly critical of quantitative analysis. Tony Puddephatt and I wrote a little paper examining the notion of causality that went back to Plato and Aristotle, and then Mead and Blumer. We wanted to see what they had to say about the ways in which people deal with things and generate effects. Then we compared that with contemporary notions of causality from a positivist standpoint -- essentially, variable analysis. We indicate some of the limitations of quantitative analysis.

Scott Grills and I have been working on another paper, called "The Myth of the Independent Variable." Basically, we ask, "What are these things that people call

independent variables? Can they possibly enter into the causal process?" In part, the argument is that you can have constructs or concepts such as class, age, gender, race, and religion, but how do these things actually produce or generate particular effects such as crime, broken homes, educational attainment, or happiness? The overarching argument that we make is that these variables at best might be seen as social categories.

You can talk about things like gender in terms of male and female, different ethnic divisions, and social classes. Then you say, "Given that they're categories, how can they cause anything?" Age doesn't determine anything. Gender doesn't determine anything. It's just a definition that people put on a situation. That, in itself, can't do anything. So then the issue becomes, "What are these things?" People do talk about gender, age, class, race. To a lot of people, these seem to be important things. Scott and I are not saying that they're not important things, but what we are saying is that they're social categories rather than causal things. Even so, how can social categories enter into things?

We make the subsequent argument that what you really have with these social categories are vaguely implied realms of activity. So, people can organize their lives, act towards others, and think about others in terms of these categories. Those are the elements that are important. We're basically into some sort of subcultural contexts because, just like you could talk about a drug or thief subculture, you could presumably talk about male and female subcultures. Again, in broad terms. Just like the drug subculture encompasses many, many variants. You could have a sports subculture in general terms. Then talk about divisions within. Once you do that you can start to ask, "What about people's perspectives, identities, and relationships as they pertain to these particular subcultures?"

We're not saying that there's no reality in the variables that sociologists use. What we are saying is that they don't have a causal quality to them as variables. At best, they represent social categories and the social categories, at best, represent these rather vague enacted realms of behaviour. The idea, though, is that those enacted features of human group life are not being captured by the variables... To do that, you have to really go into the levels where people live and do things. When you do that the whole notion of causality looks so different from the way it's framed in mainstream social science, in variable analysis.

Another point, one that we didn't develop in the paper, but one that I was thinking about and likely will, is that if you have something like crime or suicide – the dependent variables – those are basically like residual elements or the end products. So, mostly quantitative researchers start with the end product and work backwards to see what might connect, correlate, with that somehow?

As a scientist, that type of "looking backwards," doesn't have great appeal to me. You might have to do that sometimes, but you'd really like to follow the process through and see where things start and how they develop and then how they end up. Just to start at the end and, somehow, more or less fantasize to explain how it arrived here in this state doesn't have much appeal to me.

The broader issue yet is if you have something like age, race, and crime, what exactly is the connection? How is it that race could enter into crime? Race is a construct, a designation. A construct can't do anything in itself. People typically do variable analysis and then they develop another little theory, what Robert Campbell calls "paratheory," to account for the correlations because you can't connect the dots very directly. There is this matter of trying to establish the linkages or connections between what you claim to be an effective independent variable and some residual end-state.

There's another problem. You have something like race. I think most people will say that people don't really change their race over the years. Even though you can have different categories of race or different categories of gender and you find that people in this category or that category commit more crime or have a higher rate of suicide or come from broken homes, how can this be a causal factor? It's a constant for all those people. But they're only committing suicide once. No one seems to raise these sorts of issues with regards to quantitative analysis. Even if you're looking at crime, it's not like these people are involved in crime 24 hours a day for their whole lives. It's a more sporadic thing -- even if they're systematic criminals, maybe a livelihood for them. But they're not just doing that, they're doing other things, too. Is race the cause of those other things, too? Partying, going to church, buying certain kinds of clothes, say? With class, race, or age, if those are constants within the categories, how can something like that be an explanatory concept? Especially if it doesn't do anything. It doesn't act. What's the connection with cause and effect? How can it be a viable cause?

If anything, we argue for the importance of looking at people as causal agents. Look at the ways in which people as minded, purposive, reflective beings enter into this process and engage other people who are bringing their views into play as well, how they're defining each other. We end up with a very different conception of society, but nonetheless a critique of variable analysis.

Does variable analysis have a reality? We make the inference that these variables at best reflect social categories and the social categories at best vaguely reflect what people do. But it's there, in these realms of activity, in the actual instances of things, that all these things take place. But that's so far removed from variable analysis! The people who use variable analysis don't think in those terms anyway.

Instead, the reality of variable analysis is to be found in the ways in which social scientists have reaffirmed the viability of this perspective by stressing it as a methodology, legitimating it and objectifying it, and promising solutions to people in agencies who want quick fixes to various problems. The reality is in the acceptances, the funding, the books that are published, and the courses that are taught. That's where the reality is. It is not in their research per se. That's a rough, roundabout explanation of that article.

Steve: Do you see any sort of value in the quantitative approach?

Bob: It has value -- we do say this in the paper, too -- in terms of descriptive statistics. It can be very useful to people making plans of various kinds to know how many males and females you have in a typical school. You might be in the airlines industry and knowing proportions of your passengers you could roughly estimate what the average weight might actually be. You could do things of that sort. So, just the straight descriptive statistics have practical kinds of values. But, to use them as explanatory concepts, that's the problem.

Steve: Say I'm doing a quantitative project which relies on a large dataset. I'm looking at an issue related to crime and I find that in running some analyses certain neighbourhoods seem to have higher crime rates. Is that worthwhile?

Bob: Sure, that certain categories of people might have higher crime rates than other categories. That can be worthwhile to know, but now what are you going to do with it? It doesn't explain the crime rates. To explain that, you really need to ask the

types of questions that we do. You can ask, "What are these variables? What do they refer to?" But you really need to investigate the connections to see how things are linked to those categories in more direct terms. For that, you need to study instances as these take place in process and engage in comparative analysis.

Steve: This is interesting because as an undergrad we're taught that we use qualitative research as exploratory research and that we use quantitative research to explain things. Basically, what you're saying is that we should almost look at this the other way around with qualitative research being useful for both exploratory and explanatory research. To do a qualitative research project well, though, takes time. It's maybe a little dirtier than doing a quantitative study.

Bob: That's another thing. Quantitative analysis does offer that allure. It's relatively easy and quick. You can introduce some formula and run things through the computer and it looks like "real science." People will buy that stuff because they want scientific explanations. They just don't realize that the level of explanation is almost the antithesis of science. If you went into a courtroom and tried to prove that age, race, or class caused crime, what kind of case could you possibly make? They want to see how things connect. If you're going to claim that something is the causal agent it has to connect in pretty direct terms. The researchers can't give you that because there are no direct terms of connection. Oddly, very few people have challenged that.

In Durkheim's later works, including his statement on *Moral Education*, he talks about the impossibility of reducing a complex, living thing like society to variables. This sounds funny because Durkheim, of course, is one of the principal architects of the positivist tradition in sociology. In his later works, though, he makes very little reference to his earlier studies. It is as if he didn't do them. Every once in awhile he will say, "It would be nice to have some data on this," but he seems to be asking for descriptive statistics not sustained variable analysis. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, he makes the argument that you're much better to study one case in great detail than to study a massive number of superficial cases. This again is rather interesting. That is the problem and, of course, it's mainstream. But, that's where the money is right now, has been for quite a while. A lot of people gravitate towards it.

Steve: You wrote a paper in the early 1990s called, "The Interpretivists are coming" which is obviously a bit of controversial piece. In it you make claims about the entrenchment of quantitative methodology and positivism within mainstream sociology, and given that entrenchment it's difficult to change the focus of a discipline that's built around that. So, you've engaged yourself quite centrally in these sorts of debates and have taken, arguably, a polemical approach to some of your arguments. Some might be thinking the same sorts of things that you're saying, but hold back on their opinions. You seem to be comfortable about pushing forward and making a case. Was this something you just decided that needs to be written? Not that you're the only one that's making these claims.

Bob: I realize that it's not always a popular position to take, but I also recognize that it's very important that some people at least in our tradition make statements of those sorts. It makes it easier for others in our tradition to do what they're doing. They can take more moderate positions without being the outliers. At the same time, I firmly believe in these things. I'm not really interested in making accommodations that to

my mind are inauthentic. So, I've made those statements. The debates are very interesting and it looks like I'm getting more into them.

Lorne Dawson and I spent some time debating with the postmodernists. But we realized that the postmodernism really wouldn't be that consequential over the longer period of time and that the central debates are really with the positivists. I have more confidence in the positivists than the postmodernists, but nevertheless those are the people we're debating with.

What I appreciate about the positivists, actually, is their interest in doing science and trying to be good scholars. I think that they fail in terms of the methodology and assumptions with which they work, but I can nevertheless give them credit for their sincerity. The postmodernists, I believe, are quite contradictory at base. If you were a real postmodernist and you believed that nothing had any truth-value, why would you bother saying anything? They want to dispense with other forms of knowing, but typically do so to promote their own agendas. Often it's more of a Marxist agenda, but sometimes it's more of an emotional, expressive, personal agenda. To my view they, at base, lack sincerity.

So, where do we go? The mainstream resistance is there and I realize that. I think it's something that's going to last for a very long time. At the same time, though, I think it's important we try to maintain the viability of interpretive, hermeneutic, pragmatist, interactionist kinds of scholarship because it has such a level of authenticity. If we're going to make more genuine contributions to the community, that has to be the core – some form of pragmatist emphasis.

Blumer's Concerns with Intimate Familiarity

Steve: Bob, Krzysztof Konecki has seen some of the materials we discussed earlier and sent me a few additional questions. Let's talk about these because they add some important dimensions to the interview. First, he asks about Herbert Blumer's use of the term "intimate familiarity." Blumer stresses the necessity of achieving intimate familiarity with one's subject matter but he doesn't explain it all that fully. How do you think researchers might pursue intimate familiarity and what are the benefits and limitations of Blumer's emphases?

Bob: Sure, a good question, indeed! It's a tough question, or set of questions, too. But the concept of intimate familiarity also is so important for comprehending Blumer's scholarship and Chicago-style interactionism. Sometimes, we make the concept more explicit in our work but other times I think those who work in this tradition also treat it more implicitly, which isn't that good.

For many people, the quest for intimate familiarity may be exemplified by their emphasis on extended, open-ended, pluralist or non-prescriptive ethnographic research – where one examines things as fully and carefully as possible, mindfully of the viewpoints and practices of the people we are studying. And that's what Blumer intends, to get right in there and learn what is going on by sustained ethnographic inquiry, especially open-ended interviewing, where you connect with the ethnographic other in these highly detailed terms. That is so basic! Still, for Blumer, something more is involved.

Blumer wants to encourage an empirical attentiveness to the instances. But the instances are to be approached in process terms, wherein researchers focus on the emergent or unfolding features of people's activities. For Blumer, activity is not a thing as much as it is a process. Activity is something in the making – so his

emphasis on the forging of activity; the interpreting, defining, anticipating, initiating, monitoring, assessing, adjusting process. Tom Morrione, who worked with Blumer in his later years, talks about these things in the text they developed together (*George Herbert Mead and Human Conduct*).

So, you see, its not just ethnographic research, it's a very particular, focused type of inquiry. It's an activity-oriented inquiry and analysis. All the other concepts, say perspectives, identities, relationships, and so forth are best known through activity, through the ways the people do things in emergent, ongoing, interactive terms.

Steve: Do you know where Blumer picked up concerns of this sort?

Bob: I don't know exactly where Blumer gets this emphasis. In part, it's from Mead, whose text really should be called *Mind, Self, and Society in Action*. In part, it's from Charles Horton Cooley and his emphasis on sympathetic introspection, which really approximates Chicago-style ethnography. Blumer talks about this in his dissertation in 1928. He contends that Cooley's method of sympathetic introspection is the essential methodology of social psychology. In part, too, it may come from Robert Park. Still, as far as I can tell, Park was much more effective as a teacher or mentor than a researcher per se. Also, Blumer was part of an intellectual milieu where people were doing ethnographic research – so Nels Anderson, Clifford Shaw, Paul Cressey, Ed Sutherland, and Blumer's own studies of the movies which are very good but so often overlooked.

While I'm on a roll Steve, I need to mention something else. I made a little note to talk about Blumer's notion of "joint activity." That's so important in this regard as well. All of the things that people do as individuals, that are meaningful in any way are only meaningful because they are connected with the group, with group life. Blumer is adamant about that! He most definitely is not a psychological reductionist.

The study of human behaviour, for Blumer, cannot possibly be understood apart from people's participation in the group. So it's not people as separate individuals with attitudes and dispositions who act in this or that way. It's people with minds that are generated from their association with others and who then mindfully do things as participants in the world of the other. This is where Blumer is going with his concept of intimate familiarity. We need to see exactly how people fit their activities together with others in both temporally situated terms and in sequentially informed terms.

So, it's intimate familiarity with people as participants in human group life -- and to achieve that, we need to participate in that life-world with them. We need to become one with them in that sense. You can't do that with a questionnaire or with some kind of experiment. As a social scientist, you need to talk to people, spend time with them, see how they do things, see how they make sense of things on an ongoing basis. It's that sustained interpersonal contact and openness, whereby experientially you become one with them, at least as much as you can. That's the idea, to strive for that.

Steve: I wanted to ask how, or in what way, does this emphasis on intimate familiarity fit with Blumer's generic processes or what you call generic social processes?

Bob: I'm glad you asked that, Steve. That's another part of Herbert Blumer's emphasis on intimate familiarity. It's not just collecting all this information on activity as instances but it is to use these instances as comparison points, to subject these to

sustained comparative analysis, looking for similarities and differences, so that we might derive some process-oriented concepts that capture the nature of human group life.

Blumer stresses the point that we need concepts if we are to have anything approximating a social science. Still, it is not just concepts per se but concepts that attend to what people actually do and how they go about doing these activities. For Blumer, as well, this will be an ongoing process as we reformulate more preliminary notions or sensitizing concepts and reassess their viability relative to other instances of ethnographic research and strive to reformulate these in more knowing and precise terms. It's theory built up from examinations of the instances but theory that is to be continually reassessed and refined relative to other instances of ethnographic inquiry.

Steve: I think that covers several aspects of Krzysztof's questions, but how does Herbert Blumer's emphasis get played out on a contemporary basis?

Bob: Unfortunately, not very well. While some people really do share Blumer's concerns, most ethnographers haven't even thought in these terms. A lot of that is what you might call "rip and run" or self-serving, expressive ethnography. It's not conceptually informed. It's not very thorough. It's not attentive to the ways that people actually do things. It's inattentive to the ethnographic literature. We have materials going back to the 1920s in the Chicago tradition. It's an incredible set of resources, there is so much there that can be used as comparison points in developing subsequent analyses. With the literature, if you don't know what has been done, what kinds of comparisons can you possibly develop? Also, if you don't know how to do comparative analysis, and that isn't taught much in the social sciences, you wouldn't be able to make much use of this material. So a lot of contemporary qualitative research is trendy, moralistic, shallow.

And the postmodernist, neo-Marxist, expressive, poetical emphases that some have promoted over the past twenty or so years, like Norman Denzin, Laurel Richardson, Andy Fontana, and their associates, have only added to the messy quality of this literature. It's affected the overall quality of what we have termed symbolic interactionism as well, because of the linkages these people have drawn to this tradition.

Steve: Can you elaborate on that a bit more? What about qualitative research more generally?

Bob: These people can do whatever they wish, of course, and if they want to pursue Marxist agendas of sorts or engage in various modes of expressivity, that's their prerogative. However, my objection is that they not call it symbolic interaction because the postmodernist, neo-Marxist, and poetical-expressive emphases badly misrepresents the scholarly tradition associated with George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer and Chicago-style ethnography.

But it's not just the people I've referenced. A lot of so called qualitative research or ethnographic inquiry is pretty dismal. This is because many of these people have pursued a more moralist, expressive, sometimes self-aggrandizing version of ethnographic inquiry. It's quick, it's easy, it's entertaining. The standards are minimal. A lot of people like that. It's very self-serving.

And it's not just in sociology but also in anthropology and other variants of the social sciences. It's not that these people are not bright or incapable in general

terms. And they can get all excited about whatever they like, but in my view it will contribute very little to future scholarship. It'll go down in history as our version of the dark ages. So, lots of huffing and puffing, lots of moralism, expressivity, egoism and emotionality, but not much of an enduring quality. And it's harder for younger people to sort these things out. Because so much of that is what they are getting exposed to. That is what they're being taught. It's often presented as exciting, hot, and the wave of the future. However, if we are going to give something worthwhile to subsequent generations, we need to strive for the sort of quality that Blumer is stressing with his emphasis on intimate familiarity.

Analytic Induction and Grounded Theory

Steve: Krzysztof also asked about Florian Znaniecki. He noted that Znaniecki wrote a book on analytic induction. Are you familiar with this text? How does it differ from Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory? Another question one might ask is how far back does this emphasis on analytic induction go? Earlier you said that it goes back to Aristotle.

Bob: I have to admit that I don't know enough about Florian Znaniecki to comment on his work. I've long suspected that Znaniecki is more pivotal to social theory than is W. I. Thomas, for instance, but I do not know Znaniecki's works well at all. I'm going to check up on him because I've been learning more about the ways that pragmatist scholarship has been engaged in Europe over the intervening centuries from the Greeks onward, including two seemingly unlikely sources -- Wilhelm Wundt and Emile Durkheim, who in their later works much more closely approximate central features of American pragmatism. Florian Znaniecki may provide us with some other links with the pragmatist tradition.

Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, I really like that book. It is a somewhat broader frame of reference, but it's generally very consistent with Blumer's emphasis on intimate familiarity and generic processes. Of course, Glaser and Strauss build on analytic induction or attempts to derive basic features of things from examinations of the particulars but they also offer a more explicit sociological emphasis than does Plato or Aristotle for instance... Dialectic analysis, which we associate with Plato, is based on the methodology of knowing things through sustained comparison of similarities and differences. The Greeks appear to have practiced this long before Plato wrote but he is the best-known dialectician.

Steve: So what is the connection between Plato and Aristotle and analytic induction?

Bob: Aristotle was Plato's student. Clearly, he learned much from Plato. However, Aristotle insists on the examination of particular instances as a means of generating inferences and concepts rather than the sorts of hypotheticals that Plato uses in his comparisons. As well, Aristotle much more consistently focuses on the humanly known and enacted world than does Plato, than do the speakers in Plato's texts. Plato never speaks for himself in his texts. But with his speakers, he tends to shift between the ideal, divinely known world and the sensate, humanly known world. So sometimes Plato appears to be a theologian and an idealist, sometimes a structuralist. But he also emerges as a relativist and a pragmatist in his texts. Sometimes he talks as if all knowing were divinely enabled or that is the ultimate reality but at other times he talks as if reality is more entirely a human construction

and religion is just part of that. I think that's why the philosophers like Plato so much. They can debate endlessly about his texts.

Aristotle is best known for syllogistic or deductive logic but he insists on the primacy of inductive reasoning and instruction for knowing. So while people require sensations for knowing, they learn to think inductively or how to make comparisons and draw inferences from others. For Aristotle, comparative analysis and memory presupposes language and associated instruction. If someone is interested in Aristotle's considerations of inductive analysis and learning, an excellent source is Sister Mary Michael Spangler's *Aristotle on Teaching*. Unfortunately, the philosophers concentrate mostly on Aristotle's syllogistic or deductive logic. That was a big part of the reason that John Dewey is so critical of formal logic. It's just so limited. It's inattentive to the ways that people reason things out in practice, how they come to know the world they engage in on a day to day basis.

So Glaser and Strauss are not the first to employ comparative analysis in the study of human group life. Still, they more pointedly maintained a sociological standpoint. Interestingly, Glaser and Strauss don't talk very directly about the formulation of generic social processes. Not like some of the interactionists have done. Glaser and Strauss stop short of that. Now in his own work, Anselm Strauss does more of that, he is more attentive to generic processes. So I would say that the focus on GSPs is a natural extension of the emphasis that they take in promoting grounded theory. The purpose really is to generate concepts and for Strauss, especially, it would be generic social processes of a Blumerian sort. You'll see that in his 1993 text, *Continual Permutations of Action*.

Toward a Public Sociology

Steve: Some people have suggested that a problem facing sociology is that we've become fragmented. We have so many different theoretical viewpoints and methodologies that the discipline has become too fragmented. They argue that if we don't watch ourselves we're going to become so fragmented that nobody's going to take us seriously.

Bob: There are a lot of variations of sociology and I would certainly not want to defend many of them because I don't think they have much viability with regards to a more sustained study of the human condition. I think that if we don't maintain a pluralist kind of emphasis concerned with developing "the sociology of any group or anybody" that we will lose some of whatever advantage we might have had as a discipline.

It is fragmented and a lot of times people become very concerned about promoting a viewpoint, but they don't stop to present the premises with which they're working. I think it's very important to define the basic premises or assumptions with which you're working so that people can make decisions at the foundational level about whether they agree or disagree with whatever you're saying.

Likewise I think it extremely important to define your terms of reference so that people you're trying to communicate with will have a sense of what you're talking about. Again, the postmodernists have essentially refused to define their terms of reference. To my mind that's not very good scholarship. Those are some of the problems. If you're taking partisan viewpoints, that also detracts from the viability of sociology as an approach to the study of the human condition.

Steve: It doesn't really seem to me that we're going to become more centralized in terms of an approach to studying social behaviour. Some people have made the alternate argument that fragmentation is good and is actually what fosters a viable sociology because it encourages different viewpoints so that we don't become stuck in our thinking about the way in which people do things.

Bob: There are those that would say let a thousand flowers bloom. I'd say let's be mindful of which flowers are blooming and which do not make contributions to the garden or the produce that we're trying to create in our garden. I do not take the viewpoint that all approaches are equally viable or valuable. I think, again, people need to try to – at least for the discipline it's important – define their terms of reference. Without that, people, from my viewpoint, are not engaging in very good scholarship.

Steve: It's obvious that, in terms of a direction for sociology, you would encourage our discipline to move towards the interpretivist, pragmatist, interactionist, and ethnographic approach to studying human group life. What are some of the ways in which you think we can encourage this more within our discipline? Is there a strategy?

Bob: No, I don't have an overarching strategy. I will write a paper called, "The Intellectual Canons of Public Sociology." Do you like that? I was thinking about that, working on that a little today.

Steve: Sort of like where public sociology stands and how it has developed?

Bob: I think we need to establish some scholarly criteria for public sociology. I'm reluctant to get into this because it's another project. I'm sort of like the little Dutch boy trying to plug all the holes in the dike. I only have so many fingers. But that had crossed my mind, Steve. We could argue that public sociology, which of course all sociology is presumably public, should be concerned with being pluralist, impersonal, and non-partisan. Also, defining our terms of reference and premises. And developing things that aren't just for this or that substantive sector of the community, but really are for the public as a unity. And emphasizing the authenticity of the things we generate, to be consistent with the things that real living, breathing, thinking, acting people do. Our studies should have some enduring quality. We should be able to connect the past and present. We should be developing concepts that are not just for today, because there's always tomorrow and today will soon be tomorrow. We need something that's enduring. It also has to be something that has sincerity, not something that we develop to be trendy, to have appeal, to get funding, or to entertain or even to please the public. It needs to be something that, over the long term, people tend to refer to. These are some of the kinds of ideas that I have. But that's for another day...

Concluding the Interview

Steve: Well, Bob, we've dealt with quite a range of issues, taking us all the way from your very early education, through to your introduction to interactionism and ethnography, and to your feelings about the discipline more generally. I've really appreciated you taking the time to meet with me over the course of the three

interview sessions. It really takes me back to my days at Waterloo. Of course, we could go on, but I think we've got a lot material here.

Bob: I agree. For my part Steve, I've very much enjoyed talking with you about these matters and am very grateful to you for the interest you've taken in my work as well as your more enduring interest in interactionist scholarship. Thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview with me. You introduced a number of very important matters and I hope the readers will find our commentary stimulating...

Still, having said that, Steve, maybe I can end on a different note... your dissertation, on the Old Order Mennonites. I'm very interested to see what you learn from that study. I don't have any particular intrigues with the Mennonites as such, but the things you are investigating, especially the matters of change and continuity and education, these are important things! Not just for the Mennonites but for groups more generally. All the more established religious communities will experience similar things and also those in the newer, trendier spiritualist stuff, too -- which actually isn't that new for the most part because it also builds on old concepts and practices, like reincarnation and souls and astrology and things like that. And these things are important, not just for religious groups but for subcultures of all sorts. That to me is the intellectual payoff, what we can do with ethnographies like yours when we locate the basic processes, these recurrent themes, in comparative, broader conceptual terms. That's what we need Steve, and I'm really glad that you are part of that process.

Major publications

- 2007 "Human Memory, Social Process, and the Pragmatist Metamorphosis: Ethnological Foundations, Ethnographic Contributions, and Conceptual Challenges." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* (in press).
- 2007 "The Intellectual Canons of a Public Sociology: Pragmatist Foundations, Historical Extensions, and Humanly Engaged Realities." In Lawrence Nichols (ed.) *Public Sociology*. Transaction Press. (in press).
- 2007 "On Studying Ethnologists (Not just People, *Societies in Miniature*): The Necessities of Ethnography, History, and Comparative Analysis." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* (in press).
- 2005 "Terrorism, Tyranny, and Religious Extremism as Collective Activity: Beyond the Deviant, Psychological, and Power Mystiques." *The American Sociologist* Volume 36 (1): 47-74.
- 2004 "Symbolic Interaction and Classical Greek Scholarship: Conceptual Foundations, Historical Continuities, and Transcontextual Relevancies." *The American Sociologist* 35 (1): 5-33.
- 2003 *The Deviant Mystique: Involvements, Realities, and Regulation* (Robert Prus and Scott Grills). Westport, CT: Praeger [Greenwood] Press.
- 2003 "Policy as a Collective Venture: A Symbolic Interactionist Approach to the Study of Organizational Directives." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 23 (6): 13-60.

- 1999 *Beyond the Power Mystique: Power as Intersubjective Accomplishment*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- 1997 *Subcultural Mosaics and Intersubjective Realities: An Ethnographic Research Agenda for Pragmatizing the Social Sciences*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- 1996 *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press
- 1994 *Doing Everyday Life: Ethnography as Human Lived Experience* (Co-edited collection, with Mary Lorenz Dietz and William Shaffir). Toronto, Ontario: Copp Clark Longman.
- 1991 *Road Hustler: Grifters, Magic, and the Thief Subculture* (Robert Prus and C.R.D. Sharper). New York: Kaufman and Greenberg. Reprint of the 1977 edition of *Road Hustler* [178 pages], with an extended epilogue [325 total pages]
- 1989 *Pursuing Customers: An Ethnography of Marketing Activities*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.
- 1989 *Making Sales: Influence as Interpersonal Accomplishment*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.
- 1980 *Hookers, Rounders, and Desk Clerks: The Social Organization of the Hotel Community* (Robert Prus and Stylianoss Irini). Toronto, Ontario: Gage.
- 1977 *Road Hustler: The Career Contingencies of Professional Card and Dice Hustlers* (Robert Prus and C.R.D. Sharper) Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books (D.C. Heath).

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Harri Sarpavaara (PhD) is a postdoctoral Researcher in the Department of Sociology and Social Psychology at the University of Tampere, Finland.

His PhD thesis looked at the representations of embodiment in television advertisements. He has published a number of articles concerning the representations of body and gender, stereotypes, and humor in e-mail jokes and advertising. Sarpavaara is currently investigating substance use and addictions in prison context.

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Steven Kleinknecht is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at McMaster University. His major research interests revolve around qualitative methods, subcultures, deviant behaviour, online interaction, and social problems. Examining people's everyday lived experiences using a symbolic interactionist approach, his dissertation is an ethnographic examination of social change and boundary maintenance among the Old Order Mennonites of southwestern Ontario. His other recent research includes the study of the hacker subculture, ex-politicians, and online qualitative methods. Steve also has worked as a research analyst at the Department of Justice Canada where he has written on issues pertaining to restorative justice, juvenile delinquency, and cybercrime.

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Author-Supplied Abstracts & Keywords

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Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: Laying the Foundations for a Pragmatist Consideration of Human Knowing and Acting

Whereas a great many academics have presumed to speak knowledgeably about Aristotle's work, comparatively few have actually studied his texts in sustained detail and very few scholars in the social sciences have examined Aristotle's work mindfully of its relevance for the study of human knowing and acting on a more contemporary or enduring plane. Further, although many people simply do not know Aristotle's works well, even those who are highly familiar with Aristotle's texts (including *Nicomachean Ethics*) generally have lacked conceptual frames for traversing the corridors of Western social thought in more sustained pragmatist terms. It is here, using symbolic interactionism (a sociological extension of pragmatist philosophy) as an enabling device for developing both transsituational and transhistorical comparisons, that it is possible to establish links of the more enduring and intellectually productive sort between the classical scholarship of the Greeks and the ever emergent contemporary scene.

Keywords:

Aristotle; Ethics; Activity; Knowing; Agency; Politics; Pragmatism; Character; Morality; Virtues; Happiness; Friendship; Symbolic interactionism

Tim Gawley

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Revisiting Trust in Symbolic Interaction: Presentations of Trust Development in University Administration

Trust development has been studied from many sociological perspectives. Despite its early ventures, a perspective that lags in its attendance to trust is symbolic interaction. Using data drawn from twenty four semi-structured interviews with Canadian university administrators (UAs), this paper revisits a Goffman-influenced conceptualization proposed by Henslin (1968) to frame the analysis of four trust development tactics: being visible, expressing sincerity and personalization, showing the face and establishing routine activity. Resistance encountered during trust development is also discussed. Findings are compared with previous studies of trust in professional, leadership and everyday life settings. The implications of this paper for future symbolic interactionist forays into the areas of trust and administration are also discussed.

Keywords:

Trust; Symbolic Interaction; Erving Goffman; Qualitative Methods; Educational Administration; Leadership

Frank Nutch

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On Cooling the Tourist Out. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Expectations

This article focuses on the social world of the commercial whale watch cruise. It draws on several years of participant observation research with marine field scientists, particularly field scientists who serve as naturalists on commercial whale watch cruises. Using Erving Goffman's work, the essay details how the naturalist's narration is an example of "cooling the mark out" that Goffman conceptually outlined and others have explored. In the social world of the commercial whale watch, the naturalist is the "operator and the tourist the mark". It is argued that the naturalist's narration is the principal means for cooling the tourists' out. This is done within a context of the operator anticipating a set of spoiled expectations the tourist is likely to experience. While this essay extends the work of Goffman and others who have explored different settings of the cooling out process, it substantially differs from them. Past studies have focused on the cooling out process primarily within a context of individual face-to-face interaction. This essay looks at the commercial whale watch as a social setting of cooling out the mark not on a face-to-face basis but as a process of a "group of individuals who are being "cooled". Most importantly, this is viewed as occurring not after they have been conned or duped but in anticipation of their likely experiencing a set of spoiled expectations.

Keywords:

Cooling out; Eco-tourism; Goffman; Science studies; Social construction of experience; Tour guides; Tourism; Narrative; Whale watching; Naturalists

Allison L. Hurst

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Telling Tales of Oppression and Dysfunction: Narratives of Class Identity Reformation

I compare experiences and class identity formation of working-class college students in college. I find that all working-class students experience college as culturally different from their home cultures and have different understandings and interpretations of this difference based on race, class, and gender positions. I find that students develop fundamentally different strategies for navigating these cultural differences based on the strength or weakness of their structural understandings of class and inequality in US society. Students with strong structural understandings develop Loyalist strategies by which they retain close ties to their home culture. Students with more individual understandings of poverty and inequality develop Renegade strategies by which they actively seek immersion in the middle-class culture of the college. These strategic orientations are logical responses to the classed nature of our educational system and have very significant implications for the value and experience of social mobility in an allegedly meritocratic society.

Keywords:

Working Class; Identity; Narrative; Social Mobility; Higher Education

Richard C. Mitchell

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Grounded Theory and Autopoietic Social Systems: Are They Methodologically Compatible?

The paper offers a secondary analysis from a grounded theory doctoral study that reconsiders its “grounded systemic design” (Mitchell 2005, 2007). While theorists across multiple disciplines fiercely debate the ontological implications of Niklas Luhmann’s autopoietic systems theory (Deflem 1998; Graber and Teubner 1998; King and Thornhill 2003; Mingers 2002; Neves 2001; O’Byrne 2003; Verschraegen 2002, for example), few investigators have yet to adopt his core constructs empirically (see Gregory, Gibson and Robinson 2005 for an exception). Glaser’s (1992, 2005) repeated concerns for grounded theorists to elucidate a “theoretical code” has provided an additional entry point into this project of integrating grounded theory with Luhmann’s abstract conceptual thinking about how global society operates. The author argues that this integration of methodology and systems thinking provides an evolution of grounded theory - rather than its ongoing “erosion” as Greckhamer and Koro-Ljungberg (2005) have feared - and a transportable set of methodological and analytical constructs is presented as a basis for further grounded study.

Keywords:

Autopoietic theory; Grounded systemic theory; Theoretical codes; Transdisciplinarity

Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen

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Creating the Client Who Can Create Himself and His Own Fate – the Tragedy of the Citizens’ Contract

This article is about the emergence of new forms of active citizenry, empowerment, and self-help that meet in the so-called citizens’ contract. Based on Danish social policy, the article shows how the articulation of the citizen as ‘fellow citizen’ has led to the current contractualization of the relationship between the administration and the individual citizen. Citizens’ contracts are employed not only to commit clients to a specific behavior, but first and foremost to commit them to a particular inner dialogue about obligation and freedom. Economic assistance becomes dependent on this dialogue and they thus become contracts both between the administration and the citizens and between the citizens and their own selves. The article moves beyond the Foucault-inspired categorization by identifying the tragic consequences of these self-contracts.

Keywords:

Active citizenship; Contractualism; Luhmann; Koselleck; Semantics; Governmentality

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Individual Planning or Adaptation: Personal Destinies of Non-Estonians in the Period of Socio-Economic Reforms of the 1990s in Estonia

The aim of this paper is to analyze the interrelationship between structural changes and personal destinies of non-Estonians. How do non-Estonians who have grown up in a socialist system and have finished their education in the late 1980s or early 1990s experience a societal transformation? Were structural and institutional changes brought about by a minimum of adaptations and fluctuations or by a maximum of turbulence and mobility? How successful were they in converting resources gained in the old system into other types of assets in post-socialist conditions? The paper is based on in-depth interviews conducted in 2003 and 2004 with non-Estonians graduating from secondary educational institutions in 1983 and belonging to the so-called "winners" cohort. One of the central results of the analysis is that non-Estonians' behaviour was not so much directed by purposeful biographical projects but rather it could be characterized as an adaptation to new circumstances. Opportunities proved to be less a matter of individual control and planning than of unfavourable structural conditions. Our analysis indicated the stability of relative rankings in social hierarchy despite the huge amount of job moves. It was evident that having only higher education did not guarantee non-Estonians a stable position in the labour market. Broad social network helped to realize this resource.

Keywords:

Personal destinies; Adaptation; Post-socialist structural changes; Social networks; Non-Estonians

Wendy Leo Moore

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Still Killing Mockingbirds: Narratives of Race and Innocence in Hollywood's Depiction of the White Messiah Lawyer

Through a narrative analysis of movies confronting issues of race and racism in the post-civil rights era, we suggest that the movie *To Kill a Mockingbird* ushered in a new genre for movies about race which presented an image of a white male hero, or perhaps savior, for the black community. We suggest that this genre outlasted the era of the Civil Rights Movement and continues to impact popular cultural discourses about race in post-civil rights America. Post-civil rights films share the central elements of the anti-racist white male hero genre, but they also provide a plot twist that simultaneously highlights the racial innocence of the central characters and reinforces the ideology of liberal individualism. Reading these films within their broader historical context, we show how the innocence of these characters reflects not only the recent neo-conservative emphasis on "color blindness," but presents a cinematic analogue to the anti-affirmative action narrative of the innocent white victim.

Keywords:

Race; Racism; Film; Popular culture; Whiteness

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Backpackers as a Community of Strangers: The Interaction Order of an Online Backpacker Notice Board

While commercial images of “backpacking” emphasise adventure, youth and sightseeing, recent ethnographies of backpackers identify other motivations and rationales that accentuate travel experiences as formative of the self and identity. This raises the question of the basis of this apparently common orientation. This paper investigates, through analysis of postings on an electronic backpacker notice board, “backpacker” as a collaboratively constructed category. We propose that the shared understandings of “backpacker” enabled by these notice boards are consistent with cultural orientations captured in notions of cosmopolitanism (Beck 2000) involving a shift to new forms of sociality across borders: a solidarity with strangers.

Keywords:

Backpackers; Interaction Order; Cosmopolitanism; Information and Communication; Technology

Harri Sarpavaara

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Dionysian and Apollonian in Advertising. The Representations of Pleasure and Discipline in Finnish Television Advertisements

The recent accounts of our era usually argue that pleasure, sensuality, and sexuality play essential roles in media and consumer culture. Advertising especially is regarded as a place where rational argument is displaced by pleasure and sex. However, it is hard to find systematic empirical analysis to verify these claims. In this article, I examine the pervasiveness of the ideal of pleasure empirically in television advertising by analysing 167 Finnish advertisements. The findings suggest that the prevailing discourse about hedonistic culture and especially the hedonistic advertising culture captures something essential, but that this discourse does not tell the whole story because it does not notice the flipside, the ideal of the ascetically-oriented body that appears as frequently as the hedonistic ideal.

Keywords:

Apollonian; Dionysian; Embodiment; Gender; Representation; Television advertising; Semiotics; Content analysis

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