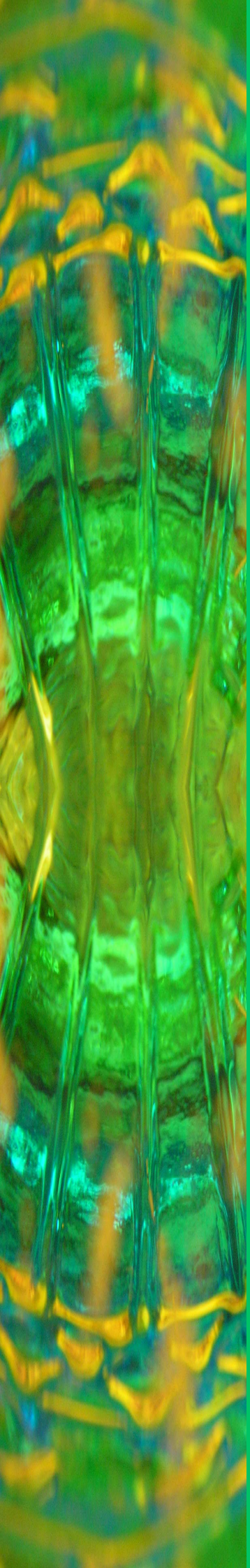


April 30, 2008

Qualitative Sociology Review

Volume IV
Issue 1

Available Online
www.qualitativesociologyreview.org

Editorial Board

Editorial Staff

Krzysztof T. Konecki
Editor-in-chief

Anna Kacperczyk
Slawomir Magala
Associate Editors

Lukas T. Marciniak
Executive Editor

Steven Kleinknecht
Antony Puddephatt
Approving Editors

Anna Kubczak
Editorial Assistant

Dominika Byczkowska
Book Reviews Editor

Yana Kunichoff
Marek Skomorowski
Newsletter Editors

Web Technology Developer

Maciej Gawin

Cover Designer

Anna Kacperczyk

Note:
The journal and all published articles are a contribution to the contemporary social sciences. They are available without special permission to everyone who would like to use them for noncommercial, scientific, educational or other cognitive purposes. Making use of resources included in this journal for commercial or marketing aims requires a special permission from publisher. Possible commercial use of any published article will be consulted with the author beforehand.
It is forbidden to charge for access to this journal or to put any limitations on the accessibility of published papers.
The authors are responsible for obtaining the necessary permissions for publication of materials, which are protected by a copyrights owned by other persons.

©2005-2008 Qualitative Sociology Review

ISSN 1733-8077

Consulting Editors

Patricia A. Adler
Peter Adler
Mahbub Ahmed
Michael Atkinson
Howard S. Becker
Nicolette Bramley
Marie Buscatto
Kathy Charmaz
Catherine A.. Chesla
Cesar A. Cisneros
Adele E. Clarke
Jan K. Coetzee
Juliet Corbin
Norman K. Denzin
Robert Dingwall
Rosalind Edwards
Peter Eglin
Gary Alan Fine
Silvia Gherardi
Barney Glaser
Giampietro Gobo
Jaber F. Gubrium
Tony Hak
Paul ten Have
Stephen Hester
Judith Holton
Domenico Jervolino
Robert A. Kenedy
Hubert Knoblauch
Joseph Kotarba
Ireneusz Krzeminski
Margarethe Kusenbach
Riitta Kyllonen
Staffan Larsson
Lyn H. Lofland
Jordi Lopez
Michael Lynch
Christoph Maeder
Barbara Misztal
Setsuo Mizuno
Lorenza Mondada
Janusz Mucha
Sandi Michele de Oliveira
Slawomir Partycki
Dorothy Pawluch
Eleni Petraki
Constantinos N Phellas
Andrea Press
Robert Prus
George Psathas
Anne Warfield Rawls
Johanna Rendle-Short
Brian Roberts
Roberto Rodríguez
Masamichi Sasaki
William Shaffir
Phyllis N. Stern
Antonio Strati
Joerg Struebing
Andrzej Szklarski
Roland Terborg
Victor Thiessen
Jan Trost
Jonathan H. Turner
Dennis D. Waskul
Shalva Weil
Fred Wester
Ingrid Westlund
Ruth Wodak
Kiyomitsu Yui

Contents

Thematic Articles:

On the Pragmatics and Problematics of Defining Beauty and Character: The Greek Poet Lucian (120-200) Engages Exacting Portraitures and Difficult Subjects
by Robert Prus 3

Born to Write: Discovery and Construction of Self in the Identity Stories of Poets and Writers
by Deborah Ben-Shir 21

"We can't just do it any which way" – Objectivity Work among Swedish Prosecutors
by Katarina Jacobsson 46

American Social "Reminders" of Citizenship after September 11, 2001: Nativisms and the Retractability of American Identity
by Jack Fong 69

Crafting Blindness: Its Organizational Construction in a First Grade School
by Giampietro Gobo 92

Applying Institutional Ethnography to Childcare
by Lori L. McNeil 109

World Interrupted: An Autoethnographic Exploration into the Rupture of Self and Family Narratives Following the Onset of Chronic Illness and the Death of a Mother
by Caroline Pearce 131

The Construction of Self-Identity in the Chronically Mentally Ill:
A Focus on Autobiographic Narratives of Mentally Ill Patients in South Korea
by Sang-hui Nam 150

Grounded Theory and Serendipity. Natural history of a Research
by Krzysztof T. Konecki 171

The Interactionist Self and Grounded Research: Reflexivity in a Study of Emergency Department Clinicians
by Peter Nugus 189

Construction of Scientific Facts – Why is Relativism Essential in Bypassing Incommensurable Gaps in Humanities. Case of Personal Involvement – Biased Scientific Facts
by Lucija Mulej 205

Book Reviews:

Book review: *The Scientific Reproduction of Gender Inequality. A Discourse Analysis of Research Texts on Women's Entrepreneurship*
Iza Desperak 220

Book review: *Dirty Work. The Social Construction of Taint*
Izabela Slezak and Jakub Niedbalski 223

Book review: *Maids to Order in Hong Kong. Stories of Migrant Workers*
Waldemar Dymarczyk 229

Book review: *Multiple Case Narrative*
Lukas Marciniak 231

Contributors 232

Author-Supplied Abstracts and Keywords 235

Qualitative Sociology Review
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Robert Prus
University of Waterloo, Canada

On the Pragmatics and Problematics of Defining Beauty and Character: The Greek Poet Lucian (120-200) Engages Exacting Portraitures and Difficult Subjects

Abstract

Although best known as a satirist of the classical Roman era, Lucian's (c120-200CE) Essays in *Portraiture* and *Essays in Portraiture Defended* provide considerable insight into the problematics of people knowing and defining objects (along with the consequential and related matter of people sharing their definitions of reality with others).

Engaging notions of admiration, beauty, and character in these two statements, Lucian not only faces the task of establishing viable frames of reference for linguistically defining the essence of a woman deemed to be particularly beautiful and gracious but also assumes the challenge of defending one's preferred definitions of particular subject matters from others who do not share these views.

Whereas Lucian uses the works of prominent sculptors, painters, poets, and philosophers as reference points in articulating beauty and grace, this paper also acknowledges the perils of people who sincerely express their viewpoints on others even when these descriptions of others are cast in clearly positive terms.

Lucian may be a lesser-known classical Greek (Syrian) author, but he is an astute observer of human endeavor. Lucian's work on portraiture also has a striking cross-cultural and transhistorical relevance for a more enduring pragmatist emphasis on human knowing and acting. Not only is Lucian (a) explicitly attentive to the necessity of people establishing frames of reference for describing objects to others in meaningful terms, but he also overtly recognizes (b) the multiple viewpoints that people may invoke with respect to describing particular objects, (c) the resistances that people may encounter from others, and (d) the importance of speakers articulating the foundations for their claims amidst contested notions of reality.

Approached from an interactionist perspective (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969; Strauss 1993; Prus 1996, 1997, 1999), wherein attention is given to the more general matters of people acquiring perspectives, defining objects, and sustaining particular notions of reality, this paper uses Lucian's materials on portraiture as a cross-cultural and transhistorical resource both for assessing (and qualifying) existing interactionist conceptualizations of human group life and for suggesting some more particular areas of inquiry to which contemporary scholars may attend.

Keywords

Lucian; Beauty; Character; Art; Reality; Definition; Language; Resistance; Symbolic interaction

> *[I]t is in virtue of qualities only that things are called similar or dissimilar; a thing is not similar to another in virtue of anything but that in virtue of which it is qualified.* (Aristotle *Categories* 8: 11a)

Whereas notions of beauty and character, along with people's conceptions of art and poetics, are often envisioned as aesthetic and/or subjectivist, if not more extensively elusive essences, people have continued to engage these as matters of some consequence over the span of recorded history. Although those in philosophy and literature have given considerable attention to the essences and problematic features of beauty, art, and poetics, at least since Plato (c420-348BCE) and Aristotle (c348-322BCE),[i] social scientists have given little attention to these essences and the comparative "tastes" they seem to imply.

Still, as Dewey (1934) so aptly argues, matters of beauty, character, art, poetics, and the like merit careful, scholarly attention as realms of human knowing and enterprise. Indeed, while we may not be able to know these matters in all respects, as students of the human condition we can examine the ways in which people make sense of, as well as invoke and sustain notions of these sorts within the context of community life.

Likewise, while there is no attempt to justify or defend the things that people develop or define in more expressive or aesthetic terms, it is instructive to examine as far as we can, the ways in which people make sense of, engage, and represent, as well as more explicitly attempt to communicate to others, all manner of things.

Relatedly, rather than presume that social scientists require one theory for dealing with items that have material substance and another theory for matters deemed to be immaterial in essence, the objective in developing this statement is to contribute to a more general theory of human knowing and acting.

In what follows, I not only build on Chicago-style interactionism to arrive at a fuller understanding of the poetic venture,[ii] but also seek to explore, assess, and possibly extend interactionist notions pertaining to "the definition of the situation" by examining a fictionalized account of the definitional process in some detail.

Thus, in contrast to more contemporary, ethnographic depictions of people's definitions of situations (e.g., Cressey 1932; Lofland 1966; Prus and Sharper 1977; Prus and Irini 1980; Prus 1989a,b; Charmaz 1991; Karp 1996; Fine 1996, 2001), wherein the emphasis is on the analysis of actual cases, the present statement is developed around two separate but interrelated statements that were developed nearly two millennia ago by a Greek philosopher-poet.

The author, Lucian of Samosata (c120-180) would have been in no position to anticipate developments in the (contemporary) social sciences. However, Lucian was part of the broader, second (Greek) sophistic movement (c60-230CE),[iii] wherein a pronounced emphasis was placed on the questioning of conventional wisdoms and practices. Consequently, whereas Lucian writes as a satirist (and poet), much of his work has a notable philosophic and (as with the two articles examined here) a sometimes more distinctively "constructionist" or "interactionist" quality. Thus, although Lucian is a lesser known Greek author writing in the Roman era, his statements on portraiture provide a remarkably insightful and valuable cross-cultural and transhistorical portrayal of the definitional process.[iv]

Lucian's work would have been even more compelling had he engaged in more extended ethnographic inquiry, but Lucian still very much speaks for "the generalized other" (Mead 1934) in developing his materials on beauty and character.

Following a brief overview of interactionist notions of beauty, character, and reality, central attention is given to Lucian's considerations of the ways in which beauty and character may be defined, communicated, contested, and defended.

On Defining Beauty, Character, and Reality: An Interactionist Perspective

Although the interactionists have given little direct attention to the matters of defining beauty or character, they have given some consideration to the somewhat related matters of (a) defining and assessing artwork (Becker 1982; Sanders 1989; Vail 1999a, b) and artistic performances (Becker 1963; Faulkner 1971; Prus and Irini 1980; Stebbins 1990; MacLeod 1993; Dietz 1994; Fine 1996; Bruder and Ucok 2000) and (b) identity work (Goffman 1959; Klapp 1964).[v]

As well, because they work within a broader pragmatist tradition, the interactionists (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969; Strauss 1993; Prus 1996, 1997, 1999), like Dewey (1934) would not only envision notions of beauty and character as "something in the making" but also approach these notions as aspects of the much broader matter of making sense of, or giving meanings to, the entire realm of humanly known reality.

Thus, in contrast to Plato's (*Phaedo*) Socrates and others who may be inclined to argue for absolute notions of beauty, truth, virtue, and the like,[vi] the interactionists attend to the relativist features of human notions of the world. Still, in contrast to those who may be inclined to reduce human reality to totalizing relativism or arbitrary text (discourse or speech), the interactionists attend to the matters of people doing things (activities) and engaging objects in intersubjectively meaningful, intentioned, and adjustive terms.

Similarly, while acknowledging that people may assign all manners of qualities to the objects of their awareness, the interactionists also recognize that the particular meanings that people assign to specific objects of reference have implications for the ways in which those people may think about and act toward these objects. As well, the interactionists recognize that the meanings that people attribute to objects may be subject to resistance and reconfiguration as people both engage specific objects and attend to other people with respect to those objects.

Thus, whereas people's notions of reality are problematic with respect to the meanings that people assign to particular items, people's definitions of situations also are to be viewed in process terms; as something in the making; as subject to instances of testing, resistance, negotiation and reconfiguration.

Still, something more is involved. It is essential to recognize that things have meaning to people only within the context of other things and particular objects achieve meaning only by reference to the things with which they are compared. Indeed, without contexts and comparison points, it is impossible to establish "what something is" or "is not" and, relatedly, to convey to meanings of that "something" to others.[vii]

In other words, it is only by invoking contexts and reference points that things become "meaningful," "objectified," and the like. Because language is built around notions of context and reference points, this fundamental aspect of "knowing" is often taken for granted. All symbols, thus, are not simply representations of things; all symbols *presuppose* reference points.

Some may be inclined to dismiss people's notions of "art," "beauty," "character," and the like as things that are somewhat peripheral in the greater scheme of human affairs, but it should be appreciated that these matters need not be envisioned as trivial to the human actors defining particular situations in these terms.

From an interactionist perspective, as well, each instance in which people engage objects provides another occasion in which to develop a more viable understanding of the processes by which all manners of human reality (knowing and acting) may be achieved — as in tested, articulated, maintained, resisted, defended, compromised, and so forth.[viii]

Encountering Lucian

To many readers, it may seem odd that a 21st century social scientist would reference a Greek poet from the classical Roman era in considering the ways in which people define reality. However, Lucian provides some highly instructive material on the nature of human knowing and acting. The two selections from Lucian considered here may be seen as instances of fictionalized satire. They also lack the more sustained empirical base that one associates with conventionalist or Chicago-style ethnographic research.

Nevertheless, in developing his *Essays in Portraiture* Lucian provides an extended consideration of (a) *the ways in which people might develop more precise accounts of things that they wish to represent for others*, as well as (b) *the variable receptions people's representations of things may encounter from others* and (c) *the ways in which they may deal with the resistances they encounter from others*. The relevance of these matters to human group life may be appreciated when one realizes all of people's notions of "what is" and "what is not" not only are thoroughly rooted in the intersubjective, referential realities of the human community, but also connote a constructive process.

Lucian does not have access to some of the analytic concepts that contemporary social scientists (e.g., Mead 1934; Schutz 1962, 1964; Berger and Luckmann 1966; Blumer 1969) have developed in addressing "symbolic interaction" or accounting for "the social construction of reality." Nevertheless, Lucian generates a remarkably detailed account of the definitional process (and various contingencies within). He also provides another (cross-cultural, transhistorical) indication of the relevance of pragmatist notions of human knowing and acting across the centuries. Relatedly, rather than fault Lucian for not engaging the pragmatist venture in more distinctive interactionist or constructionist terms, contemporary scholars may derive inspiration for more focused ethnographic investigations of the definitional process by attending to Lucian's texts.

Lucian - On Portraitures

Although Lucian's *Essays in Portraiture* and *Essays in Portraiture Defended* are fictionalized accounts that are intended to be entertaining to readers,[ix] these essays are less pointedly satirical than many of Lucian's other works and are especially instructive for the attention Lucian gives to the matters of people developing, articulating, conveying, assessing, resisting, and defending notions of reality. Thus, whereas the focus of attention is a young woman whom the principal speaker Lycinus and Polystratus find highly captivating, similar processes may be invoked in describing and knowing any variety of other objects.

Essays in Portraiture (EP)[x]

> *Lycinus: Upon my word, Polystratus, those who saw the Gorgon must have been affected by it very much as I was recently when I saw a perfectly beautiful woman: I was struck stiff with amazement and came within an ace of being turned into stone*... (Lucian, *Essays in Portraiture*: 1)

In the dialogue that follows, two speakers Lycinus and Polystratus attempt to describe a beautiful woman. Although Lycinus knows the lady only through sight, it later becomes apparent that Polystratus also knows her through more extended association. After Lycinus attempts to describe the woman's outward appearance, Polystratus strives to depict the lady's character.

While Lycinus and Polystratus eventually decide to assemble their portrayal of Panthea into a text that all may enjoy, Lucian's *Essays in Portraiture* [*EP*] is instructive for conveying the problematics and processes by which people develop, describe, and share images of objects with others.

Since Lycinus and Polystratus are explicitly concerned about communicating their images of a particular object to others, social scientists may acknowledge the extended instances of reflectivity and role-taking (Mead, 1934) that Lucian's consideration of portraiture entails. No less, consequential, however, are the processes by which the speakers attempt to establish frames of reference for one another. Thus, readers may acknowledge the ways in which the speakers invoke the works of various sculptors, painters, poets, and philosophers in developing sharper, more comprehensive images of their focal object.

In developing this statement, I have followed the overall flow of Lucian's text so that readers might achieve a more sustained sense of the ways in which Lucian's speakers assumed their definitional tasks. Because Lucian seldom references the woman being described by name, I have maintained this (more generic) stance.

Essays in Portraiture [*EP*] opens with Lycinus (*EP*: 1) telling his friend Polystratus that he has just been awestruck at the sight of a beautiful woman. Noting that Lycinus is often affected that way by boys, Polystratus is most intrigued and encourages Lycinus to describe the creature that has had such petrifying effects on him. While insisting that this woman is truly exceptional, (*EP*: 2), Lycinus says that she is Ionian but otherwise he knows little of her background.

In the ensuing interchange, Polystratus (*EP*: 3) explicitly requests that Lycinus do his best to *describe this woman's appearance in words*. While noting that he will be unable to adequately portray her beauty, Lycinus proposes that he might make reference to the statues created by some famous sculptors to assist him in this task.

After asking Polystratus if he has seen certain statues of Aphrodites, Sonsandra, and Athena, Lycinus (*EP*: 4-5) says that by drawing on these works and selecting features from each, he may be able to arrive at an artistic composite that more aptly portrays the woman in question.

Utilizing this set of statutes as particular reference points, Lycinus subsequently details the woman's appearance including the shape of her head, hairstyle, forehead, brows, eyes, cheeks and smile.

While highly pleased with Lycinus' description to that point, Polystratus (*EP*: 7) informs Lycinus that he has neglected to provide any coloring to the woman he has represented. To accomplish this, Lycinus references certain painters and specific instances of their work. Selecting meticulously from these works of art, Lycinus not

only portrays the woman's hair coloring, flesh tones, cheek and lip colors but also conveys the textures and coloring of her apparel.

Then, drawing very precisely on certain descriptive expressions from the poet, Homer for further enhancement, Lycinus (*EP*: 8) proceeds to describe the woman's legs, eyes, arms and fingers. In addition, Lycinus (*EP*: 9) states, she has a heavenly gracefulness that none of the artisans could possibly duplicate.

Asked what this marvelous creature was doing at the time, Lycinus says that she was reading and conversing with her escorts. Then, continuing with his earlier task, Lycinus (*EP*: 9) uses the occasion to describe the lady's intriguing smile, alluring mouth, and beautiful teeth. Notably, while describing the symmetry and appearance of her teeth, Lycinus also provides contrasts with some generally less appealing teeth to indicate what her mouth did not look like.

At that point, Polystratus (*EP*: 10) realizes who the woman is and humorously chastises his friend for failing to recognize Panthea, the Emperor's mistress.

Continuing his commentary, Polystratus (*EP*: 11) acknowledges the accuracy of Lycinus' description. However, Polystratus explains, as a fellow Ionian, he has had many opportunities to converse with this woman. While stating that he places much greater value on gentleness, kindness, nobility of the mind, self control, and a cultured background than physical beauty, Polystratus describes perfect beauty as existing only when these valued qualities of the mind are combined with physical beauty. He indicates, subsequently, that many women may be beautiful on a physical level but lack the sort of character he has just described.

In order that his own admiration for this woman may be more adequate, Lycinus (*EP*: 12) asks Polystratus to provide him with a *verbal description of the woman's character*. As Polystratus formulates his response, he notes that he also will need to draw on the philosophers, painters, and sculptors in developing his portraiture.

Polystratus (*EP*: 13-14) first discusses the woman's speech, saying that it is clear, sweet, and soft, youthful and gentle to the ear; the sort of sound that lingers delightfully in one's memory. While defining the woman's speech by providing some contrasts with what it is not, Polystratus also tries to describe the beauty of her singing voice. This seems particularly difficult and, in the end, Polystratus says that her singing voice would be of that sort one would find harmonious with the images Lycinus has provided of the woman's beautiful mouth and teeth.

Relatedly, Polystratus (*EP*: 15) comments on the precision of the lady's speech, her quick mind, and her ample but subtle Attic (Athenian-style) wit. He also appreciates her enthusiasm for poetry. Then, observing that his efforts so far have been somewhat inadequate, Polystratus says he will attempt to discuss her other qualities in more singular terms as opposed to following Lycinus' practice of developing composite descriptions. [It is not apparent that Polystratus can sustain this emphasis.] Lycinus says that he looks forward to Polystratus' description.

Proceeding thusly, Polystratus (*EP*: 16) says that culture is the most desirable of all assets, particularly acknowledging the refinements acquired through study. Finding himself at a loss to produce an established model, Polystratus states that a woman of her distinction would not only be well versed in poetics, but also would have acquired considerable depth in history and philosophy.

Polystratus (*EP*: 17) next focuses attention on wisdom and understanding. Citing a Socratic dialogue written by Aeschines, Polystratus likens Panthea to the woman depicted therein. Thus, she is well versed in matters of state and has a quick, penetrating mind. Referencing yet other women from the past, Polystratus describes the lady as noble, having a pleasant life-style, and able to give valuable counsel.

Somewhat relatedly, Polystratus (*EP*: 19) then comments on the lady's gentle, gracious disposition. Here, Polystratus compares her to some earlier women considered well known for these qualities.

In a similar fashion, Polystratus (*EP*: 20) also attests to Panthea's modesty and her love for the Emperor. Continuing, Polystratus (*EP*: 21) stresses that despite her elevated status, she has maintained her graciousness. Not only has she avoided all aspects of vulgarity but she also treats all visitors as equals. Likewise, Polystratus observes, by exercising such moderation and modesty, the lady avoids the envy that is associated with the low-minded, pretentious, or arrogant styles frequently associated with others who enjoy good fortune. Instead, her mannerisms are so gracious that all of her acquaintances only pray for her continued good blessings.

As Polystratus concludes his portraiture of her character, Lycinus (*EP*: 22) applauds Polystratus' description, adding that it is most fitting that someone as good and gentle as the Emperor would find a woman so exceptional to love and love him. Indeed, Lycinus concludes, there is no mortal woman that can compare with her.

Recognizing that he and Lycinus are of one mind on this matter, Polystratus (*EP*: 23) proposes that they put their portraitures together into a book; a statement to be appreciated by all of mankind on an enduring basis. Polystratus also contends that a text of this sort would provide a more pleasing representation for the lady than anything that artists might create in statues, paintings, and the like. In addition to its authenticity, their statement would reveal both her physical beauty and the graciousness of her character.

***Essays in Portraiture Defended* (*EPD*)**[xi]

> *Polystratus: ... see how you can refurbish the book... To be sure, when I heard it first I did not see a single fault in what you had written, but now that she has pointed them out, I myself begin to think as she does about it*. (Lucian, *Essays in Portraiture Defended*: 12)

In opening this dialogue, Polystratus (*EPD*: 1-6) indicates that Panthea has read the composite portraiture that Lycinus and Polystratus have developed for her. Polystratus now delivers her response to Lycinus. [Readers may note that although the essay submitted to Panthea was developed by both authors and Polystratus acknowledges joint authorship at times, Lucian's text reads as if Lycinus is the only author at other points in the dialogue.]

While acknowledging the authors' very kind gesture in developing their statement as well as the high esteem in which they apparently hold her, the lady indicates that she cannot condone flattery. She further states that whatever exceeds the boundaries of authenticity constitutes flattery. She notes that many people like to be flattered and she provides some instances of women who have been receptive to such portrayals. She, however, wishes to have none of that.

Polystratus (*EPD*: 7) says that the lady commended the portraiture in many respects. Nevertheless, she considered it highly inappropriate to be compared to the great ladies of the past and especially objected to comparisons that the authors had drawn between goddesses such as Hera and Aphrodite and herself. Polystratus adds that the lady views herself as superstitious and is fearful in all matters involving the gods.

Further relaying her concerns, Polystratus (*EPD*: 8-11) says that Lycinus must rewrite all references of these sorts. While acknowledging the authors' talent, the

lady considers it sinful to allow herself to be likened unto the gods and simply cannot accept such references.

Then, speaking more directly on his own behalf, Polystratus (*EPD*: 12) reaffirms the validity of the lady's viewpoint. Polystratus says that he had earlier viewed Lycinus' statements as flawless, but now shares her assessments. Indeed, it is highly disrespectful to the gods to liken any human unto them. Continuing, Polystratus suggests that Lycinus might refer to mortal women in order to provide more acceptable comparisons. Then, noting that Lycinus seldom has been generous in his assessments of others, Polystratus encourages Lycinus to be more restrained in his compliments in this case. As well, Polystratus says, even the great sculptor Phidias [also Pheidias] extensively reworked a statue of Zeus after encountering critical commentaries when it had been publicly displayed. Polystratus encourages Lycinus to acknowledge the advantage of multiple viewpoints over the one.

Responding to the lady's message and Polystratus' commentary, Lycinus (*EPD*: 15) says that Polystratus not only has delivered a lengthy message, but also has condemned the book without providing an adequate opportunity for Lycinus to defend himself. Attending to his friend's viewpoint, Polystratus says that he is not only ready to listen to any defense Lycinus might offer but would prefer to align himself with Lycinus as a co-defendant.

Noting that he will not be able to address this lady directly, but will have to rely on Polystratus as a messenger, Lycinus (*EPD*: 16) says he will try to be succinct. Lycinus observes that he is quite apprehensive about the whole matter, but can see no way out. After reminding Lycinus of the lady's exceedingly gracious and congenial manner, Polystratus encourages Lycinus to venture forth. [In what follows, Lycinus develops a series of defenses for his definitions of Panthea. Each of these will be identified in turn.]

Lycinus (*EPD*: 17) begins by acknowledging the lady's concern about the gods. However, Lycinus does not defend what he said. Instead, Lycinus contends that the lady's response, which displays her great reverence for the gods, indicates that he has said less than he should have. If he were to correct the portraiture, to make it more accurate, Lycinus would have to comment on her exceedingly noble character as evidenced by her humility, respect, and devotion to the gods.

Second, while noting that he praised her character, Lycinus (*EPD*: 17) says that the lady has confirmed the validity of his claims about her humility by the particular things she censored in his text. Lycinus emphasizes that it is those who are least willing to be praised that most merit praise. Lycinus (*EPD*: 18) also notes that while poets and painters often know no boundaries in their enthusiasm for expressing and exciting admiration for their subjects, he will take no refuge in this latter viewpoint.

Still, Lycinus (*EPD*: 19) states, it is important to recognize the limitations with which authors work. Although it is necessary to develop comparisons and to use similes (or metaphors), it is essential that the comparisons are viable. When something is seen as exemplarily, Lycinus states, it is not enough to compare it with things that are generally equivalent or with things of notably lesser quality. Instead, one needs to compare exceptional objects with more worthy comparison points. Otherwise, Lycinus contends, the praise or admiration that one has for a particular object will appear mundane and pointless.

Lycinus (*EPD*: 20-22) next turns to the matter of flattery. While openly commending the lady's distaste for flattery, Lycinus stresses the difference between genuine admiration and the exaggeration of flatterers.[xii] Noting that flatterers have little regard for the truth, but instead readily misrepresent all manners of things for

personal gain, Lycinus says that admirers sincerely focus attention on the particular matters that they value. Relatedly, he states, it is inappropriate to distrust all who praise one in certain respects. Instead, it is important to distinguish and assess each speaker accordingly. Lycinus then proposes that the lady examine the claims he has made about her beauty and see if there is not substantial evidence for the likenesses he has identified.

Then, returning to the lady's objection to being compared to the goddesses, Lycinus (*EPD*: 23) notes that he did not actually compare her with the goddesses themselves but instead has likened her to the masterpieces of distinguished craftsmen. Arguing that it is not impious to compare humans with things generated by human artists, Lycinus also draws attention to the inabilities of humans, even with their very best efforts, to adequately represent the gods.

Developing yet another line of defense, Lycinus (*EPD*: 24-26) continues. He says that even if he had compared the lady directly to the goddesses referenced in his text, he would not have been the first to make comparisons of these sorts. Indeed, the poets, of whom Homer is most notable, have long done so. Lycinus then asks if Homer or his work is to be rejected on this basis.

Further, Lycinus (*EPD*: 27) adds, on another level, it is of comparatively little relevance if people are likened unto gods. Thus, Lycinus observes that many Greeks are named after particular gods and acknowledges that the Egyptians pursue this practice even more extensively than the Greeks.

Then, addressing Panthea's fears in more direct terms, Lycinus (*EPD*: 28) says that the lady has no reason to be apprehensive about the praise that has been directed toward her. Assuring her that she is not accountable for the deeds of others, Lycinus says that it is he, as the author, whom the gods would punish. Still, Lycinus emphasizes, Homer and the other poets would precede Lycinus in these matters, as presumably also would those philosophers who claim that people have been created in God's image.

The dialogue (*EPD*: 29) ends with Polystratus planning to deliver Lycinus' message promptly to the lady. Lycinus expects that his defense will encounter a favorable reception.

In Perspective

Although *Essays in Portraiture* and *Essays in Portraiture Defended* are fictionalized accounts set in another place and time, Lucian's considerations of the ways that people develop, share, resist, and reaffirm definitions of objects has a pronounced relevance to contemporary social scientists' interest in human knowing and acting.

Not only does Lucian provide us with material that has a valuable transcultural and transhistorical nature, but Lucian's attention to multiple viewpoints, comparison points, and linguistically-enabled intersubjectivity has an enduring relevance as also does his consideration of contested and defended viewpoints.

Expressed in other terms, Lucian's texts represent instructive depictions of people's definitions of reality, the problematics of effective communication (limitations of language, locating common reference points, achieving precision and adequacy in developing descriptions, and the use of composites, analogies and metaphors), and aspects of influence work (promoting definitions, encountering resistance, and defending positions).

That Lucian's texts revolve around beauty and character, focus on a particular young woman, or have an intendedly entertaining quality, should not detract present

day scholars from the more fundamental, generic, or enduring quest on the part of humans to know (as in identifying, comparing, describing, sharing, testing, assessing, contesting, readjusting, and defending) all objects of their awareness.

Relatedly, rather than envisioning Lucian's texts as antiquated, frozen in time, or poetically idiographic, we can situate Lucian's texts within the larger set of resources that address people's "definitions of the situation (or reality)." Building on the insights that Lucian provides, we might give more attention to the ways that people sharpen and retain their own images of things and how they share these notions with others in linguistic (and other) representations.

Thus, for instance, more focused consideration could be given to the reference points that people invoke in locating, describing, and giving meanings to things, the ways in which people invoke, reject, and resist comparisons (similarities and differences) in defining and conveying images of specific things, and people's use of analogies and (the typically more expressive) metaphors to draw attention to particular features of objects.

Of relevance as well, are people's abilities to resist, contest, and revise definitions that they deem inappropriate as well as people's tendencies to reaffirm those definitions that they consider more viable. While these notions have been particularly prominent in "labeling theory" and interactionist notions of deviance (see Lemert 1951, 1967; Garfinkel 1956; Becker 1963; Goffman 1959, 1963;[xiii] Prus and Gills 2003), it also might be observed that related matters of contested identities have been discussed at length by various Greek and Latin scholars (especially Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian) in their analysis of rhetoric (Prus in progress).[xiv]

As well, rather than dismiss art and people's aesthetic judgments as beyond the realms of knowledge and study (as suggested in notions of unrestrained spontaneity or unbridled emotional expressivity), Lucian engages matters of beauty and character as intersubjectively achieved essences. Thus, although there is no indication the Lucian is familiar with either Aristotle's *Poetics* or Horace's *On the Art of Poetry*, Lucian engages artistic definitions of the situation in ways that lend themselves to detailed investigations and scholarly analyses (also see Dewey 1934; Becker 1982).[xv]

In concluding this paper, one more caveat may be in order. This revolves around the distinction between social scientists benefiting from poetical endeavor as a scholarly resource versus social scientists becoming caught up in poetic intrigues and ventures as modes of scholarship, expression, entertainment, and morality.

As social scientists, we can be extremely grateful to Lucian and the other authors of the classical Greek and Latin eras for the incredible literary legacy they have bequeathed us. These materials have been foundational in forming and enabling our own intellectual developments across wide ranges of scholarly endeavor as well as constituting historical documents for comprehending particular eras of Western civilization.

Clearly, not all of the materials from the classical Greek and Latin eras are of equal value for the study of human lived experience. Indeed, only a small portion of the poetical or fictionalized literature contains material that addresses the human condition in more sustained, detailed, and explicit manners.[xvi] However, as suggested in this paper, these latter materials represent resources that social scientists may use in assessing and refining concepts of more generic (transsituational and transhistorical) sorts as well as sources of intellectual stimulation for subsequent research.

Still, it should be emphasized that the value of these materials to those in the social sciences does not derive from their intendedly playful or entertaining qualities or the artistic manners in which these materials have been developed.

Instead, given their interests in the study of human group life, the "beauty" and "character" of these works for social scientists comes from the more sustained attention that these particular authors have given to the study of knowing and acting.

We can appreciate the substantive portrayals of human group life as well as certain conceptual (philosophic) insights that Lucian and some other Greek and Latin poets introduce in their texts. Likewise, it should be acknowledged that we have no historical substitutes for most of the works that these authors have produced.

However, because of the mixed and virtually unlimited licenses that poets may assume with respect to their subject matters, experiences, sources, analysis, moralities, representations, and emotional expressions, it is much more difficult to assess the substantive value of materials that are framed in poetic terms.

Accordingly, contemporary social scientists would be ill-advised to imitate the poetic qualities of these endeavors in pursuing their research, analysis, and eventual representation of the human condition in their texts. Quite directly, while poetical works can be informative and suggestive in various ways, their fictionalized emphases are not to be envisioned as viable substitutes for more sustained ethnographic research.[xvii]

As social scientists, we may scrutinize (and value) poetic (fictionalized) endeavors for any insights they may offer about the human condition as well as for suggestions for more focused realms of inquiry. However, we also need to be attentive to the many questionable elements of these materials and engage the poetics literature with considerable skepticism.

In particular, it is important that social scientists be extremely cautious about invoking, using, or referencing emotionally evocative features of fictionalized (as in fantasized, dramatized, particularized, moralized, idealized, and linguistically amplified) materials in depicting aspects of human group life that they themselves have not investigated in highly sustained detail.[xviii]

Indeed, only by (a) attending more directly and conscientiously to one's assumptions about human knowing and acting and (b) approaching all texts in more discerning and precise conceptual and comparative terms, may we (c) benefit from the materials that those poets of the past (and present) who deal with human knowing and acting in more detailed and sustained terms and (d) develop projects and analyses that have greater clarity, depth, rigor, authenticity, and enduring relevance for the study of human group life.

Endnotes

i See Plato's *Republic*, *Laws*, *Ion*, and *Symposium* as well as Aristotle's *Poetics*.

ii Following Aristotle (*Poetics*) more generally, the term poetics is used to refer to deliberatively fictionalized linguistic materials intended to have an entertaining quality (regardless of whether these are developed in rhyme or prose, presented on their own or in conjunction with enactments, props, music and the like).As Aristotle also observes: unlike historians and others who more faithfully claim to represent particular instances of things, poets are not restricted to highly specific cases in developing their representations of things. Thus, although they need not be concerned with such matters, poets have the

opportunity to develop concepts, insights, and other depictions that have more (philosophic) universalistic or generic analytic qualities than do people developing materials as historians or others intent on portraying particular cases. Further, readers may appreciate that even when certain aspects of poets' texts are notably fictionalized, poets may still maintain considerable authenticity in representing other aspects of the phenomenon under consideration.

iii Others who may be included within the second sophist movement include Dio Chrysostom (c40-120CE), Plutarch (c46-125CE), and Sextus Empiricus (c200CE)

iv Contemporary scholars who lack direct familiarity with the texts written in the classical Greek and Latin eras are apt to be struck by the overall quality (conceptual fullness, depth, detail, clarity, and comprehensiveness) of these materials.

v Identity work, as in notions of self and others and deviance and respectability, represents a central analytic theme or generic social process in the interactionist literature. For overviews of the conceptual and ethnographic materials developed by those in the interactionist tradition, see Prus (1996, 1997, 1999) and Prus and Grills (2003).

vi Although Plato engages notions of absolute reference points and ideal forms in other of his dialogues, Plato does not sustain this viewpoint in his considerations of city states (e.g., *Republic*, *Laws*) or in his dialectic analysis of human knowing (*e.g., Phaedrus, Philebus*). Thus, while Plato (a) argues for a divinely-enabled pure realm of knowledge when adopting theological stances, Plato also asks (b) whether anything can be humanly known and, at other times still, (c) focuses on the pragmatist (knowing and enacted) features of human community life.

vii The pragmatist insight, that nothing has meaning unto itself, is not unique to the interactionist or American pragmatists, but is discussed in rather explicit terms by Aristotle (c384-322BCE) in *Categories*. For a fuller consideration of the Greek roots of contemporary pragmatist scholarship, see Prus (in press).

viii Although people may define "art" and "beauty" in many different ways, notions of beauty seem central to people's attentiveness to art (material as well as poetic) -- both as *producers* or makers of art and as *consumers* (observers, assessors, critics). Thus, whereas people may have very different, often highly contradictory notions of beauty, beauty is apt to be defined by people's definitions of what is good, desirable, intriguing, or pleasurable. Thus, what qualifies as "art" (versus banality, incongruity, incompetence, waste, ugliness, offensiveness) is contingent on people's senses of beauty in productive as well as consumptive modes of engaging particular subject matters more generally and the actual instances in which people attend to things. Relatedly, as Dewey (1934) emphasizes, the roles of the producer and the consumer are not as separate as they often are assumed. Thus, artists routinely also take on the role (i.e., assume the viewpoint) of consumers or audiences as artists develop (envision, engage, assess, and re-engage) particular instances of [artwork] and consumers also assume the role of artists whenever consumers attend to instances of [artwork] as something that would be envisioned and produced by minded, purposive agents. Likewise, it also should be noted that both producers

and consumers of particular objects may retain as well as reformulate their images and assessments of these items overtime. Thus, the same people may reaffirm earlier standpoints and interpretations as well as adopt very different notions of beauty and art as they engage and re-engage particular human productions. Notably, too, while consumers or audiences may be (a) seen as fickle, (b) presumed to operate with limited perspectives when defining beauty and art; and (c) accused of lacking the specific viewpoints or sensitivities that producers may have in generating the items under consideration, it also may be appreciated that artists (as producers) may be among their own most severe critics. Hence, producers not infrequently refer to objects (that they, themselves, formerly had envisioned as art or art in the making) as junk, trash, and the like, and may be adamant about destroying their own productions because they no longer represent instances of "art" from one or other perspectives that the producers have brought to bear on these instances. Whereas Dewey (1934) addresses both material (plastic) and poetic (linguistic) art, readers also may like to examine Rosenblatt's (1978) *The Reader, The Text, and The Poem.* Attending to reading as activity, Rosenblatt's statement builds centrally on Dewey's pragmatist analyses.

ix Because Lucian provides no explanation of the source of his portraitures, it is inappropriate to claim ethnographic integrity for these essays. Still, this does not preclude elements of authenticity in his essays, nor does this destroy the value of the more prototypic processes that Lucian addresses therein. Relatedly, although Lucian gives the woman in question a specific identity and speaks of her in the most laudatory of terms, he seldom uses her name in developing either essay on portraiture. Those who know Lucian's other texts (e.g., *On Sacrifices*, *On Funerals*, *Zeus Rants*, *Zeus Catechized, Philosophies for Sale*, *The Double Indictment*, *Slander*) may appreciate the notable relativist, multiplistic, and generic emphases that Lucian introduces into his work more generally. For an interactionist / constructionist consideration of some of Lucian's work on religion, see Prus (2003).

x I am indebted to A.M. Harmon's (1925) translation of *Essays in Portraiture* in *Lucian* (Vol. IV: 255-295). The numeral references to this statement (*EP*) are to the standardized notations accompanying the Greek text in the (Greek-English) Loeb edition. Although Harmon (*Lucian* IV: 255) uses the term portraiture to refer to the verbal descriptions that Lucian's speakers develop to represent the object under consideration, Harmon also indicates that there is no direct translation for the Greek term *eikon*. Since *eikon* refers to any portrayal or likeness, the representations implied within this term more generally would also encompass people's sketches, paintings, and sculptures.

xi I am indebted to A.M. Harmon's (1925) translation of *Essays in Portraiture Defended* in *Lucian* (Vol. IV: 297-335). The numeral references to this statement (*EPD*) are to the standardized notations accompanying the Greek text in the (Greek-English) Loeb edition.

xii It is not apparent that Lucian has read Plutarch's (c46-125) "How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend" (*Plutarch's Moralia*, Vol. I), but it seems more likely that Lucian would have had access to Plutarch's (Greek) texts than those of Latin authors such as Cicero and Ovid who have written on somewhat related topics.

xiii Because both authors so extensively focus on image work, Lucian statements on portraiture can be likened to Erving Goffman's (1959) *The Presentation Self in Everyday* Life and (1963) *Stigma* in a number of respects. Nevertheless, whereas Goffman concentrates on the ways in which (a) people manage the impressions that they give off to others and (b) those attending to these matters make inferences about these targets (based on these impressions and other information that the audiences may possess with respect to those targets), Lucian more directly addresses (c) the ways that people articulate and share images of specific targets with others, particularly in instances in which they endeavor to be precise and comprehensive in their depictions of those people.

xiv Whereas Lucian displays a noteworthy fluency with rhetoric in many of his texts (including the present material on portraitures), Lucian also engages rhetoricians somewhat more directly in satirical analysis (see Lucian's *The Double Indictment*).

xv Lest Lucian's analysis of the definitional process be seen as confined to notions of beauty, it might be noted that Lucian develops somewhat parallel constructionist considerations of human knowing and acting with respect to people's representation of divinity and their participation in religious life-worlds (Prus 2003). Also as noted in Lucian's *Philosophies for Sale*, *The Dead Come to Life*, and *Hermotimus*, Lucian is no less attentive to the problematics of defining the essence of philosophy (as in delineating, contrasting, and questioning the subject matters, practices, and roles of those who profess to be practitioners of philosophy).

xvi Although only some of their poetic materials have a more distinctive analytic (versus expressive, fantastic, moralist, religious, idealist, or entertainment) emphasis, readers also may include Ovid (43BCE-18CE), Dio Chrysostom (40-120CE), and Plutarch (46-125CE) among the classical philosopher poets or poetic philosophers. Ironically, while Plato (420-348BCE; *Republic*, *Laws*) generally is severely critical of poetic representations, Plato may be seen as the most poetic of the philosophers. Further, whereas the preserved texts of Aristotle are among the most scholarly instances of prose ever generated, Aristotle's *Poetics* is the single most astute and conceptually enabling analysis of poetics on record.

xvii If I seem to be laboring over this point, it is only because a number of people who profess to engage the study of the human condition as "social scientists" appear to have lost perspective on the distinctions between poetic endeavor and the methodological detachment and conceptual precision required of those embarking on a more responsible social science. Also see Schwalbe (1995).

xviii Since they have access to theory, methods, and a body of research materials that deal with human knowing and acting in highly situated terms, contemporary social scientists appear able to make more much viable contributions to the study of human knowing and acting by pursuing more conventional ethnographic research than by embarking on their own poetical ventures.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Matthew Burk, Lorraine Prus and Beert Verstraete for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

References

Aristotle [1984] *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

------. [1915/1946] *The Works of Aristotle*. Edited by W. D. Ross. 11 volumes. London: Oxford University Press

Becker, Howard S. (1982) *Art Worlds*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

------. (1963) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press

Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Doubleday-Anchor.

Blumer, Herbert (1971) "Social Problems as a Collective Behavior." *Social Problems* 1:298-306

------. (1969) *Symbolic Interaction*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Bruder, Kurt A. and Ozum Ucok (2000) “Interpretive Art Interpretation: How Viewers Make Sense of Paintings in Conversation.” *Symbolic Interaction* 23:337-358.

Charmaz, Kathy (1991) *Good Days Bad Days: The Self in Chronic Illness and Time*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Cicero [1962] *Orator*. Translated by H. M. Hubbell. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

------. [1962a] *Brutus*. Translated by G. L. Hendrickson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

------. [1949] *De Inventione*. Translated by H. M. Hubbell. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

------. [1942] *De Oratore*. Two Volumes. Translated by E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Cressey, Paul (1932) *The Taxi-Dance Hall*. University of Chicago Press.

Dewey, John (1934) *Art as Experience.* New York: Perigee (Penguin).

Dietz, Mary Lorenz (1994) “On Your Toes: Dancing Your Way into the Ballet World.” Pp. 66-84 in *Doing Everyday Life: Ethnography as Human Lived Experience*, edited by Mary Lorenz Dietz, Robert Prus and William Shaffir. Toronto, ON: Copp Clark Longman.

Dio Chrysostom [1913/1932] *Dio Chrysostom*. MA: Harvard University Press

Faulkner, Robert R. (1971) *Hollywood Studio Musicians: Their Work and Careers in the Recording Industry*. Chicago: Aldine-Atheron.

Fine, Gary Alan (2001) *Gifted Tongues: High School Debate and Adolescent Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

------. (1996) *Kitchens: The Culture of Restaurant Work*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Garfinkel, Harold (1956) "Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies." *American Journal of Sociology* 61: 420-424.

Goffman, Erving (1963) *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

------. (1959) *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor.

Homer [1991] *The Odyssey*. Translated by E. V. Rieu. New York: Penguin

------. [1990] *The Iliad*. Translated by Robert Eagles, with an Introduction by Bernard Knox. New York: Penguin

Karp, David A. (1996) *Speaking of Sadness: Depression, Disconnection and the Meanings of Illness*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lemert, Edwin (1967) *Human Deviance, Social Problems and Social Control*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall

------. (1951) *Social Pathology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lofland, John (1966) *The Doomsday Cult: A Study in Conversion, Proselytization and Maintenance of Faith*. New York: Irvington Publishers (1977).

Lucian [1913/1967] *Lucian.* Eight volumes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

MacLeod, Bruce A. (1993) *Club Date Musicians: Playing the New York Party Circuit*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Mead, George H. (1934) *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ovid [NO DATE] *The Loves, The Art of Beauty, The Remedies for Love, and The Art of Love.* Translated By Rolfe Humphries. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Plato [1997] *Plato: The Collected Works*. Edited by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett

------. [1961] *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

------. [1937]*The Dialogues of Plato*. Edited by Benjamin Jowett. New York: Random House1937.

Plutarch [1927/1936] *Plutarch's Moralia*. Sixteen volumes. Translated by multiple authors. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

------. [1914/1926] *Plutarch's Lives.* Eleven volumes. Translated by multiple authors. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Prus, Robert (2003) "Objectifying Religious Beliefs, Practices, and Representations: Dio Chrysostom (40-120), Lucian (120-180), and the Constructionist Motif." Paper presented at the Association for the Sociological Study of Religion meetings in Atlanta, GA, August 15-17.

------. (1999) *Beyond the Power Mystique: Power as Intersubjective Accomplishment*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

------. (1997) *Subcultural Mosaics and Intersubjective Realities: An Ethnographic Research Agenda for Pragmatizing the Social Sciences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

------. (1996) *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

------. (1989a) *Making Sales: Influence as Interpersonal Accomplishment*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

------. (1989b)*Pursuing Customers: An Ethnography of Marketing Activities*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

------. (in press) "Ancient Precursors to Symbolic Interaction: Pragmatist Dimensions of Early Greek Scholarship." in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*, edited by Larry Reynolds and Nancy Herman. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira.

------. (in progress) Classical Rhetoric, Contested Realities, and the Human Sciences: Pragmatist Motifs in Greek, Latin, and Contemporary Considerations of Influence Work (ms. in preparation)

Prus, Robert and Scott Grills (2003) *The Deviant Mystique: Involvements, Realities, and Regulation*. Westport, CN: Praeger.

Prus, Robert and Styllianoss Irini (1980) *Hookers, Rounders, and Desk Clerks: The Social Organization of the Hotel Community*. Salem, WI: Sheffield

Prus, Robert and C.R.D. Sharper (1991) *Road Hustler: Grifters, Magic, and the Thief Subculture*. New York: Kaufman and Greenberg.

------. (1977) *Road Hustler: The Career Contingencies of Professional Card and Dice Hustlers*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Quintilian [NO DATE] The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian (Four Volumes). Translated by H. E. Butler. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rosenblatt, Louise (1994) The Reader, The Text, and The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Sanders, Clinton (1989) *Customizing the Body: The Art and Culture of Tattooing*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Schutz, Alfred (1962) *Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

------. (1964) *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*. Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Schwalbe, Michael (1995) "The Responsibilities of Sociological Poets." *Qualitative Sociology* 18: 393-413.

Sextus Empiricus [1933] *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Four volumes. Translated by R. G. Bury. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Stebbins, Robert (1990) *The Laugh Makers: Stand-up Comedy as Art, Business, and Life-Style*. Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Strauss, Anselm (1993) *Continual Permutations of Action*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Vail, D. Angus (1999a) "The Outside of a Thigh is Half a Back: Negotiating the Canvas among Fine Art Tattoo Collectors." *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 28:261-276.

------. (1999b)"Tattoos are Like Potato Chips ... You Can't Have Just One: The Process of Becoming and Being a Collector." *Deviant Behavior* 20:253-273.

Citation

Prus, Robert (2008) “On the Pragmatics and Problematics of Defining Beauty and Character: The Greek Poet Lucian (120-200) Engages Exacting Portraitures and Difficult Subjects.” *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Deborah Ben-Shir
The Open University of Israel, Israel

Born to Write: Discovery and Construction of Self in the Identity Stories of Poets and Writers

Abstract

The explorative study hereby presented is based on in-depth interviews with 16 renowned Israeli writers of prose and poetry. The aim of the study is to examine the identity-stories of these masters of the written word. By the term "identity-story", we relate to the self-reflective or "ars-poetic" sides of the life stories our interviewees presented, the hows, whens and whys which had brought them to realize their identities as their cultures' authorized authors or poets. Thematic analysis of these stories, conducted in the spirit of the Schutzian Phenomenological-Interpretive approach, reveals an interesting interplay of two seemingly contradictory core meta-themes - identity-creation and identity-discovery. The present paper is focused on the identity-discovery meta-theme. Unlike the identity-creation meta-theme, which illustrates active, deliberate and conscious processes of identity construction within the social world, the identity-discovery meta-theme is based on narratives that detect the belief in the feasibility of a transcendental revelation of a given identity, whose roots lies beyond the ties of time and place.

Keywords

Self-identity; Life stories; Phenomenological - interpretative approach; Writers; Poets; "I" & "Me"

The explorative study hereby presented is based on in-depth interviews with 16 renowned Israeli authors and poets. The study examines the identity-stories of these masters of the written word. By using the term "identity story" we refer to the forthright and conscious side of what Ricoeur (1991, 1992) calls "narrative identity", or what may be seen as the "ars-poetic" side of it. In other words, identity-story is the self-reflective story a person tells about the hows, whens and whys which have brought him or her to realize their present identity, in our case the identity of a poet or an author. The aim of the study, then, is not necessarily to show how one "really" turns out to be a writer or a poet. Rather, it is to explore how writers and poets tend to construct their identity-stories. Yet, based on the assumption that the life story - the total sum of the subjective and inter-subjective life experiences and their meaningful interpretations - is the core of one's identity, we cannot accept any positivistic distinction between what there "really" is and the personal perception of it.

In other words, the life story is not just about life constructing a story, but equally about the story constructing identity, as well as life itself.

This cycle of influences does not end there. It is inseparably intertwined with another cycle of influences that exists between self-perception and one's image in the eyes of others and vice versa. These two cycles of influences enhance each other, as determined by the driving principle of Symbolic Interactionism, which claims that the meaning of experiences, including that of one's identity, is set through ceaseless social interactions based on exchange of symbols and interpretations (Blumer 1969; Cooley 1964; Mead 1934).

Methodology

The study hereby presented was conducted in the spirit of the phenomenological-interpretative approach formed by Alfred Schutz (1962). According to Schutz, every biographical situation always includes sediments created by all the person's subjective experiences, while social interaction with another person means a mutual involvement in each other's biographical situation. Those past sediments are accumulated to a typifications reservoir which provides prescriptions for a variety of social situations.

Blumer (1969) urges that the research method should be compatible with the research topic and the philosophic approach that guides it. Based on this assumption, the present study uses the life history or personal history methodology which is common in interpretative research (Babad, Birnbaum and Benne 1983; Bertaux 1981).

This methodology seeks to set a holistic and meaningful interpretative framework, within which the participants' experiences are studied. For this purpose, it strives to achieve a subjective and inter-subjective understanding which represents tacit knowledge, and not only the formulation of an explanation that represents the explicit knowledge (Denzin 1970, 1989; Jones 1983; Langness and Frank 1981; Stake 1978; Titon 1980).

Research Tools

An open in-depth interview is a natural tool of interpretative research, whose approach is holistic, reflective, and inter-subjective. In particular, it is suitable for the studying of the identity-story, which is a dynamic, developing, and contextual phenomenon. Such an interview is considered as a primary means for producing a life story and understanding how people interpret it and the social phenomena of which they are part (Filstead 1970; Rosenthal 1993, 2004; Yin 2003). It is customary to assume that, unlike other research tools, the open interview can and should be carried out with minimum interference with, or enforcement onto, the worlds of the interviewee, and that an effort should be made to neutralize any premises and biases the researcher may hold through maximum reflective awareness (Bourdieu 1996). Nevertheless, an open interview cannot set a static or sterilized meeting environment. On the contrary, it is a reciprocal and developing process of negotiation between interviewer and interviewee, during which the interviewee interprets molds and changes his reality and himself, as the protagonist of his life story (Bruner and Kalmar 1998; Fischer-Rosenthal 1996; Guba and Lincoln 1982; Pack 2006).

Method

The interviews were fully recorded and transcribed. Detailed inspection of the texts was used for identifying the recurring patterns. The typification produced was then interpreted in the spirit of Schutz's (1962) ideas, namely, aiming to turn “first order constructs” - the social world's actors' constructs of everyday knowledge - into “second order constructs” – the researcher's interpretations harmonizing both with the participants' personal social reality and a given conceptual context. The themes that this process produced were arranged using a cross-case study method, and gathered to shared-theme groups. This classification procedure was repeated until the two core meta-themes were isolated. As mentioned above, the present paper is focused on one of these meta-themes - the notion of identity discovery.

Participants

Sixteen well-known Israeli authors and poets participated in the study. They display a heterogenic distribution of age, origin, residence and occupations (for earning a living) other than writing. The participants also varied in their seniority in their creative writing career and the degree of social recognition they enjoy. Nevertheless, all of them met the predetermined criteria, namely:

- Repeatedly publishing works of literature in distinguished non-commercial publishing houses and literary journals.
- Accepted as authors or poets by recognized literature specialists such as critics, editors, academic figures, who interpret, criticize and cite their works.
- Known and commonly defined as authors or poets among members of society - readers and the media.

Conceptual Background

The concept of identity-story presented above is, we argue, flexible enough to contain a number of different and even contradictory perspectives, held by researchers and theorists occupied with identity in its many facets. Some, for instance, introduce "archeological" models of identity development representing communitarian, deterministic processes, involved in recognition, acceptance and internalizing of given and fixed social-cultural relational attributions, into which every person is born. As a counterclaim, constructive liberal models outline open and narrative processes of option and choice between different alternatives, in which individuals are portrayed as active and reflexive in shaping their own identity, continuously constructing an ever-developing narrative-identity (De Peuter 1998; Fischer-Rosental 1996; Gergen 1991; McAdams 2006; Presser 2004; Ricoeur 1991, 1992; Tamir 1996; Thorne 2004).

The term "identity-story, set at the center of our discussion, represents an organic combination of both these approaches. It acknowledges the importance of "identity", allegedly a static and given socio-cultural ascription, on the one hand and the dynamic and open processes of constructing the "life story" on the other. Identity-stories of authors and poets in particular, for whom the word is both the content and the instrument of their work, evoke a special interest. Throughout life every person answers the question "who am I?" by an act of on-going self-narration. In the case of writers, the contents of the meta-answer in response to that ultimate question are well documented and accessible to all through their writings. Of all art forms, literature, as a literal-conceptual formation, cannot help but record the internal

essence of the contents, forms and processes of one's life story, fictional and imaginary, as their external manifestations may appear in the literary work. One of our interviewees, the author I.O., referred to his writing as a "third eye". We espouse this metaphor, which suggests a further possibility of enriching the perception used to view the world. This super-eye, or rather, the ability it represents, not only constructs and sustains the work of art, but, in a circular process, becomes itself ever more penetrating and refined.

An analysis of the identity-stories arising from the interviews shows that they are characterized by a unique blending of two fiercely expressed and seemingly contradictory narrative meta-themes. The term "meta-theme" is used to indicate a comprehensive framework which includes different related narrative themes, each arranged around a thematic core of its own, as we shall see. The first meta-theme, identity-creation, depicts an active and conscious volition of an author's or poet's identity, and the daily choices and decisions which construct and affirm it again and again. The second narrative meta-theme, identity-discovery, emphasizes the opposite facet and expresses strong and almost mystical belief in the given, predetermined element of the writing gift and its role.

Significant resemblance exists between those two meta-narratives that characterize the identity-stories of our interviewees and the two theoretical approaches mentioned earlier - the constructivist approach and the deterministic "archeological" approach. But while the meta-theme of identity-discovery is fully compatible with the principles of the constructivist approach, there exists a meaningful difference between the meta-theme of identity-discovery and the deterministic approach. Using the conventions and jargon common in the social sciences, this approach is usually applied to identify and interpret the processes involved in identity-discovery that relate to given social affiliations such as gender, nationality, religion and so on. As we shall explore in the following discussions, in the case of poets and writers, the principles of this approach are applied to contents that describe their striving to rise above any given social affiliation.

We chose to interpret the dualism of the two meta-narratives involved in the identity-stories of our interviewees by conceptually distinguishing between the "Me" and "I" as their thematic cores. While the meta-theme of identity-creation expresses the characteristics of building the "Me", using a constructivist jargon and point of view, its seeming antithesis, the meta-theme of identity-discovery, outlines in transcendent-metaphysical terms, the pursuit towards an ever existing "I". As a rule, beyond its infinite variations, the "Me" is perceived by most researchers and theorists who use this term, as situated in the socio-cultural dimension of reality. It can also be conceptualized as that mental element responsible for the pursuit of distinctness and clear boundaries as well as interaction and relational emplacement in that dimension. The "I", on the other hand, has a more diverse range of interpretations. Amongst these different interpretations, we chose to define it here, based on our interviewee's words, as the primeval, non-verbal element of the self, characterized by a transcendent aspiration to break through time and place boundaries, in an aim to return to a primal unity with the environment.

The distinction between the "Me" and the "I" is not a new one, of course, and it repeats itself in different contexts and interpretations in the work of contemporary researchers and theorists (Alma and Zock 2002; Hermans 1997; Jaynes 1976; McAdams 1996, 1997; Sarbin 1986). Nonetheless, in general, it seems that the "Me" discourse alone is the most commonly used concept by researchers and theorist of the various disciplines of social science, usually under the influence of social

constructionism. For example, most widely spread in different social sciences is the concept of the "dialogical self" (Josephs 2002; Raggat 2000; Sarup 1996; Tappan 2005). This concept suggests a decentralized self - an orchestra of different, sometimes contradictory voices. Together they present a polyvocality of "I-positions", a tapestry of past and present voices, each conditioned by its own set of cultural and historical contexts, social and power relations, which maintain dialogical relationships between them. This concept is usually displayed as an alternative to the opposing Cartesian notion of self as individualized, a-historical, non-cultural, disembodied and having a distinct central core (Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Hermans 2001).

Consequently, the discussions relating to some primeval "I", whose very definition prevents it from being verbalized and explored directly, were almost completely abandoned. We argue, however, that a complete understanding of vocational development of writers is not fully possible, without referring to all the concepts involving both terms, the "I" as well as the "Me".

Moreover, we claim that despite the contradictory appearance of these two vectors, both types of these emerging discourses should not be viewed as dichotomous and not even as two poles on the same continuum. Rather, they may be seen as two autonomous and independent sequences. The identity-stories of authors and poets are apparently characterized by the tendency to the intense and high potency of the relating expressions of both these sequences. They include narrations of intended and active construction of identity, relevant to the social "Me", as well as narrations of discovering a given identity, related to the primeval "I", that hold an intense affinity to the metaphysical.

In the case of poets and writers, processes relating to the first narrative meta-theme of the identity-creation with the "Me" at its heart are reflected in different narrative themes. Some of the most salient, to mention them briefly, are a conscious choice in writing as a way of life, which is repeatedly affirmed again and again through day to day decisions designed to assert it; a gradual development of self-perception and self-definition as an author or a poet, shaped by experiences and feedback from the people around; organization and regulation of other identities, professional or domestic for instance, in order to establish them as subordinate to the superior identity of creating artists; basing the identity of an artist on a continuous critical comparison to an appropriate referral group of artists and poets, and more (Ben-Shir, Forthcoming). In this paper, we intend to focus on the second aspect of this world-view – the narrative meta-theme of identity discovery, and the "I" discourse which characterizes it.

This meta-theme also includes some sub-themes:

- A person is a poet or a writer because he or she was "born to write", as a given and pre-determined disposition. As this disposition gets exposed, during the process of identity-discovery, writing turns from a mere activity into an obligating way of life.
- Writing talent can serve as the first sign of the literary destination, but sometimes it can be revealed at a relatively late stage. More than talent, it is the powerful urge to write, the feeling that there is no escape from writing no matter what, which is the foretoken of a destined writer.
- The writer is not the source of his writings. He or she is just a medium through which the world is speaking, and as such, his assignment is to pass true messages, that are meaningful to all others.
- As the identity-discovery process advances, the writer is more capable of playing the role of the medium, based on experiences of self-negation during

> writing. This reduction of the immediate and the private increases the impact range of one's writings, and thus reinforces the identity as a writer or a poet in one's own eyes as well as in those of the public.

As we shall henceforth show, the identity-story of the writer or the poet, which is based on these themes, resembles, in form as well as content, the descriptions of the identity development processes of the ancient biblical prophets.

Findings

The Identity Discovery Meta-Theme: Born to Write

According to the meta-theme of identity discovery, the processes of shaping identity express, as any other phenomenon in reality, a unified truth that goes beyond human relationships and social regularizations. These processes are characterized by a pursuit of the primeval "I", perceived as a given core of selfhood. In our case, descriptions of that core's revelation were often built on a scaffolding of an explicit or an implied metaphor that emphasized the resemblance between the literary creator and the ancient biblical prophet. Metaphors can give the life story meaning and coherence (Keller-Cohen and Gordon 2003). Here, too, this metaphor served as a framework for describing the different stages the writer had to experience before fully accepting the life mission of writing. Just as in the prophets' stories, acknowledging the special designation exists much before actually starting to write:

> *Y.H.*: I believe for me it was an immanent and continuous way to poetry. No skipping or leaping or arbitrary choosing. It was a way that had been fine-tuned from within. It was stronger than me, perhaps.

> *S.J.*: An author or a poet, if at a certain moment he has the choice between writing a pretty good line or being a millionaire or a prime-minister - I have absolutely no doubt what he will prefer. It's not even a question of choice - it is his destination to be a poet. Just like that.

> *A.M.*: There is no such question "why are you a poet". I am a poet, and I knew it much before I even understood it.

In contrast with the natural and continuous course implied above, A.M. herself, like other interviewees, depicts a pursuit against all odds, or rather, a steeplechase, towards the assigned mission:

> I immigrated here with my family when I was four years old. We lived in a small town, a god-forsaken place. I was completely isolated, lived in a vacuum. I did not have any books at home, so I simply didn't read, except text books at school. This is very strange, really, because you always think that if you'll give a child a lot of books to read, than he'll write. And I am an example of a person who contradicts this theory. I think that somewhere, in the human resources department up there, it was written that I should be a poet. It came out like that although my whole life stood against it. I see it as something that is beyond me. For me this really is proof.

The theme of obstacles placed by the surroundings, which only strengthen the power of the internal calling and drives it to materialization, repeats itself with L.A.'s story:

> I came from a family where people had absolutely no connection to literature. They were hard-working, poor people. It was also a home that contained no ornaments at all. No paintings or pictures or statues - nothing of this sort, and of course - no books at all. Well, we had two books only - there was a breviary that my grandfather, who was a religious man, had once brought, and there was a driving lessons booklet that belonged to my brother. That's it. Those two 'books' were standing there, proudly, along with some vase, on the buffet, and that was it. So I taught myself to read. All by myself. Obviously, none of them read, I mean, really read. My brother used to read 'Bill Carter' and stuff like that, pulp fiction, and my sister read dime novels. And still, I learned to read with no help at all. You see, my father had those birdcages, he raised birds for sale, to maintain the family, so he used to buy old newspapers for draping the bottom of the cages. I started reading those old newspapers. My parents were never at home 'cause they were working from dawn to sunset, and I am sitting there, all alone, and reading those old newspapers, and from than on I developed it more and more, reading, and then writing.

In both of the stories presented above, repeated statements about growing up in families that couldn't nurture reading, let alone writing, emphasize the notion of them turning into writers out of nowhere, thus strengthening the destination hypothesis they hold. Nevertheless, an alienated surrounding is not the only way to demonstrate the power of the inner calling. O.B., son of another well-known author, who had the advantage of growing up in a home satiated in literature and culture, presents an inverted mirror image of the same idea. For him, the real obstacle he had to overcome on his way to fulfill his calling was none other than that profound cultural background. Here too, despite the reverse in the factors presented as interceptive, lies the idea of an internal calling stronger than outside circumstances:

> My mother came from Russia in 1911. She graduated there from a known art college; she learned painting, immigrated to here and married my father, who was already a young and successful author and a school principal. So I was actually born and raised in a writer's home. The whole house was full of art and artists. Most of the famous artists, musicians, writers and great singers used to come to us. It was a custom to take them to 'the author's residence', you know… That was the concept. We grew up in the author's house, and all our life none of us dared to write, because father was "the author". In the psychologist's language, one would say that father had castrated us. Even if we wanted to, we didn't dare start writing.

Although the sense of calling, as reported above, leads the writers to follow their destiny, it doesn't need to be clear to them in advance. Sometimes it can evolve from a trial and error procedure. O.B. himself, for example, tells of indecisions and much searching which paved the way to writing. Amongst others, he describes schooling in an agricultural school, studying in a prestigious intellectual school, studying painting, living on a kibbutz as well as in the big city, and working as an artist and as a teacher. It was only at a relatively late age that he arrived at writing. Like him, Y.K. declares:

> I tried. I really did try everything. There is nothing I didn't do at one time or another. I was a barman, a guard, a shepherd, I painted swimming pools… Nothing I didn't try… and really, by default, writing is all I have now. That's where I feel best.

Let us not be mistaken. This account and its similar do not wish to portray writing as the fruit of a gradual and natural interaction with the environment, or as just one of many possible outcomes of a trial and error process. On the contrary, they only emphasize what is predetermined. These self-quests are of the highest importance. Perhaps they are the throes of the real and the absolute. They demonstrate the power of the inner injunction compelling them to keep searching, even when they don't yet know what it is they are looking for, or not even that they are, in fact, looking for something.

At the end of a long and intensive quest, the encounter with the calling, just as in the biblical prophets' stories, can occur as if by itself in an incidental manner. Thus, for example, testifies the author D.B.S., who started writing at the age of 42 at a workshop for prose writing. By his own account, he came into the workshop as a result of surprising circumstances. He found in his mailbox an advertisement for the workshop but ignored it and almost tossed it away. It was his wife who drew his attention to the fact that the ad mentioned the name of his commander from his days in the army, as the manager. That commander was the only person to notice, prior to his recognition as a successful author, his unique language skills, and praised him for that. His wife's encouragement along with the pleasant memories from the only compliments he had ever received for his language skills, led him, finally, to enroll in the workshop.

O.B., an influential and admired children's author, had also first started writing, in his opinion, at a late age, when he was already in his thirties. He too came upon it as a result of circumstance. During his stay in the United States he corresponded with his six year old niece. In order to strengthen his relationship with her and to amuse her, he garnished his letters with fictional descriptions and stories. His sister, reading the letters, referred them, at her own initiative, to a renowned poet and editor, who liked those poetic letters, and recommended to publish them as a book. Only from that point on did O.B. become committed to writing.

A similar incident happened to E.K., who actually wanted to be a journalist. As a twenty year old with practically no journalistic experience, he sent a local newspaper a short story he wrote. Some years later, by now an appreciated author who never really turned to journalism, the chief editor of that newspaper told him he didn't even like that first story of his. He admitted that he agreed to print that story just for the purpose of annoying his deputy editor who disliked the story even more, because they were in a quarrel at that time... E.K.'s stories later on became the crowning glory of that newspaper.

These three stories have some striking similarities. In all of them, the speakers mark a critical point in time, only from which turning point they consider themselves authors. All three state, spontaneously, their age at that point, a mark destined to sharpen the difference between the phases prior to the most important experience of identity discovery, and all that happened after it. The age of the discovery is different, but in all the cases, the way things were put is designed to emphasize, not only a sudden breakthrough, but also, in accordance with the speaker's feelings, a relatively late one. In addition, in all three cases, the discovery emerges from casual circumstances, but the triviality of the earthly details only emphasis an event rich in meaning, and as such, an event that could not but take place.

In fact, in all three stories, the hero is displayed in the role of the naive figure. Therefore, the course of external events which leads the future author or poet to confront his mission is of crucial importance. The figure of mediator – the

commander, the sister or the editor, who is, just like in legends, a genuine fate's messenger, has a special part in this course of events, leading the writer to the internal recognition vital for writing. The belief in fate shown in those descriptions is but another way of trying to give a sense of unity to what otherwise may appear as a mix of frightening coincidences, lacking any sense of meaning or direction.

The discovery of a writer's identity is not necessarily the end of the struggle. It is not, according to the way most interviewees put it, just picking an elective role, but a lifelong assignment, with a heavy personal price, therefore the ordained often tries to rebel. As Moses refused leadership and Jeremiah refused prophecy, both claiming that they were not qualified enough for their assignments, nowadays writers may also deny their special abilities and try to turn their backs on their designation. This can happen even after gaining significant recognition. D.B.S. tells how after excelling in the prose writing workshop he attended, winning a contest, and the manuscript being chosen for publication, he still hesitated:

> I said: 'Yes, I'll send them the manuscript', but I didn't. I just did not believe in myself. But my wife saw that the whole thing was becoming pathological, and she said to me: "agree or not, I'm sending it myself". She printed it, 20 pages, and I changed them. She printed them again, and I changed the whole thing all over again. I did it on purpose, to wear her out. It went on like this, again and again - a real cockfight. And like in any cockfight at the end only one rooster stays in the arena. That was my wife. Finally, the manuscript was ready, but I ignored it. So she said to me: 'If you don't take it to them, I will. Make up your mind'. I surrendered, I took it to the publishers, went there really trembling. I am not sure a virgin on her wedding night is more frightened then I was, submitting my manuscript.

The similarities between the contemporary writer and the prototype - the ancient prophet - are clear. Both are chosen to specialize in the spiritual dimension of life and search for eternal truths in the service of the public. The realization that this is a risky task and certainly not a profitable one, along with a feeling of incompetence for the lofty designation, drives them both to an escape voyage - in vain. They must become what they are meant to be.

In the case of writers and poets, then, the meta-theme of identity discovery can have many facets. It can be expressed in accounts of trial and error that stop only when the true identity is finally realized, or it can be portrayed as a relatively linear process developing directly to its peak. This process can include expressions of deep self-awareness, or, in its absence, the process can be described as a succession of random occurrences whose true meaning is revealed only towards its end.

One way or another, all these different versions demonstrate the same idea that frames the identity-story of the artist of the written word: the identity of a poet or writer is not chosen as any other arbitrary choice may be made. This is a process of identity-discovery, tuned by the primeval "I" that lies in the roots of one's soul, and it cannot but lead to a full realization of the a-priori destination.

On Destiny, Destination and Acceptance: Decisive Moments in the Construction of the Identity-Story

The messenger as we have seen, does not choose his mission, but is chosen for it. Nevertheless, what makes one person, and not another, into the chosen one? A simple answer is in the convention determining that authors or poets are separated

from the rest, first and foremost, by their talent for writing, O.B.'s answer, as follows, represent this convention well:

> People are born with given pre-dispositions, it's not just about learning things. For one it's more towards doing things with his hands, for another it's a tendency to heal, and for some - it's to writing. That is what God gave them. It's not intentional. It's a fact - some write, some don't. It's a gift. One of those things you can't teach. Well, you can teach, I guess, the technical things that concern writing, but that's it, it's not that special sparkle. Any real art contains that sparkle. The sparkle that makes Mozart's symphonies divine, and someone else's symphony - a piece of garbage. Same tools, almost the same tunes, but here you have that divine sparkle, and there - nothing.

O.B. takes here a clear religious tone – the artist is blessed with a gift from God. Even the "spark" he is referring to, is a concept rich in connotations with the divine. According to Cabbala's view, for example, the sparks of sacred divinity fell down onto the world after the "Shattering of the Vessels" (in Hebrew, "*Shevirat haKeilim*") of the world of *Tohu* - the prior form of Creation, mentioned in Genesis. From this assumption stems the idea that the human being's mission in life is to search for those lost sparks. In Greek mythology, as well, Prometheus, who stole the fire from the gods, needed a spark taken from Mount Olympus to light a stalk of a fennel plant, using it to bring fire to the people. If so, the literary talent is God's gift, a priori distinguishing between the "true" artist and everyone else. Praise from the environment is sometimes the first hint of a given natural ability. Thus, they promote the development of an artist's identity and constitute the first signals to what will become a central and life-long commitment:

> *D.Z.*: It started in the third grade, the writing. And it was not only I that said it - my whole surroundings said it. I started to write all the time - a diary, stories, even essays that the teacher had not asked for, volunteering.
>
> *S.J.*: I was an outrageously spoiled student. My Arabic teacher just loved me, and he always helped me. He knew I was a good writer, and whenever there was a ceremony or a party, I was always asked to write the poems. And when I started to publish my poems, for my father it was as if I had reached the sky. He was so proud. And not only him - everybody, all his friends, all my friends, the whole village, everyone.
>
> *Y.B.*: At the age of thirteen, just before I immigrated here, three poems of mine were published in a poetry journal. It was grown-up people's journal, not something for kids. There, in the editorial column, the editor wrote: 'Here you have an example of the renewed young poetry, which is restoring itself after the flames of World War 2…' etc. That was me. But I didn't really understand at all the importance of that declaration. Besides, it wasn't even me that had sent those poems to the journal. One of my teachers sent them without telling me. I did not understand that it was important.

Many studies have tried to empirically map the course running from talent, as a "natural" given, to the realized artist. Some go to the length of pointing to DNA as a key to the riddle (Eysenck 1995). Others content themselves with presenting the personality factor, as that natural element to which talent is connected. Still, the theories and studies in this field exhibit extremely varied results, indicating links

between every imaginable personality trait and a creative talent of some sort (Gedo 1996; Simonton 1984; Storr 1972; Young-Bruehl 1991).

Such a setting makes it particularly interesting to examine the stories in which the speakers choose to testify about failing to exceed normative requirements of creative writing at the beginning of the way:

> *E.K.*: As a child, a teenager, no one ever ascribed me any special talent or ability to write. I was quite a good student at high school, but at composition writing lessons I had my lowest grades. The teachers, all of them, said that there is absolutely no connection between my sentences, that I just can't develop a plot, that my characters' behavior is completely arbitrary. Not even one of them thought otherwise. I accepted it. That is, I loved writing, I just knew that it wasn't something I was good at.

> *Y.O.*: I recently found poems in Yiddish which I wrote when I was 11 or 12. Totally immature, so sentimental and weepy… I could write, back than, entirely worthless stuff, and with such emotion and enthusiasm, as if they were masterpieces.

> *A.M.*: I started to write when I was 15, romantic texts in the 18th century age of enlightenment style. I had the guts to write without reading anything, and really, I wrote such strange things, desolated. I thought that's how everybody was writing.

> *L.A.*: I wrote my first poem when I was five years old. Well, it could hardly be considered as a poem or as writing. At the age of seven, or eight, I was already writing like mad, enormous amounts. I wrote and wrote and wrote. I used to imitate those horrible school readers. Tried to write like that and like that. All sorts of loaded and complicated poems, and quite awful, to be honest.

The marking of the chosen one, then, does not necessarily express itself from the beginning in a prominent literary talent. That is to be revealed only at a latter phase. Therefore, for the first miles of the road one must find its manifestations in more hidden and complex ways. The self-irony expressed by the speakers in these stories plays a double role here: first, it is proof of the highest "even though" hurdle they ever skipped over. Despite the unpromising start, they had the upper hand. Second, these descriptions accentuate the importance of that uncontrollable urge to keep writing, to make writing the center of life, as a factor that truly designates the artist to be. The following speaker highlights this idea:

> *D.B.S.*: Sometimes you may meet someone who has the talent for it. God had blessed him with the verbal capability, the associative thinking, and you ask him, 'have you ever considered writing?', and he says: "No, come on. Who has time for it"? So he has, maybe, that gift, but he doesn't have the drive, the misery that gives birth to the deep, moving, profound story. For me, you see, writing is based on a wild, even evil need to translate crying into words. It's an almost obsessive process, forced by some kind of demonic world. We are actually only mouthpieces to those demons. So, it is not necessarily the talent for writing that signals and hints about the life mission that awaits the writer or poet to be. Rather, the identity-stories they set makes it clear that it is the importunate urge to write that proves writing to be an attribute, an inner call that must become realized, and not just another activity one can decide to undertake or give up.

The Writer as a Medium

According to the identity-discovery meta-theme, as we gather from all these accounts, a writer is a writer long before he or she starts writing. The designation lies at the core of one's being, and much like religious faith, does not need reasons, purpose or proof. To understand the nature of this core, let us look at the following descriptions:

> *D.B.S.*: Writing ability is kind of a huge umbrella, underneath it are crowded all the tools of expression - verbal richness, ability to shape your characters psychologically, brilliant ideas - and yet, all of those things are not the heart of it. The heart of it is within the writer himself. Those tensions and hidden chords in him, through which a tune that tells a human's story is being played.

> *Y.H.*: It is very hard to explain what turns someone into a poet. One can only guess. For a poet, every thing is meaningful. It's a mind that absorbs everything, that receives, accepts all the time, processes everything. All the voices are imprinted in me. I get them, but they just elapse, pass through me, and then they come out in the shape of poems.

According to this, that unique spark of the artist is not conditioned by a positive ability. Rather, it is a negative one. The most important ability that is required for writing is the ability to put one's self aside, and thus become a medium – mouthpiece, a vessel, a channel, chords– through which the world is heard and played. Only as a medium, not as a private person, can the artist realize his/her essence as a messenger, and to pass meaningful messages, going far beyond the total sum of private experiences. Our interviewees described themselves as expressing the human experience in its different facets, and as bearers of different kind of messages – moral, psychological, socio-cultural and esthetic. The power of projection processes, enabling the writers to unite with the subjects of their writing, is so extensive, that in some cases their messages can precede and predict events in reality. D.Z. tells of this:

> People think sometimes that first of all the writer is impressed by something, and than he writes it down, but for me it's the other way round. First I write, and then it actually happens. Happens in real life. Unbelievable coincidences. It has happened to me a lot of times. Well, if I was writing about myself, and it would have happened, I guess one could explain it as a self-fulfilling prophecy, but I write about others. I don't influence them. I don't bring it on them. I simply 'guess them', because of the huge investment of emotional strength while writing of them.

The similarity between today's artist and the ancient prophet is even more striking when the contemporary writer sees himself as committed to a mission of correcting society, reality itself, recreating the world through words. The image of the writer as an ancient prophet, with an evident social and moral role, is still influential and valid in different theological and literary cultures (Ben-Bassat 2000; Davidson 2003; Galvin 2002; Goroncy 2006). The following speakers both express awareness and commitment to this specific aspect of the artist's role:

Y.B.: For me the image, the ideal of the true poet includes a clear destination, but as something that is revealed post factum. Not something that one takes on himself in advance. Like the prophet Amos. He says, 'I was taken from my plough. What am I? I am nobody. A simple farmer', so he says. You can say it's vain…but that is truly how I feel. Because I, as well, haven't set in advance that this is who I am. I just realized it. It's like Vladimir Mayakovsky wrote - a poet, living in his society, his community, has to be very attentive to social 'invitations' or expectations, has to sense, and express, the feelings of unease around him. This is not a role one knowingly chooses, but when you read his biography and the literature he created – you can eventually understand his role in society.

S.J.: From a very young age, I had this notion that a poet is like a prophet, a doom prophet. I don't believe that inspiration comes directly from God or anything, but poets do posses a strong feeling of destination. Like Moses, Jesus or Muhammad, poets too are messengers. Some say God's messengers, and I say messengers of that vague, general feeling, they want, they need, to change the world. That's the raison d'être of a poet's existence. Never to stay indifferent in front of life's situations without making a stand, never without a commitment or recruitment. That is on one condition – that one doesn't rationally decide to become a messenger.

For both Y.B. and S.J., the poet is a kind of social messenger, but only in retrospect, not as an outcome of a conscious choice. Either way, the mission must be backed by deep self-conviction as to the truth and justice of the message. In this sense the resemblance between the prophet's role and the role of the writer stands out - they both must feel as the bearers of the flag of truth, whether it is a binding social or political truth or a timeless religious or metaphysical truth. In fact, in this aspect in particular, the contemporary artist goes back to wear, as S.J. puts it, the big shoes of the prophet, fulfilling a divine assignment, as M.A., too, clarifies:

We are, actually, nothing but pipes, channels. The world is in constant motion. The moment something stops moving, stops accepting, it becomes sealed, opaque, it becomes defiled. We must avoid it. We must keep ourselves open, like open vessels. Torah fills those vessels. But when a vessel is filled, it has to be cleared, evacuated, and then it can give. In my writing, too, I give. This is a kind of circulation.

M.A. is using here a concept from the world of Kabalistic philosophy in order to clarify the idea that humans are none other than holy objects. In this context, the artistic work, as a form of giving, opens the way to "acceptance" (in Hebrew, "*kabala*"). Writing, so we see again, is perceived as another legitimate way to find amendment, to reform, and by that to realize the highest purpose of human existence. In M.A.'s case he interprets this process in terms taken from his religious world view. The secularist western world view, on the other hand, tends to prevent such open externalization of the search for connection with the sacred. Some mark Freud's theories as the turning point from which time on religion was placed on the treatment couch. From this point of view, phenomena like anxiety and denial were presented as the foundations of religion's domination of mankind, and the unconscious had replaced God and the soul as the guides of our self understanding (Gargiulo 1997). Under these conditions, the search of the secular writer after the mystic experience is reflected in more personal and internalized terms, as we can find in D.Z.'s description:

> For me, it all started with the car accident. There are still things I'm afraid to say out loud. It's not accepted anymore to talk about communicating with the dead, but since the accident I do have an open channel to my beloved dead relatives. All these things arise now, in the book I'm writing. Suddenly, I can define in words a little more of what was sealed in me the whole time. In a strange way, writing about the accident has recalled another mystical event that happened when I was 8 years old. Not much of a story in terms of its plot. The story is that I used to go out with shorts and braids, the white demon they called me. It was summer that particular day, afternoon, and a sun's ray came down and I was sort of trapped in it. It was such weather - wine, womb, not too hot, not too cold, pleasant, embracing. I felt like merging with the sun's ray, with nature, with the tree, even with that cement block on which I was standing. I was alone. I don't know for how long. Later on the clouds came and hid the sun, and as much as I tried to get into the ray again, I couldn't anymore. Never again. And it has been years that I am still trying in my writing to find again that experience, actually, that moment which mystics try to summon artificially, by praying, by ecstasy, by all means that aim to invite inspiration - that one-minute union between me and the universe.

From this description rises an experience of being thrown out of time and place, an experience that writing alone could restore. In fact, such an experience of stripping down from the material reality, and stepping out from the "Me" into the domain of the "I", is the exact experience for which the believer searches all his life, and tries to call upon himself through prayers and rituals. D.Z's words reflect, so it seems, the typical embarrassment originating from today's secular, objective-scientific culture, when standing at the gates of the religious or metaphysical subjective experience. Thus, unlike other interviewees who described themselves as channels of history, society or nature, such an image of connecting to the metaphysical does not suit D.Z. Her embarrassment is noticeable in the statements of reservation she places in her words: "There are still things I'm afraid to say out loud ", "It's not accepted anymore to talk about communicating the dead". But although she expresses a need to dissociate herself from what may sound like a too esoteric or mystical description, her stories highlight the intensity of the experience and its meaning to her. The search for a transcendent experience, it seems, has not been completely expropriated. It just takes other forms. The most important to our case is the linkage between the transcendent and the creative process. According to D.Z.'s narration, it was writing which brought her back to the accident event, as well as to the childhood experience she described - two occurrences which she considers to be key experiences in her spiritual development.

Another interviewee, Y.O., has a well-defined theoretical outlook on the metaphysical mindset evident from D.Z.'s words. The concept of "light", not surprisingly, is as a key theme in his account:

> When you look at a work of art, you can feel as if something is threatening your sanity, any human's being sanity. That threat is what creates art. We can know all our life: 'this is a table' but when a good poem, a good story, sheds light on it - only then you really see it for the first time. It's as if someone has turned on a flashlight, and it could turn off any moment. You feel that this is a signal light. The search after that light, that sign, is what I call the secular pilgrimism. It is maintained due to the dialectics that exists between those two

> pillars - secularity and pilgrimism. Remove one of them, and the whole thing collapses.

Y.O.'s point of view resembles other claims to a link between art, or creativity in general, and the religious experience. Both these basic aspects of human existence express the pursuit for revelation, illumination and inspiration (Coleman 1998; Fauteux 1995).

Accounts of revelation, illumination and inspiration are indeed characteristic of the identity-story of the writer or the poet. In the process of identity-discovery, driven by the force of the "I", one has to learn how to get rid of the burdens of daily events and personal obligations, and to find within oneself the power of the medium. The medium's entity represents refinement of the "I"'s aspiration to total unity with the universe. As a vessel that absorbs the entire human experience, the medium thus gains the merit of being relevant to the readers.

Self Nullification as the Core of the Medium's Special Ability

Turning into a medium requires flexible boundaries and maintenance of an absorbent and accepting state of mind. Purification from ego's stumbling-blocks may be essential threshold conditions to achieving such a desired state of mind, as is clear from M.A.'s words:

> The first and utmost important thing is to get rid of vanity, of hubris. When you understand that you're nothing but a tool, only then you are open to accept. Who is the wise guy? A person that learns, learns continuously, from everything and everyone. It's not is if you learn, get a degree, and that's it, you know it all. No such thing. Wise men have already said: the purpose of knowing is not knowing. It's humbleness in the good sense of the word.

According to the idea expressed here by M.A., a certain degree of self-nullification is a vital first step on the way to acceptance and inspiration. Knowing what is unknown is the key to self-negation, that is, to the blurring of the firm boundaries of the "Me", and thus creating an opening for the "I"' to unite with the world. These ideas are rooted deep in the world of Kabalistic philosophy. They present, indeed, a model stating that creation, both creation of the world and its splits and splinters in the form of human creation, is possible only based on a self-reduction process, designed to clear space to unify with the other (Rotenberg 1995a, 1995b).

The worldview of Zen-Buddhism also maintains that insight and illumination, which are among the cornerstones of the creative process, are not possible within the framework of the firm and fixed models of selfhood, portraying a false ideal of self-continuity (Thomas 1999).

From a different point of view, the concepts of Sartreian Existentialism may also offer an intriguing interpretation of the writer's experience of being a medium. According to Sartre (1966), human consciousness exists only as absence, as nothingness. The human consciousness is aware, by its very nature, of the nothingness of its essence, and its infinite activeness arises from its efforts to lift this burden from its shoulders, and to step out of itself by means of unifying with the objects around.

Let us be reminded again that we are focused here on only one aspect of the identity construction processes of authors and poets. As mentioned, we also found

that their discourses revealed many patterns expressing the opposite need in building a stable and well-defined "Me". Such a "Me" is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition, for a life dedicated to art – the ability to persevere in spite of difficulties, the ability to cope with others and one's self for recognition in their art and in themselves as artists, and more. Therefore, this is the root of the paradox they face. On the one hand, they are subject to factors of time and place, which have a crucial role in defining the "Me" in general, and for writing literature relevant for others in particular. On the other hand, in order to write a true literary work, they must annul the private and reach the universal. A.M. is keen to describe this aspect:

> It's customary to think that writing a poem is a matter of concentration. I say it's the other way around; it's rather a matter of distraction, of an absent mind. I mean, the less I'm focused on me and my life, the more I open and enable layers that are much deeper, much wider than myself. The experience of being a channel is so strong. It really is a paradox: the more I succeed in emptying myself out of me, turning myself into a vessel that receives, that gets, so my poetry gets stronger, has a much larger radius.

Consequently, as we have seen, only through this "self-nullification" process can the writer unite with his/her objects, and become the world. This tendency defines the essence of the "I", which, as mentioned, opposes the detached self-definition of the "Me", and aims to break boundaries and to reach unity with everything. The progress of such a quest can occur only by way of negativity – removing the unimportant, reducing obstacles and expelling disguises of all sorts. The "I", which is not constructed based on outside circumstances, represents, therefore, a dimension beyond the social, beyond the personal, as A.M. continues to explain:

> There isn't much new about how a person lives. Everyone is living somewhere, working somewhere, has his people. It's up to us. But deep inside it all, there's the essential, spiritual nucleus, and it has got nothing to do with all the fuss that surrounds it. It's as if there's the consciousness in the center and life around it. You must have some sort of a life, must sort of produce your life. But those inner layers, that really matter, are the most impersonal. Writing poetry demonstrates it. It's like in meditation, putting myself aside, expanding, losing outlines, giving up the personal. Not all my poems come from this layer. Some come from the personal. I can tell the difference. But for me, poems that emerge from this empty, pure, mirror-like layer, are the most meaningful, the most interesting. Actually, there's a lot of hubris in saying "personal". What's personal? What have I got that all others haven't? It is vain, almost comical to experience things in a "personal" way.

Such being the case, the "I", is found beyond the "Me", beyond who that person is – residence and occupation, social and family bonds and so forth. The big paradox is that the internal core contains nothing personal, only formless and endless possibilities. A similar approach is found in Sartre (1966), when he states, that in fact, it is the surrender to the social imposition determining human beings should be "what they are" which is one of the most common ways of self-deceit. According to him, a person can fulfill a social role only in that neutralized existence he calls "entity for itself", thus, in existing in a form of what one is not. Self-negation, so it seems, is paradoxically portrayed here as the main road to self-discovery. In spite of the apparent contradiction this is understandable, as true writing itself, no doubt the

cornerstone of the writer's or poet's identity-story, cannot exist, so our interviewees believe, without the discovery of the ability to surpass one's own self.

Concluding Remarks

Our study shows that the two components of the term "identity-story" - the personal dynamic story at one end and the identity as a close social label at the other - are actually inseparably interwoven with each other. The accounts of our interviewees move to and fro from the subjective transcendental experience that lies at the base of writing, towards, and sometimes against, the approved social identity of each of them as a writer or a poet.

In their identity-stories are interlaced themes which we identified as serving the needs of the "Me" that describe how they actively and intentionally construct their identities as literary creators, with themes that outline the "I" forces that drive them gradually, allegedly passively, to discover the core of their identity as writers and poets. Both these narrative meta-themes - identity-creation and identity discovery - maintain constant correspondence with cultural models and images concerning the term "writer" or "poet".

The main principle of the identity-discovery meta-theme, on which we focused our discussion in the present paper, lies in the idea that even in reducing all possible surrounding influences, whether objective or their various subjective interpretations, something will always still remain, that something being, in fact, the core of selfhood. That primeval universal human core is perceived as the source of humans' motivation to keep searching for the meaning of existence beyond the borders of externals and circumstances. In the case of authors and poets, as we showed, it is also perceived by them as the main source for the creative power and the motivation to write. The meta-theme of identity-discovery is composed of sub-themes that describe how they came to realize that they were born to write, as a kind of destination they did not choose but were chosen for, and how they gradually become committed to the assignment. In the process of identity-discovery they acknowledge the signs of their destination - sometimes, though not necessarily, the talent for writing, but always, inevitably, the urge to write, no matter what. They discover the need as well as the ability to experience, in the creative process, an experience of self-negation, and in that to fulfill the medium's role, and mediate to others messages that exceed the limits of their own private existence.

The combination of the two narrative meta-themes - identity creation and identity discovery, so we claim, is important to the construction of any identity-story and is certainly critical to the to the self-definition processes of authors and poets as such.

The apparent contradiction between these two kinds of discourses, as well as the one that may seem between the unique "stranger" image and all others, is only on the face of things. We all create our identity and discover it at the same time. On the one hand, identity-creation does not happen in a vacuum - even when the process occurs within an extensive spectrum of choices, it is always based on construction and re-construction of given materials whose source is always the socio-cultural dimension. Just the same, identity-discovery, on the other hand, does not end with the exposure of what is regarded as the true core of selfhood. This core of identity is indeed seen as absolute and ultimate, and yet here, too, as we have seen, the discovery requires an endless process of reinforcement and refining.

The uniqueness of our interviewees' identity-stories does not rest, therefore, in the mere combination of creation and discovery themes in their identity-stories, but perhaps just in the intensity and forcefulness of both these kinds of discourses in their accounts.

The literary practice itself, so it seems, requires, and eventually also enhances the two tendencies at the same time. The characteristics of this art of the written word and the abstract idea - the search for some eternal truth on one side and the creative game with endless options, images, imaginations, not limited by actual material on the other side - are compatible both with the demands of the search after the primary true core of identity as well as with those of identity's construction, interpretation and its constant editing and styling.

However, disassembly of this mosaic picture to its separate components does raise a question. It is quite clear how the identity creation meta-theme, with its focus on the social "Me", contributes to the writers' understanding of the vital cultural-symbolic negotiation they hold with their surrounding, just as it is vital to the understanding of any identity narration. However, what, we may ask, is the contribution of the somewhat esoteric identity discovery meta-theme with the "I" discourse that characterizes it?

Unlike the "Me" centered themes that are related to identity construction, the identity discovery concept is not even commensurate with the premises of constructivist methodology and methods we have adopted for the present research. By definition it points to eternal truths that rise above the day-by-day negotiations and social reality. We have tried, therefore, to treat the "I" discourse statements produced by our interviewees like any other possible content, without judging or sorting those ideas and certainly without disqualifying them according to any scale of importance or scientific "truth" foreign to the speakers' world and their own frames of reference. Moreover, the constructivist "dialogical self" concept itself does immanently contain the possibility of dualistic thought, and that should include the coexistence of diversity and unity, of the social and the spiritual, or of the relational aspects of the self alongside the feeling of distinctiveness (Alma and Zock 2002; Valsiner 2005; Yau-fai Ho et al. 2001).

Still, apart from this methodological principle, what if any, is the role of this abstract discourse, to the game of constructing an identity story of an author or a poet?

We propose a few possible answers. First, the typical belief in dimensions of super-time and super-place originating from the identity discovery theme can serve as a refuge from various day-to-day, here and now stressors. Writing, in this context, is understood as both deriving from those supreme dimensions as well as creating them. Such a belief is a natural promoter of self-esteem, probably not at all redundant to holders of an artistic task which has, in recent decades, lost much of its former glory. Moreover, this kind of belief may intensify the creative power, helping the artist to confront the hindrances and blocks to writing that the daily pressures produce, through by-passing them on the way to those experiences of a higher existence.

Secondly, the characteristics of the identity discovery theme and the "I" discourse accompanying it, illustrate the writer as the ancient prophet or the tribe's magician. We witnessed a developing metaphor that enhanced this impression of the elected, somewhat freakish, supernatural image. Born to this special destiny, committed to a lifetime assignment and bound to play the role of mouthpiece to the voice of truth, the writer is almost automatically situated in that well known, heroic-

romantic blend, structuring culture's myth of the artist as a lonely genius - agonizing, fighting, sublime, mad - all at the same time. Vasari (1996), Michelangelo's 16th century biographer, had already portrayed the artist's superior image. In fact, much before that, even ancient Greek culture considered the artist a person whose source of inspiration was one of the nine muses - the goddesses that encouraged the arts. Hence, by excluding themselves from the public the writers do not set for themselves a real banishment. On the contrary, by this they actually speak of themselves as leading carriers of their culture, fulfilling and reinforcing its role expectations and myths. In this classic process of symbolic interaction, the writers rebuild themselves from the artist's myth that their culture offers them, and at the same time, by accepting it, they strengthen and empower not just that specific myth of the artist's image, but the whole cultural patrimony for which it stands. In this sense our own study, for example, reflects the hidden streams, originating from the archaic biblical culture, that still affect the current Israeli modern and secular society.

Moreover, this particular cultural myth enables them to aspire to a position, of what we might call an "all-sider" - the joint position of the "outsider" and the "insider", at the same time. A certain feeling of oddness is characteristic of writers, and it can turn into a virtue if they manage to assimilate it into their writing and identity (Day 2002). Perhaps this is the case because as Schutz (1971) has pointed out, the stand of the stranger always involves distantness, hesitation, insecurity and mistrust, but also the ceaseless attempt to interpret the cultural patterns of the social group he seeks to join. For writers this is an especially suitable stand. It enables them to interlace their need to understand their society, and gain its understanding and recognition as its authorized authors on the one hand, and on the other, keep watching and describing it from outside, forever from a fresh and genuine point of view. In other words, the "madness" of the artist represents, amongst other things, a justification and even an invitation to individualism, authenticity, flexibility and openness. These abilities and characteristics are known to be connected to the multi-directional thinking that is necessary for all forms of creativity (Fine 2003; Griffin and McDermott 1998; Kwang and Rodrigues 2002).

Thirdly, the image of the artist as a medium, mediating truths and forces stemming from timeless and placeless strata of the human existential experience, coincides well with the flourishing contemporary New-Age sub-culture. Our era - secular, technological, commercial - has a preference for the immediate, the practical and the earthbound. Manifestations of the intangible, let alone the divine, have been driven to the corner. The universal spiritual needs which, in the past, religion was authorized to express, have been partly blocked. On the other hand, this censorship of authentic human tendencies and aspirations has created a whole burst of extracanonical sub-culture of mysticism and transcendence for the masses. The fine arts have also gained extra power, regarded as being able to raise one-time personal experience into allegory status, much in the way holy scriptures have done for a long time. Literature especially, due to its cultural, intellectual, explicit and verbalized aspects, is more than suitable for that purpose. Thus, a window has opened here for nowadays authors and poets for public serving in this kind of postmodern sanctuary.

Fourthly, as we have seen, the "I" discourse situates the author or the poet in the world, not only as a source but also as a vessel, as many of our interviewees noted. In many ways, this belief can represent a counterbalance to another common life stand between authors and poets, these natural storytellers, proclaiming that "life is nothing but a tale". It can offer them, therefore, a refuge in the idea that there is, after all, something absolute in life, something that goes beyond their own tales and

interpretations. In a way that tends to turn every detail of the historical biography, and primarily of the emotional one, into the next line or verse, there is something very soothing in knowing that you are not just telling and recognizing - that at the very same time you yourself are also told and recognized by something much bigger than yourself. Whilst the importance of the "Me" discourse and the identity creation meta-theme lies in its strengthening the personal experience of having a place and a voice of your own in the social-cultural ensemble, the "I" discourse, as opposed to that, reinforces the level of the historic precisely because it goes beyond it. Apparently, the secret of its charm derives from the idea that it gives the personal life-story an echo in the unhistorical and impersonal levels of existence. In some sense, it can be looked upon as a metaphysical parallel to the fondness toddlers have for stories in which they are placed as the protagonists, stories that validate and add worth to their very existence in the world.

Finally, let us be reminded, that there is an in-advance difficulty in constructing an identity of an "author" or a "poet", and the quotation marks are not accidental in this context. In relation to more common professional occupations, those vocational definitions tend to suffer from an inherent ambiguity. This is because all human beings use words to tell their personal stories and to create meaning. Moreover, nowadays, in the era of computer communication technologies, more than ever, it seems everyone can publish their meditations and raise them to nobility through the power of the printed word. We should note that literature-making is not conditioned by unique tools, materials or techniques, it is not performed in an exclusive pre-defined physical or cultural institution, nor does it require a training period, admission requirements or membership in a formal guild. Thus, even in relation to other forms of artistic expression the weakness inscribed in advance in the titles "author" or "poet" is evident.

In a way, this weakness sheds light on the crucial importance of the tension that exists between the "I-Me" discourses, typical of writers' understanding of their own identity construction process. It seems, to a large extant, that this tension serves as a powerful engine that outlines the course of these expert writers to the so much needed self-definition as authors and poets. Eventually, it enables them to construct clear, distinct and potent identity-stories, despite the immanent difficulties that characterize the way they must conquer in order to reach their destiny as writers.

So, do writers expose the predispositions that enable, and perhaps commit them to write or, do they merely choose to write as they could have chosen any other way of life? Do they discover their identity as authors and poets or gradually construct it? We know, by now, that in their understanding, it is not an either/or question. In any way, and certainly in this context, the identity story of the writer, just like any other story, aims to stand the test of the aesthetic rules. It strives, as Erikson (1963, 1971) had taught, to reach for homogeny and consistency of its unique ingredients. In our case, as we have tried to demonstrate, this all-human tendency to construct a unique identity story from universal components is intensified. The identity-story is the ultimate story created by each of us. We have seen, in the case of these literary creators, that they strive, just as in their writings, to play it as a harmonious choir of the discovered and the constructed, the given and the chosen, the one-time and the eternal.

References

Alma, Hans and Hetty Zock (2002) "I and Me: The spiritual dimension of identity formation." *International Journal of Education & Religion* 3 (1): 1-15.

Babad, Elisha Y., Max Birnbaum and Kenneth D. Benne (1983) *The social self: Group influences on personal identity.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich (1986) *Speech genres and other late essays*. Translated by V.W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press.

------. (1981) *The dialogic imagination: Four* essays. Translated by C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Austin: The University of Texas Press.

Ben-Bassat, Hedda (2000) *Prophets without vision: Subjectivity and the sacred in contemporary American writing*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.

Bertaux, Daniel (1981) "From the life history approach to the transformation of sociological practice." Pp. 29-45 in *Biography and society: The life history approach in the social sciences*, edited by D. Bertaux. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Blumer, Herbert (1969) *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1996) "Understanding." Translated by B. Fowler and E. Agar. *Theory, Culture and Society: Explorations in Critical Social Science* 13 (2): 17-37.

Bruner, Jerome and David A. Kalmar (1998) "Narrative and metanarrative in the construction of self." Pp. 308-331 in *Self-awareness: Its nature and development*, edited by M.D. Ferrari and R.J. Sternberg. New York: Guilford Press.

Coleman, Earle Jerome (1998) *Creativity and spirituality: Bonds between art and religion.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Cooley, Charles Horton (1964) "The social self: The meaning of “I”." Pp. 168-210 in *Human nature and the social order*. New York: Schocken Books.

Davidson, Pamela (2003) "The validation of the writer's prophetic status in the Russian literary tradition: From Pushkin and Iazykov through Gogol to Dostoevsky." *Russian Review* 62 (4): 508-536.

Day, Susan X. (2002) "'Make it uglier. Make it hurt. Make it real': Narrative construction of the creative writer's identity." *Creativity Research Journal* 14 (1): 127-136.

De Peuter, Jennifer (1998) "The dialogics of narrative identity." Pp. 30-48 in *Bakhtin and the human sciences: No last words*, edited by M.M. Bell and M. Gardiner. London: Sage Publications.

Denzin, Norman K. (1989) *Interpretive biography: Qualitative research methods series* (Vol. 17). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

------. (1970) *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods.* Chicago: Aldine Publishing.

Erikson, Erik H. (1971) *Identity: Youth and crisis*. London: Faber & Faber.

------. (1963) *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.

Eysenck, Hans J. (1995) *Genius: The natural history of creativity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fauteux, Kevin (1995) "Regression and reparation in religious experience and creativity." *Pastoral Psychology* 43 (3): 163-175.

Filstead, William J. (1970) "Introduction." Pp. 1-11 in *Qualitative methodology: Firsthand involvement with the social world*, edited by W. J. Filstead. Chicago: Markham.

Fine, Gary A. (2003) "Crafting authenticity: The validation of identity in self-taught art." *Theory and Society* 32 (2): 153-180.

Fischer-Rosenthal, Wolfram (1996) "The problem with identity: Biography as solution to some (post)modernist dilemmas." Pp. 9-20 in *A quest for identity: Post war Jewish biographies*, edited by Y. Kashti, F. Eros, D. Schers and D. Zisenwine. Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University.

Galvin, Rachel (2002) "Of poets prophets and politics." *Humanities* 23 (1): 28-34.

Gargiulo, Gerald J. (1997) "Inner mind/outer mind and the quest for the "I"." Pp. 1-9 in *Soul on the couch: Spirituality, religion and morality in contemporary psychoanalysis*, edited by C. Spezzano and G.J. Gargiulo. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press.

Gedo, John E. (1996) *The artist and the emotional world: Creativity and personality.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Gergen, Kenneth J. (1991) *The saturated self: Dilemmas of identity in contemporary life*. New York: Basic Books.

Goroncy, Jason A. (2006) "Bitter tonic for our time - Why the church needs the world: Peter Taylor Forsyth on Henrik Ibsen." *European Journal of Theology* 15 (2): 105-118.

Griffin, Murray and Mark R. McDermott (1998) "Exploring a tripartite relationship between rebelliousness, openness to experience and creativity." *Social Behavior Personality* 26 (4): 347-356.

Guba, Egon G. and Yvonna S. Lincoln (1982) "Epistemological and methodological bases of naturalistic inquiry." *Educational Communication and Technology Journal* 30 (4): 233-252.

Hermans, Hubert J.M. (2001) "The dialogical self: Toward a theory of personal and cultural positioning." *Culture & Psychology* 7 (3): 243-281.

------. (1997) "Self-narrative in the life course: A contextual approach." Pp. 223-264 in *Narrative development: Six approaches*, edited by M. Bamberg. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Jaynes, Julian (1976) *The origin of consciousness in the breakdown of the bicameral mind.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Jones, Gareth R. (1983) "Life history methodology." Pp. 147 - 159 in *Beyond method: Strategies for social research*, edited by G. Morgan. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Josephs, Ingrid E. (2002) "'The Hopi in Me': The construction of a voice in the dialogical self from a cultural psychological perspective." *Theory & Psychology* 12 (2):161- 173.

Keller-Cohen, Deborah and Cynthia Gordon 2003. "'On trial': Metaphor in telling the life story." *Narrative Inquiry* 13 (1): 1-40.

Kwang, Ng Aik and Daphne Rodrigues (2002) "A big-five personality profile of the adaptor and the innovator." *Journal of Creative Behavior* 36 (4): 254-268.

Langness, Lewis L. and Gelya Frank (1981) *Lives: An anthropological approach to biography.* Novato, CA: Chandler & Sharp.

McAdams, Dan P. (2006) "The problem of narrative coherence." *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 19 (2): 109-125.

------. (1997) "The case for unity in the (post)modern self: A modest proposal." Pp. Vol. 1: 46-78 in *Self and identity: Fundamental issues*. *Rutgers series on self and social identity*, edited by R.D. Ashmore and L.J. Jussim. New York: Oxford University Press.

------. (1996) "Personality, modernity and the storied self: A contemporary framework for studying persons." *Psychological Inquiry* 7 (4): 295-321.

Mead, George Herbert (1934) "The Self." Pp. 135-226 in *Mind, self and society: From a standpoint of a social behaviorist,* edited by C.W. Morris. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Pack, Sam (2006) "How they see me vs. how I see them: The ethnographic self and the personal self." *Anthropological Quarterly* 79 (1): 105-122.

Presser, Lois (2004) "Violent offenders, moral selves: Constructing identities and accounts in the research interview." *Social Problems* 51 (1): 82-101.

Raggatt, Peter T.F. (2000) "Mapping the dialogical self: Towards a rationale and method of assessment." *European Journal of Personality* 14 (1): 65-90.

Ricoeur, Paul (1992) *Oneself as another*. Translated by K. Blamey. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

------. (1991) "The human experience of time and narrative." Translated by D. Pellauer. Pp. 99-116 in *A Ricoeur reader: Reflection and imagination*, edited by M.J. Valdes. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Rosenthal, Gabriele (2004) "Biographical research." Pp. 48-64 in *Qualitative research practice*, edited by C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium and D. Silverman. London: Sage.

------. (1993) "Reconstruction of life stories: Principles of selection in generating stories for narrative biographical interviews." Pp. Vol. 1: 59-91 in *Narrative study of lives*, edited by R. Josselson and A. Lieblich. London: Sage.

Rotenberg, Mordechai (1995a) "Cabalic sexuality and creativity." *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 5 (4): 225-244.

------. (1995b) "'Sexuality and creativity': Response to Bakan's and Witztum's commentaries." *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 5 (4): 255-258.

Sarbin, Theodore R. (1986) "The narrative identity as a root metaphor for psychology." Pp. 3-21 in *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct*, edited by T.R. Sarbin. New York: Praeger.

Sartre, Jean-Paul (1966) *Being and nothingness: An essay on phenomenological ontology*. Translated by H.E. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press.

Sarup, Madan (1996) *Identity, culture and the postmodern world.* Athens: The University of Georgia Press.

Schutz, Alfred (1971) "The Stranger: An essay in social psychology." Pp. 32-38 in *School and Society: A sociological reader*, edited by B.R. Cosin, I.R. Dale, G.M. Island and D.F. Swift. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul/Open University Press.

------. (1962) *Collected papers I: The problem of social reality*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Simonton, Dean K. (1984) *Genius, creativity and leadership.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Stake, Robert E. (1978) "The case study method in social inquiry." *Educational Researcher* 7 (2): 5-8.

Storr, Anthony (1972) *The dynamics of creation*. London: Secker and Warburg.

Tamir, Yael (1996) Some thoughts concerning the phrase: “A quest for identity.” Pp. 21-50 in *A quest for identity: Post war Jewish biographies*, edited by Y. Kashti, F. Eros, D. Schers and D. Zisenwine. Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University.

Tappan, Mark B. (2005) "Domination, subordination and the dialogical self: Identity development and the politics of 'ideological becoming'." *Culture & Psychology* 11 (1): 47-75.

Thomas, Myra (1999) "Seventeen syllables for the self." Pp. 197-214 in *Heart and soul: The therapeutic face of philosophy*, edited by C. Mace. London: Routledge.

Thorne, Avril (2004) "Putting the person into social identity." *Human Development* 47 (6): 361-365.

Titon, Jeff T. (1980) "The life story." *Journal of American Folklore* 93: 276-292.

Valsiner, Jaan (2005) "Scaffolding within the structure of Dialogical Self: Hierarchical dynamics of semiotic mediation." *New Ideas in Psychology* 23 (3): 197-206.

Vasari, Giorgio (1996) *The lives of the painters, sculptors and architects*. Translated by G. D.C. de Vere, introduction and notes D. Ekserdjian. London: D. Campbell.

Yau-fai Ho, David, Shui-fun F. Chan, Peng Si-qing and Kwang Ng. Aik (2001) "The dialogical self: Converging east-west constructions." *Culture & Psychology* 7 (3): 393-408.

Yin, Robert K. (2003) *Case study research: Design and methods*. 3rd Edition. London: Sage Publications.

Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth (1991) *Creative characters*. New York: Routledge.

Citation

Ben-Shir, Deborah (2008) “Born to Write: Discovery and Construction of Self in the Identity Stories of Poets and Writers.” *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org /ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Katarina Jacobsson
Lund University, Sweden

"We Can't Just Do It Any Which Way" – Objectivity Work among Swedish Prosecutors

Abstract

Objectivity is a principle widely acknowledged and honoured in contemporary society. Rather than treating objectivity as an *a priori* defined category to be tested empirically, I refer to the construction of objectivity as it is accomplished in practice as "objectivity work" and consider how Swedish prosecutors in interviews make and communicatively realize (i.e. "make real") its claims. In analyzing two facets of objectivity work – maintaining objectivity and responses to objectivity violations – seven mechanisms are identified: appeals to (1) regulation, (2) duty, and (3) professionalism; responses to violations by (4) incantations of objectivity, (5) corrections, (6) proclamation by contrast, and (7) appeals to human fallibility. Directions for future research emphasize cross-cultural and cross-occupational comparisons, not only within the judiciary as objectivity is of a general concern in any area where disinterested truths are claimed. The concept of objectivity work allows one to study how various actors bring principle into everyday life.

Keywords
Objectivity work; Prosecutors; Accounts; Ethnomethodology; Constructionism; Sweden.

Objective legal proceedings are something of a criterion for a constitutional state. Objectivity should facilitate, if not guarantee, equality before the law. Agents within the legal system often equate this unwavering idea with legal practices: it is understood that the majority of trials take place in a process devoid of value judgments (Conley and O'Barr 1990:60; cf. Baumgartner 1994:130). For decades, social researchers of legal settings have continuously claimed this assumption to be wrong (Conley and O'Barr 1990). Also, in popular culture, questions of whether the legal process has been upheld or violated in terms of equality before the law serve as a major critical theme (e.g. Rogers and Erez 1999). Studies of prosecutors' decision-making are generally guided by these concerns, striving to determine, or measure, whether prosecutors make objective decisions.

This article takes a different point of departure. Objectivity is not seen as an external category that *a priori* is defined for empirical testing. Rather, it is viewed as it

is manifested in people's related legal practices, namely, the everyday work of how prosecutors themselves refer to and demonstrate objectivity as a fundamental goal when they talk about their work. In practice, objectivity must be construed and assigned meaning in relation to the concrete particulars of prosecutorial routines. I refer to the construction of objectivity as it is accomplished in practice as "objectivity work" and consider how Swedish prosecutors in particular, make and communicatively realize (i.e. "make real") its claims.

Objectivity is almost always of a general concern when it comes to studies of prosecutors. Still, the practice of objectivity *work* is seldom (if ever) investigated there; the main focus is almost exclusively on decision-making outcomes and its variation with regard to extra-legal factors such as the effects of race on prosecutorial decision-making. Studying objectivity work does not mean that the leading question is whether prosecutors actually make objective and neutral decisions. The aim rather is to investigate how prosecutors talk about and "do objectivity" in their accounts of professional practice.

From an ethnomethodologically influenced point of departure, interest is directed towards how abstract categories such as rationality (Garfinkel 1988), justice (Maynard & Manzo 1993) or – in this case – objectivity are accomplished and manifested in people's everyday practice. My ambition is not only to investigate the prosecutors' explicit "declarations of objectivity" but also the more subtle demonstrations of "an objective stance". But how do we know when and how people accomplish objectivity without defining the concept? What are the markers or indications of objectivity to guide the analysis? For analytical purposes, it is assumed that we share certain basic associations and assumptions as to what characterizes objectivity. The concept of objectivity is generally associated with impartiality, neutrality and an emphasis on the factual. It is not associated with emotional or personal accounts. A common western cultural conception is that, in the administration of justice, objectivity should facilitate (if not guarantee) equality before the law.

The legal world is one of many settings where objectivity work may be studied. The Swedish legal system offers an interesting case since there are strong beliefs that the Swedish legal system is unparalleled in being an impartial and neutral system. For instance, the widespread idea that Sweden is a non-corrupt country is evident in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (TI 2006). Another example is that any potential discrimination in the Swedish legal system has long been regarded "as a non-issue in Swedish research" (Diesen, Lernestedt, Lindholm, Pettersson 2005:134). This serves as a possible explanation for the neglect of this as a political and especially as a research issue; the regulation of the Swedish administration of justice is assumed to either render discrimination impossible or make it extremely difficult.

Objectivity work and related research

Principle, while broadly upheld, does not translate into the construction of related matters of everyday life for prosecutors. The concept of objectivity work turns our attention to the construction process, as the constructive sense of "work" does in a related research literature dealing with the everyday construction of identity, biography, and social problems. The addition of the concept of work – as in identity work (Snow and Anderson 1987), biographical work (Holstein and Gubrium 2000),

and social problems work (Holstein and Miller 2003) – points to the continuous and practical features of meaning-making, which in the case of prosecutorial decision-making, indicates how objectivity as principle is construed in practice. Concepts such as identity, biography, and culture are commonly used in reified forms as "something you have" (cf. Berger and Luckman 1966). Similarly, objectivity tends to take on personified versions, referring to "something you are" (cf. Rogers and Erez 1999:268). Yet, people just don't "have" an identity or "are" objective. Something must be done to achieve and maintain these as states of being that take account of the particulars of what in practice is understood and indicated to be objective.

Objectivity work is not limited to prosecutorial practice. It takes place in many settings and has been studied more or less explicitly outside the law. There are a number of professions that are similarly expected to carry out their work objectively that is to say in an impartial and matter-of-fact way. Journalists constitute such a group (e.g. Clayman 1992:163), scientists another (e.g. Latour 1987:54; see also Billig 1996:4). Issues of objectivity and neutrality also are significant topics in studies of medical settings (eg. Lutfey 2004; Beagan 2000), although here this has not necessarily been framed in terms of objectivity work. There are, of course, differences in both the degree and standard of objectivity between and within these professions. Whereas for journalists, scientists, and physicians these revolve around professional codes or ethics, an insistence on objectivity in the exercise of authority is inscribed into and demanded by the law:

> Courts of law, administrative authorities and others charged with fulfilling specific functions within the public administration sector shall take everyone's equality before the law into just consideration and observe objectivity and impartiality (Swedish Government Constitution 1 chapter 9§)

Prosecutors' Decision-Making

In American social science studies, the prosecutor is ascribed a decisive role in the career of a case through the legal system. The prosecutor's work comprises a high degree of independent decision-making, which also has become subject to criticism relating to an abuse of power (Ma 2002). Despite the criticism, the prosecutor's powers have increased in recent decades, while judicial supervision can be said to have become somewhat passive (ibid.). It thus follows that the prosecutor is perceived as having a kind of superior power in the American legal system (e.g. Wilmot and Spohn 2004; Rainville 2001; Steinberg 1984). Indeed, the prosecutor's work is sometimes described in rather dramatic or drastic terms, such as "guarding the gateway to justice"[i] (Spohn, Beichner, Davis-Frenzel 2001; Frohmann 1991).

Ma (2002:25) draws attention to the fact that the scope of the American prosecutor's authority does not lie in the power to prosecute, but rather in the power *not* to prosecute in cases where there is sufficient evidence. In particular, the decision not to prosecute for sexual offences has been the subject of close scrutiny (e.g. Mac Murray 1988; Frohmann 1991).

A number of studies have been conducted with the aim of discerning and examining patterns in American prosecutors' decision-making, both quantitatively (e.g. Rainville 2001; Wilmot and Spohn 2004) and qualitatively (e.g. Frohmann 1991; 1997). Legal decision-making seems to be guided by a number of external (legally irrelevant) factors such as ethnicity (e.g. Free 2002), the victim's character traits (e.g. Spohn, Beichner, Davis-Frenzel 2001) and the offender's social status (e.g.

Baumgartner 1994:143). Challenging these results, Katz (2001:454) suggests – on the basis of Frohmann's field research in Californian prosecutors' offices – that prosecutors' work is more about story telling than judging people from "external" characteristics. Regardless of personal values, Katz maintains, the prosecutors are concerned with drafting scripts appropriate to the legal process at hand (cf. Emerson and Paley 1994).

Corresponding studies of prosecutors' decisions have not been carried out to any great extent in Sweden. The Swedish jurist Claes Lernestedt, however, draws attention to a growing tendency that the absolute duty to prosecute is being undermined: "Today it is possible for a prosecutor to neglect to prosecute someone that has committed a crime and could be convicted for it." (ibidem: 118). Furthermore, Leijonhufvud (1996:48) emphasizes that Swedish prosecutors bear "a very great responsibility" for what is examined or not examined in court, which demands "impartiality and objectivity in the exercise of duty."

The interest in legal discrimination in Sweden seems to have increased, not least through a number of journalistic investigations of reports, prosecution decisions and sentences; several of which have come under the spotlight in recent years. One example is Katarina Wennstam's (e.g. 2004) extensive exposition of verdicts of rape. Swedish lawyers and criminologists have also challenged "equality before the law" [*Likhet inför lagen*] in a book bearing the same title (Diesen et al. 2005). The authors maintain that there is empirical evidence that, even within the Swedish legal system, there is structural discrimination in terms of gender, class and ethnicity.

All in all, it can be ascertained that when prosecutors feature in social scientific research, the issues mainly concern whether they actually make neutral and objective decisions according to the principle of equality before the law. This study is not guided by such framing and neither intends to try to prove nor deny the prosecutor's objectivity. The focus is rather on objectivity *per se*; the point of departure being in how prosecutors themselves both talk about and display objectivity in what can be called "objectivity work".

Although not paying particular attention to objectivity *work*, Rogers and Erez (1999) examine how legal practitioners (of which some were prosecutors) interpreted objectivity into legal beliefs. They conclude that each practitioner had differing perspectives on who and what was objective. Nevertheless, by pointing out examples of subjectivity and emotion displays among legal practitioners, the authors tend to deal with the familiar question of whether or not prosecutors are objective, concluding that subjectivity "…was an active and resonate feature of their routine activities." (Rogers and Erez 1999: 285).

Whereas sociological research has drawn attention to the significance of a variety of extra-legal factors (i.e. beyond formal law) in shaping judicial decision-making, it has been criticized for a narrow look for cognitive aspects, disregarding emotional dynamics (Lange 2002). A growing body of literature in the context of both the United States and United Kingdom legal systems suggests that expression and management of emotions is a significant part of the legal professions' every-day work (e.g. Anleu and Mack 2005; Bandes 1999; Harris 2002; Karstedt 2002; Lange 2002). A key aspect in the emotion literature is behavioral control among legal practitioners, whether it regards suppressing improper emotions or eliciting appropriate emotional responses in court. From what I can tell, these themes are mainly investigated on the basis of interviews with legal practitioners, in which they explicitly talk about emotions.

There may be a resemblance between "emotional labor" and "objectivity work".

For instance, Anleu and Mack (2005: 614) suggest that acting in accordance "…with such judicial ethics as impartiality, neutrality, and fairness often depends on the successful performance of emotional labour in the courtroom." However, this conclusion is not based on what happens in the courtroom, but rather on magistrates' interview accounts of how they talk about the necessity not to let feelings and sympathy "get in the way of what you do" (Anleu and Mack ibidem: 611). Such a statement is similar to the ways my prosecutors invoke two incompatible perspectives, the legal and the human, when personal values and (seldom) emotions are discussed (author). I would suggest that – in the interview context – both the magistrates and the prosecutors are engaged in objectivity work rather than emotional labor. The concept of objectivity work is indeed more sensitized to my data that give no evidence of, for example, "suppressed emotions". Objectivity work, on the other hand, is carried out in a particular language and linguistic style with the aim to display "a professional attitude", and as such it is highly visible in the data transcripts.

Furthermore, the concept of emotional labor tends to rely on theoretical assumptions that are very different from the ones that are guiding this analysis. For instance, asserting that legal regulation also involves emotional dimensions, Lange (2002: 205) states: "Both what social actors think and feel produces behaviour." Another theoretically informed perspective stipulates the contrary: behavior (or preferably, *interaction*) produces what people think and feel. The concept of objectivity work is derived from this latter perspective.

Judicial Talk

Related research extends to analyses of talk in judicial contexts. These draw upon observational data of "naturally occurring talk", such as interactions that take place during court proceedings (e.g. Atkinson and Drew 1979; Conley and O'Barr 1990; Holstein 1993). Certain "court researchers" have also explicitly studied how agents such as judges, aided by linguistic subtleties, attain neutrality (Atkinson, M. 1992) as well as other ends. Hobbs (2003) shows, for example, how a lawyer strives to reach solidarity with members of the jury by shifting between popular and more professional language. Komter (1994) has also studied how prosecutors make accusations during court proceedings. The author identifies a number of institutional factors that appear to facilitate accusations; everyday accusations are much more problematic and indirectly conveyed.

Studies of legal proceedings have also been conducted in Sweden, mainly at Linköping University, where a research group combined observations of district court proceedings with follow-up interviews with the parties involved (see e.g. Adelswärd, Aronsson, and Linell 1988; Linell and Jönsson 1991). Adelswärd (1989) illustrates how asymmetrical circumstances that affect the relationship between prosecutor/judge and the defendant can sow seeds of misunderstanding. Even friendly encouragement on the part of the prosecutor can be perceived as sarcasm by the defendant. Adelswärd's (1989: 742ff) descriptions of court proceedings are both interesting and relevant to my study. She found the absence of dramatic, rhetorical techniques striking. Furthermore, she describes the lowered tones, the lack of direct accusations and the absence of signs of suspicion as circumstances that contributed to the experience of a neutral atmosphere. The description indicates a different kind of rhetoric to that which is perhaps expected, particularly if previous knowledge of "court talk" has been acquired from American TV series – something

that Adelswärd humorously points out. If anything, it is about a conversational style where dramatic rhetoric is regarded as being unprofessional – in itself a striking rhetorical style when it comes to factual constructions (cf. Billig 1996:4). It is this type of conversational style, one that both influences and affects the prosecutors' arguments in the interviews, that forms the basis of the forthcoming analysis.

Method of procedure

The empirical material for this analysis has been taken from two separate studies, one concerning the judicial handling of women battering (author) and the other arising from Swedish legal cases with the aim of investigating stories and arguments regarding bribery and corruption (author and coauthors). In both studies, interviews were conducted with prosecutors (supplemented by police fieldwork, interviews with police officers, and charged and sentenced people) with the aim of eliciting stories of their experiences on issues of women battering and bribery and corruption. "Objectivity" was never made explicitly topical.

Eighteen interviews form the basis of the analysis. Seven interviews were completed during 1994 for the women battering study and eleven interviews were conducted 2002-2003 for the study on bribery. In this latter study I was assisted by [co-worker] who conducted six of the interviews. Each interview lasted for about an hour and was tape-recorded with two exceptions where technical problems prevented recording. These, however, have been included in the analysis with the responses paraphrased based on interview notes. Apart from two cases where a telephone conversation was conducted, all interviews took place in the prosecutors' offices.

Revisiting the Interview Material

My new interest in these interviews is based on the lingering fascination with prosecutors seldom addressing difficulties with a uniform and objective application of the law. Professional exercise of duty is often described candidly and without drama: "If there's proof, you prosecute. It's as simple as that", as one prosecutor put it. Indeed, it was my questions that the interviewees found rather odd – which they sometimes implied and sometimes frankly expressed.

In revisiting the interviews, now with the lens of objectivity work, I can see that my questions are not only characterized by a layperson's lack of knowledge of the prosecutors' legal training and regulated profession. They are also based on a sociological approach that is often quite foreign to interviewees. Areas that seemed problematical to me, for example evaluation of evidence that leads to dismissal, could be laconically commented on as being the most obvious thing in the world: "Then you just don't have *enough* evidence".

The opposite was also the case. Phenomena that I took for granted, such as case screening on the basis of a number of organizational and individual grounds[ii] would be perceived as a provokingly distorted description of reality. Such questions on my part sometimes gave rise to long expositions of law and order and the need for objectivity. There are also traces of corrections to my questions in the interview transcripts ("The question is wrongly posed!"), together with well-meaning "sermons" from the prosecutors from a legal perspective. The analysis should be read in the light of the specific circumstance that the encounter between two perspectives constitutes: it prepares the way for explanatory statements, accounts and positions expressed in terms of the discourse of the recommended perspective.

Revisiting old material with new questions is a possibility that is not often utilized (Atkinson, P. 1992:452). Research material is usually regarded as being "finished with" when the project in question is complete. Qualitative material is usually particularly well endowed with varying aspects that imply that "collect and chuck" methods leave much of the material unanalysed (Åkerström, Jacobsson, and Wästerfors 2003:353). Previously analysed research material can, of course, be reused in a number of ways. One example is to apply a radically different analytical perspective. Another example is to make use of those "by-products" that tend to be generated in every research project. The analysis presented here can be said to be an attempt to take advantage of the unused surpluses of two different studies: how prosecutors talked about their work in a more general sense. It can be added that certain ethical misgivings may have arisen vis-à-vis those interviewed in the choice of investigating a phenomenon that had not been fully outlined: "objectivity" as a topic in itself was never mentioned by me as an interviewer. At the same time, I maintain that grappling with unpredictable questions that appear in a research project ought to be regarded as defensible, albeit in line with the original guarantee of anonymity.

In approaching the material with these new questions, I have selected the prosecutor interviews from the studies concerning violence against women and bribery, listened to the taped recordings, and transcribed selected parts of the material more carefully than before. To a certain extent this approach and procedure relate to quite a different analytic style: detailed transcriptions facilitate a more linguistically oriented analysis (cf. Åkerström et al. 2003:351ff). Furthermore, whereas the interviews to the previous studies mainly served as sources of information, for this analysis they are treated as sources of conversation (cf. Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Potter 1997:149).

A note on translation

A professional translator translated the first Swedish draft into English. Several adjustments have been made since then. Translating interviewees' accounts is a delicate matter, particularly when the analysis is concerned with how people account for their practices by focusing their choices of words and phrases. As a foreigner it is impossible to know all the nuances a language offers its native speakers. Legal terms are also difficult to translate since they may have different meanings in different legal systems. The analysis is concerned with accounting processes, rather than legal process and my wish is that any inaccuracies regarding legal terms will not obscure analytic arguments.

Maintaining objectivity

Two major facets of objectivity work will be examined. The first, in this section, deals with how actors maintain the objective order in appeals to locally established entities such as rules, duty, and professionalism. The ways this is accomplished – appeals to rules and regulations, appeals to duty, and displays of professionalism – will be discerned in detail. The section following this one deals with the distinguishable types of accounts that are offered when the objective order is violated or questioned: incantations of objectivity, corrections, proclamation by contrast, appeals to human fallibility. Taken together, these analyses will show how and in

what ways the objectivity of prosecutorial decision-making is constructed in practice and how violations of objectivity are constructed so that the basic sense of objective decision-making is nonetheless sustained. The various ways this is accomplished can be thought of as the constructive mechanisms that sustain objectivity in practice, working to bring principle into everyday life.

Appeals to Rules and Regulations

As noted earlier, the American prosecutor is described as the unbridled central figure of the judicial system (e.g. Wilmot and Spohn 2004; Rainville 2001; Steinberg 1984; Frohmann 1991). In contrast, the Swedish prosecutor's role and significance is depicted as restrained and controlled – at least according to how the prosecutors included in this study describe themselves and their work. "We are just a gearbox between the police and the courts", says one interviewee, and alludes to their dependency on these "enormous colossi" to carry out their work. A prosecutor's work is further described as being relatively technical and stringently regulated and something quite independent of the individual prosecutor's background, ambitions and personal values.

Emerson and Paley (1994) have criticised social scientific studies on the exercise of justice for simplifying the relationship between rules and discretion, where the one is regarded as the antithesis of the other. Such a dichotomy disregards the varied interpretation of the rules that is unavoidable, for instance, the discretion used "…to determine the relevant 'facts' or 'situation' to which specific rules apply…" (Emerson and Paley ibidem: 231).

Many of the prosecutors featured in this study also appear to base their arguments on the dichotomy rules–discretion. Their reasoning appears to be based on the principle "the more of the former the less of the latter" and vice versa. Rules and regulations are thus emphasized as a kind of assurance against arbitrariness in general. Related appeals are one way of realizing (i.e. making real) objectivity in practice. One example is taken from an interview with a prosecutor who talks about a situation where she has prosecuted a man for bribery. In judicial terms the offence was clear-cut, but concerned a relatively small sum of money. Even the prosecutor describes the matter as "a mere trifle". In the light of this, we talk about whether she could have chosen *not* to prosecute.

> **Interviewer**: But *you* would have been guilty of misconduct if you hadn't taken this up when you, when you received (.) notice about it, or?
>
> **Prosecutor**: No, I would've passed judgment.
>
> **Interviewer**: Yes (.) right, that's the procedure.
>
> **Prosecutor**: In that case I would've- then I would've passed judgment and taken the decision not to open investigations and later it had (.) the decision had been sent to the county court that in turn would've had the possibility to take it (.) my decision to the district prosecutor for reconsideration. It isn't a question of just throwing report notifications in the trash can (laughs) kind of but (.) it [the report] would have been *judged* (slight emphasis) here.[iii] *(bribery-8-f)*

A "judgment" and a "decision" are contrasted against report notifications that are arbitrarily thrown into the trash can. The account aims at demonstrating the precision of the law in contrast to its arbitrariness. A decision is not just something for

the individual prosecutor, but is rather regarded as one element in a system of (possible) control actions that guarantee its upholding.

Another prosecutor describes how accusations of partiality are handled:

> Well, as objectivity is an integral part (.) of the job, it's clear that a statement to the contrary must be taken seriously. And there, there we have special rules about how we handle that type of report. /---/[iv] If there is no substance, the district prosecutor makes a report to the effect that there is no reason to suspect any breach- If it does turn out to be a statement of something definite, then we are obliged to report it to the Prosecutor-General in Stockholm, who then decides whether to initiate investigations or whatever. So there are regulations and procedures as to how we deal with something like this, we can't just do things any which way. It's all been decided. *(bribery-2-m)*

Both interviewees quoted above describe the regulations as an already-decided upon course of action that covers a wide variety of decisions. There are no surprises, "It's all been *decided*". The actual rules and regulations surrounding the case are regarded as guarantees for the elimination, or at least the minimization, of arbitrariness. Descriptions like the above also mean that the ambition to demonstrate the regulations' independence of the individual prosecutor is also reached; the matter is handled bureaucratically, irrespective of who is dealing with it.

Appeals to Duty

A second way of constructing objectivity involves professionals explaining both the general work and specific decisions through reference to the law, duty and assignments. For this purpose, there is an organizationally embedded vocabulary to fall back on. Scott and Lyman (1968:54) state that "[o]rganizations systematically provide accounts for their members in a variety of situations." Some interviewees discuss specific cases in the light of anticipating that their decisions may be challenged. When this happens one often actualizes the professional task and duty. This is what the prosecutor cited below does when asked why he didn't allow investigations into a number of reports of bribery but only those that related to fraud:

> It's part of the prosecutor's duty to limit inquiries to that whatever you think can be verified and that which is, that is punishable. So it had eh, from a point of view of the penalty, it didn't have that much importance. *(bribery-1-m)*

Other explanations can include anything from an obligation to prosecute to an obligation *not* to indict, which is something that Frohmann (1996; 1991) also pointed out and studied among American prosecutors. Common to such explanations is that the specific case in question is constructed as free from options. A Swedish example of the former is the prosecutor who finds reasons to justify her decision to indict in a case that the police who handled the case didn't regard as being particularly serious. She gives some credit to the investigator, but only from a perspective that is assumed to be inconsistent with the law:

> **Prosecutor**: Yes, of course I thought he [the accused] was a total idiot, and naïve with it.

Interviewer: I see.

Prosecutor: (1.0) But that's nothing- Well I must, hmpf, you know, eh, eh, it, that kind of, of opinions you cannot make-

Interviewer: -decisions-

Prosecutor: -decisions on. Rather um, the task, my duty, it sounds (laughs) very important this but um. The duty, the duty of my work after all is to make sure that, um, that the requirements of the law are met. If it's like that, then I'm actually obliged to start a prosecution.

Interviewer: Yes, exactly.

Prosecutor: Well, um, if I don't press charges even if it is a crime then I am guilty of breach of duty. But um (sighs). *(bribery-8-f)*

Here the prosecutor stresses *the duty* at hand: establishing if "the requirements of the law is met". She seems to say that she is not the kind of civil servant who just would have an opinion one way or the other. On the contrary, she makes careful assessments and decides in accordance with the law. This is a decisive portrayal of a professional prosecutor that doesn't mistake subjective opinions for objective professional work, although she comments apologetically on the professional formulations: "it sounds (laughs) very important this but um". Also, note that I actively encourage the professional description.

Actions can be accounted for in terms of commitment as well as attachment (Scott and Lyman 1968:54). The prosecutors seem to prefer commitment-terms such as "obligation" and "a prosecutor's duty". Scott and Lyman (ibidem) emphasize circumstances where explanations referring to attachment would be regarded as inappropriate or socially unacceptable. Their example is rather dramatic: "Hangmen who, when questioned about their occupation, profess to be emotionally attracted to killing, are not likely to have their account honored." (Scott and Lyman ibidem)

Of course, the prosecutor is not an executioner. The need to demonstrate an aspect of duty rather than attachment can, however, be quite similar. Someone with a definite inclination to "nail" people would hardly match up to the neutral and objective image that Swedish prosecutors want to portray. On the whole, "prosecution style", as discussed in more detail below, can be described as something restrained and toned down.

Appeals to and Displays of Professionalism

A third way of constructing objectivity is found in appeals to and displays of professionalism. Several prosecutors refer to a professional attitude when we talk about not including "feelings in the work" or whether one makes uniform evidentiary values. "It's part and parcel of the job" maintained one prosecutor, and dismissed the possibility that similar situations might be assessed in different ways.

The way in which prosecutors talk about their work signals their regard for professional duty, or conversely: their commitment to professionalism can be signalled in many different ways in a kind of subtle, professional self-presentation. Although the law is indeed based on social morals, in the prosecutors' accounts the very concept of morals (in all senses) is regarded as being something separate from the law. The concept is not included in judicial vocabulary, so to speak.

It is not only the legal professions[v] that have to decide on traditionally moralistic questions. The same is also true for professions within, for example, the medical,

educational and social work fields. Bergmann (1998) emphasizes the "rational" framing of these professions and how the work is "demoralized":

> However, they work within institutions that function according to 'rational' models and criteria, and they therefore are officially constrained to 'demoralize' issues, couching them in terms of scientific or bureaucratic rationality. Professionals are trained to take a 'neutralistic' stance with respect to the problems they deal with. (p. 291)

Professional training in "demoralization" can help to explain the difficulties of trying to persuade a professional to express him or herself in moral terms about the exercise of that profession (cf. author). In the following interview extract, the interviewer wonders what the prosecutor thinks about bribery from a moral standpoint. The interviewer's laughter indicates that the question in itself is not easy to pose. As the conversation unfolds it is evident that the prosecutor finds the question odd:

> **Interviewer**: Let's go back to comparing bribery with other crimes. How would you say that it relates to, what might you call it (laughs) m- moral reprehensibility or (laughs) something of that kind?
>
> **Prosecutor**: I thought you were going to ask something quite different.
>
> **Interviewer**: Aha. What did you think I was going to ask?
>
> **Prosecutor**: I thought you were going to ask whether, whether, if they were more difficult to investigate than others.
>
> **Interviewer**: Well, yes, you can answer that too.
>
> (Both laugh)
>
> **Prosecutor**: Yes. Yes, because that's easier [to answer]. Because it, it [bribery] belongs to those difficult to determine crimes since nobody wants (.) to participate [development of the subject] (*ctd*.)

The interviewee avoids the question by formulating another, in his view, more relevant or reasonable question under the circumstances. After dwelling on the subject for a while, the prosecutor returns to the question of "moral reprehensibility" – this time to develop the idea of why it is not relevant to a prosecutor:

> **Prosecutor**: No, all this about moral reprehensibility- yes (1.0) It isn't (1.0) it doesn't actually depend on the prosecutor having any point of view about, about moral (.) reprehensibility. On the contrary, it is the case that when we go on training courses (.) we become especially aware of not allowing for any moral standpoints when we are in court. "Thou shalt not moralise in court" is a classic expression that is instilled in you from the very beginning. You can't sit in court and say that [the interviewee switches to a pompous tone of voice] "Honourable Court! Look at this lost soul who, in the most cruel and un- un- unreasonable manner, has violated something".
>
> **Interviewer**: (laughs)
>
> **Prosecutor**: /---/[vi] No, we *don't* moralise, *shouldn't* anyway. But eh (.) it is eh (.) how the crimes are rated on the penalty scales or, or (.) its latitude, that is to say between the least and highest sanction, that gives you an idea as to how the law has regarded it. *(bribery-2-m)*

The prosecutor's illustration of a fictitious moralizing colleague stands in sharp contrast to the dispassionate and technical description that follows. Here, decisions are not made in terms of moral indignation. Instead, it is the placing on the penalty scale that prevails, according to acknowledged latitudes, all in line with judicial regulations.

Displays of professionalism are not always as clear-cut and single-minded as explicit appeals to professionalism such as the one of the above prosecutor. An appropriate prosecution style can be demonstrated in a more subtle way, such as in the following quote where an emotionally indifferent attitude is demonstrated. We are talking about women that choose to return to the man who has assaulted them:

> **Interviewer**: Do you get upset when a woman goes back to someone who has assaulted her?
>
> **Prosecutor**: No, I don't care one jot (laughter). It doesn't concern me at all. No, I don't get involved. It's her decision (4.0) So that it's (4.0) it isn't a standpoint you take but (.) it's just a case you have to (.) complete. Then what (1.0) what people make of their lives, I mean it's not my (.) that's not my problem, is it? *(women battering-2-f)*

In order to be in a position to make objective and impartial decisions, one naturally shouldn't have any personal interest in the outcome. Judging from the "correct indifference" (Adelswärd 1989:743) demonstrated above, personal attachment is also regarded as being inappropriate. Even without a directly posing of the question of personal attachment, an appropriate indifference or disinterest was displayed during the interviews. One prosecutor talks about how, for example, he had indicted a number of local politicians for bribery, and what the consequences were:

> And that led to ah eh in so far as they hadn't seen fit to resign from their political assignments before, they did so afterwards (I: yes) I think that they- I wonder if they hadn't already resigned? But I'm not sure about that (I: yes) since that's not interesting to me at all, is it (I: no) whether they are continuing their political work or not. *(bribery-10-m)*

The significance of the interviewee's digression, as to whether the politicians resigned or not, is toned down by the comments that follow ("since that's not interesting to me at all, is it"). In accordance with what Potter (1996:124) calls *stake inoculation*, it seems to be important to emphasize indifference in order to avoid the suspicion that one should have any kind of interest in individual cases. At the same time, there is evidence of a limitation to the strictly legal duty: when it's over the case is closed. Any interest beyond this is regarded as not being particularly appropriate.

The fact that I have been highlighting demonstrated indifference and disinterest should not in any way be taken as a statement that prosecutors *are* insensitive, uninvolved and indifferent. It is the actual demonstration that I find interesting, as it tells us something about the assumptions and norms that a prosecutor's professional exercise of duty is based on. Such demonstrations seem to be an inclusive element in the overall project, which is to show an objective (matter-of-fact, neutral) approach to the exercise of duty. Of course, other techniques can also be applied to demonstrate objectivity, techniques that varies according to situation and context. A further example is Maxwell Atkinson's (1992) study of British judges' dialogues with the accused. The judges sought to display "neutrality" by systematically avoiding

words, sounds, and phrases that had any affiliating function in terms of how everyday conversation might be interpreted.

Responses to Objectivity Violations

The interviewees generally managed to provide evidence of a correct and distanced bearing, often in a quite refined way. When objectivity in any sense was questioned, the prosecutor's objective position came across in a more direct or blunt way. The following section deals with the interviewee's tendency to "repair" the objective order when it is threatened or violated, even in the subtlest sense. Thus, the "violator" may sometimes be the interviewee him- or herself when, for example, "non-relevant judicial" matters crop up. At other times it was the interviewer who were thought to apprehend the legal world in the wrong way. For the prosecutors, such contexts or situations of objectivity violations tended to elicit a variety of responses. Four types of responses were distinguished analytically: Incantations of objectivity, corrections, proclamation by contrasting perspectives, and appeals to human fallibility.

Incantations of Objectivity

In plain terms one type of response to objectivity violations can be described as some kind of incantation that is automatically added to an expression of something that appears to lack judicial relevance. Three examples of prosecutors' accounts are given where "the incantation" is underlined.

> 1. And then you may have a personal opinion (.) <u>which, which, which you (.) are not affected by (.) when you work on the case</u>." (*bribery-2-m)*
>
> 2. In part eh there was a great deal of public interest for the fact that it was eh political, local politically distinguished people that were indicted (I: yes) <u>it isn't anything that affects my actions in any way</u> (*bribery-10-m)*
>
> 3. "What!?" they say [those suspected of bribery]. "I ha- haven't thought about it at all eh Am I supposed to be a receiver of bribes because I ta-" And I, I really think that this is, in the sense of personal experience, that this is not anything you say just to avoid responsibility. But I can definitely say that investigators and others perceive these viewpoints as genuine in the sense that it really corresponds to their [those under suspicion] perception. <u>It doesn't help them in the end, so to speak, although it is still judged as a crime but-</u> *(bribery-8-m)*

In none of the above examples has the interviewer questioned, nor in any way doubted, what the prosecutor has been saying. It is rather as though they themselves realize that they find themselves in a "non-judicial-relevant-situation". The first example is concerned with the prosecutor's personal perception. The second example refers to the media interest that a legal case attracts. The third example touches upon the recognition of the lack of knowledge on the part of the accused that the action was criminal. When such "legally irrelevant" events are discussed it can happen, as in the above examples, that the interviewees regard themselves as being out on a limb. An "incantation of objectivity" has the effect of bringing the

conversation back to its discursive track. The comments tend to be seen as promoting objectivity, and perhaps even creating it.

Corrections

A second way of responding to objectivity violations is by corrections. As has already been mentioned, prosecutors do not always welcome a sociological/layperson's perspective of judicial issues. They often expressed this in subtle ways, such as a shrug of the shoulders or raised eyebrows. Occasionally there would be more a direct rebuke in terms of establishing the judicial perspective by using the correct terminology, such as rejecting the term "women battering" on the grounds that it is "newspaper talk". One prosecutor firmly states: "We don't use it. It's called actual bodily harm here".

In another interview I am corrected in a more indirect way, which causes me to repair the mistake myself. In this instance, I am interviewing the prosecutor in the light of his dismissal of a case of women battering where a woman maintained that she had been struck by her husband.

> **Interviewer**: Do you *think* that he assaulted her? (1.0) You know, [do you think so] personally?
>
> **Prosecutor**: Well, does it really matter what I personally think? *(ctd.)*

The interviewee indicates an unwillingness to discuss the matter in the terms I suggest. Both "think" and "personally" are very inadequate terms to use if one wishes to maintain an objective order. It takes a little while before I take the prosecutor's reluctance on board, but having done that I subsequently acknowledge the prosecutor's professionalism, which I have underlined in the extract:

> **Interviewer**: Ah but, oh, I imagine (prosecutor laughs) that this is how one thinks (.) I understand that you work from the point of view of what can be substantiated.
>
> **Prosecutor**: Yes well, but it isn't really- yes, of course we do. That is to say (.) yes, I'm pretty well convinced that he did. *(women battering-7-m)*

It seems as though my concession of "what can be substantiated" as the decisive principle for the dismissed case makes it possible for the prosecutor to admit to a personal perception of what had happened to the woman in question.

In another case, the interviewee corrected her own choice of wording in a distanced way as though to draw attention to the correct terminology. She answers a question about a case in the following way: "Yes, I thought so. Or 'thought' (.) the term is *judged* - if it is to be expressed rather more elegantly (laughter)."

Proclamation by Contrast

Proclaiming the objectivity ideal by contrasting the legal language with everyday vocabulary is a third way of responding to suggested flaws in the objective order. The idea that professional status and distance to the lay perspective is sustained through linguistic barriers represents a long established viewpoint (Hughes 1994: 37). Several interviewees dramatize such linguistic differences with the practical aim of

showing how professional judgments serve the objective ideal and, as such, are far more superior than merely opinions of ordinary people.

Interviewees regularly mark everyday opinions by sloppy expressions that are often spiced with swear words. By contrast, the language of objectivity is characterized by "correct" language, free from evaluative terms. In this section I give space to a particular interviewee who further reinforces this contrast by switching between different "voices". He uses exaggerated dialect to distinguish the everyday perspective, while "his own" voice is used to describe the judicial. The exposition is most likely provoked by my lack of knowledge about "case prioritization". With all the desired clarity, the prosecutor successfully – in both content and style – highlights the defectiveness of my argument. With disguised voice (an exaggerated broad dialect indicated by quotation marks) he conjures up dramatic scenarios:

> **Interviewer**: But isn't it the case that you actually *have* to prioritize if you have a heavy workload? I'm thinking of you personally now, as your work-pile increases.
>
> **Prosecutor**: (sighs) (2.0) That's all very well, but do you mean that as an individual prosecutor I should sit here and say "no (1.0) I don't think that dope is important, it can't be that dangerous so quite frankly I couldn't care less", while another colleague sits in his office and thinks "well no, tax evasion, that's really ridiculous and nothing at all to get worked up about so I'll scrap the case", and yet another thinks that "home distilling, ah it really ought to be legal so I'll dismiss that case". Another can sit there and say that "old biddies that get whipped, well they've asked for it, so I'll write that off because I don't think it's worth wasting time over, after all in most cases they've deserved it". (1.0) Is that what it should be like? I certainly hope not.
>
> **Interviewer**: Not really. *(ctd.)*

The description is rhetorically effective: is there any other response to the challenging moral question ("Is that what it should be like?) than a submissive "not really"? The prosecutor's "terrible scenario" of what he and his imaginary colleagues should do from the point of view of their personal opinion is illustrated by a choice of words that is the complete opposite of objective and judicial language; he makes conspicuous use of non-judicial terms (e.g. "dope", "old biddies that get whipped") and evaluations (e.g. "they've asked for it"). The statements are delivered in an everyday and linguistically slipshod style. The choice of the word "think" is significant. The sequences are developed in terms of what a number of colleagues *think* about this, that or the other. Here, there is neither professional "judgment" nor objective "consideration".

The accented speech (in quotation marks) that the interviewee uses is not only effective in a dramatic sense but also offers him possible agents against which to position himself (cf. Holsánová 1998:108). The prosecutor's self-presentation is formulated in implicit negations: the cited voices stand for everything he himself is against. The interview proceeds with the interviewee tautologically establishing that: "The prosecutor should deal with the offences that are criminalized!" After this he continues (following a short digression) to declare his standpoint, which seems more decisive as a result of my objections:

> **Prosecutor**: We can't have prosecutors expressing their personal views because that's a dangerous road to go down (3.0) Are we to start indicting foreigners more than Swedes? Are we to-

> **Interviewer**: Don't you think that something like this has any significance? Is there no room for (.) for personal views or whatever experience you have, etc?
>
> **Prosecutor**: [Starts to talk before I have finished] No, I regard that as being completely wrong. I can't allow my personal views on home distilling or dope or-
>
> **Interviewer**: No, but say-
>
> **Prosecutor**: [raises his voice] actual bodily harm or what I do or don't think, affect my, my prioritization of, of (.) the crimes I am trying to combat. *(ctd.)*

The above exposition is the closest I came to a passionate utterance on the part of a prosecutor – an utterance regarding the importance of a dispassionate application of the law. It is reminiscent of anthropologist Philip's comment after having studied a number of American judges:"…the clearest ideological stance the judges take is that they are not ideological…" (Philips 1998: xv).

As has previously been suggested, it is possible that my initial questions released this subsequent declaration of non-judgemental assessments. The personal framing of the question could have been interpreted as me wanting to elicit the interviewee's consent to, or "approval" of a more arbitrary order. This was clearly something that he was not prepared to give. As soon as I am allowed to develop my argument, I reformulate the question:

> **Interviewer**: No, that clearly isn't right, and one's ideal may be that something like that shouldn't even exist. But I just wonder if there is (.) like other colleagues (.) whether there is any *scope* for (.) the prosecutor's personal opinions? *(ctd.)*

First and foremost I take the opportunity to establish that arbitrary judgments are "wrong". By modifying the question to include "other colleagues", and also by alluding to the "prosecutor" as an abstract role, the framing is considerably different. When the question is no longer about the interviewee's personal opinion (he has also had an opportunity to position himself) he is then able to discuss the issue. Interestingly enough, he now straightforwardly describes how matters can be re-prioritized for reasons other than those laid down by the law:

> **Prosecutor**: Yes, that's right, if I am not particularly active in putting forward my investigation, the period for prosecution will expire. If there is something that I think is (.)
>
> **Interviewer**: A little [indicates that the case could be of little interest or lesser importance]
>
> **Prosecutor**: Less- Yes. It's got so bad in Stockholm that nobody wants to investigate frauds below a hundred thousand, or so I've heard. Those cases are put on one side until they expire. *(women battering-4-m)*

With surprising ease, the interviewee appears to abandon his concern for an account that indicates the very opposite of what he has previously championed. It indicates the importance of establishing one's point of view before allowing an outsider (as the interviewer that I am) to be party to informal or personal accounts of the exercise of the profession. The dialogue also shows that the framing of questions

in interviews, are equally important to analyze.

Appeals to Human Fallibility

When discussing the risk that similar cases are judged differently, the majority of prosecutors tone this possibility down, or even rule it out altogether. There are, however, ways of talking about differences in the application of the law, but this invokes a non-judicial response, namely, that "making mistakes is human". Referring to human fallibility is a fourth response to suggested defects of the objective order. In the following example, we discuss cases of women battering in general where the plaintiff ("the woman") no longer wishes to take part:

> **Interviewer**: But does it vary from prosecutor to prosecutor as to how far one can go without involving the woman.
>
> **Prosecutor**: Yes, I'm sure it does. (.) Yes (3.0) I suppose it does. But there are, there are rules you know (2.0) eh-
>
> **Interviewer**: except they don't always govern, or you can't always-
>
> **Prosecutor**: Well, it's, we are human after all and assess the- perhaps interpret the same material differently (2.0) so that eh- (2.0) it *is* sometimes difficult to judge, it really is. *(women battering-2-f)*

By referring to truths other than judicial ones – such as failure is human – the above prosecutor can acknowledge "different interpretations of the same material". There is a great reluctance to say this, however. In the following excerpt, though, there is no trace of such hesitation. Once again the issue is concerned with how the prosecutor handles the assault of women. This interviewee is the only one to take the initiative to suggest that the administration of justice doesn't always follow the rulebook:

> **Interviewer**: Does the case usually go to prosecution if there's only the woman's story to hand?
>
> **Prosecutor**: I think that depends on how ambitious the prosecutor is.
>
> **Interviewer**: Oh, I see. (2.0) There can be different assessments-
>
> **Prosecutor**: Yes, of course.
>
> **Interviewer**: -according to how far one takes it?
>
> **Prosecutor**: If one was to be completely honest, it has a lot to do with which prosecutor is in charge, which district it is in and (.) perhaps how much one has to do that particular day. You can be so swamped with other work on that very day that it can happen that (1.0) I can very well imagine that you (.) think that it might not work anyway. We're only humans after all. (*women battering-5-f*)

Administrative failings and deviations from the law are constructed as "human" – something other than law. Conversely, the judicial organization's handling of a situation or case is constructed as an everlasting grinding mill where the raw material (in the form of reports) is worked in a standardized and predictable way. It would seem that, just as predictably, the machine decides (rather than an individual) when a report no longer constitutes suitable raw material, but instead repudiates the

process. If something goes wrong, it is not because of the machine but rather "the human factor". In the same way, laws appear reified as if they were something other than human products – "such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws or manifestations of divine will (Berger and Luckmann 1966:106).

Conclusion

Objectivity work is not limited to matters dealing with correct procedure, but is engaged in all accounts of proper prosecutorial procedure. It is evident in varied narratives relating to descriptions of appropriate professional activity. Indeed, the prosecution style in itself may be described as the result of objectivity work.

In studying two facets of objectivity work – maintaining objectivity and responses to objectivity violations – I have identified seven mechanisms by which prosecutors support claims to objectivity in their work, thus bringing principle into everyday life. Swedish prosecutors cultivate objectivity by frequent appeals to (1) rules and regulation, (2) duty, and (3) professionalism. Also violations of objectivity are responded to or accounted for so that the major sense of objective decision-making is nonetheless maintained. I have called these responses (4) incantations of objectivity, (5) corrections, (6) proclamation by contrast, and (7) appeals to human fallibility.

An important direction for future research relates to two limitations of the analysis. First is the national venue of the objectivity work under consideration. These results are derived from Swedish material and may very well be culture-bound. It would be useful to compare the material from non-Swedish prosecutors in order to discern how general the mechanisms identified are to all prosecutorial objectivity work. A second direction deals with identifying different *forms* of objectivity work than the one found in an interview context. The study of objectivity work would profit from supplementing the interview data with other types of data, such as observations and documents.

Future research also relates to the potential for further hypotheses in this area. First, it is tempting to suggest that an "objectivity culture" cuts across judicial systems. Yet this has to be examined empirically. For instance, the mechanisms of objectivity work may vary with occupations within the legal system, given that the discursive resources at hand are not necessarily the same for prosecutors as, say, for judges. Another question is whether objectivity work is an important aspect also of employees without a law degree, for example in the everyday practice of court clerks.

Second, the results from this project can be compared with objectivity work in legal systems unlike the Swedish system. I have already suggested some significant differences between the Swedish and American legal systems that may be crucial to how principles of objectivity are discursively brought into practice. Or even more diverse, how do actors perform objectivity work in countries known for a corruptive judiciary? Is it possible to find a pattern – in spite of vast differences in legal systems – that suggests that objectivity work is a cross-cultural phenomenon?

Third, comparisons are not restricted to the legal occupations or varying legal systems. The concept of objectivity work is broadly applicable and can be studied in non-legal settings with the principle in tow. Objectivity is of a general concern in any area where disinterested truths are claimed. These are areas where authorities or experts are expected to treat those they serve in an impartial and objective way.

Objectivity is a principle of knowledge and service widely acknowledged and ostensibly honoured in contemporary society. Rather than testing an *a priori* defined

category, the concept of objectivity work emphasizes the accomplishment of objectivity from the ground up and allows one to study how actors realize this abstract principle in practice.

Endnotes

i This is not to say that prosecutors describe themselves in such a way. They may very well downplay discretionary power, which was the case with the American judges studied by Philips (1998).

ii Social science scholars are well aware that grassroots bureaucrats screen cases according to organizational and individual circumstances (e.g. Lipsky 1980). Studies on case screening usually discuss the phenomenon in concrete terms (rather than criticize their existence): How does this work in practice? Which "clients" are included or excluded? See, for example, Miller's (1991) study on employment officers.

iii Transcription signs:

[ ]	Explanation within square brackets.
( )	E.g. laughter is depicted within brackets.
/---/	Sequence has been removed (and commented on in a footnote).
förf-	Hyphen indicates interrupted speech.
(1.0)	Silence in seconds.
(.)	Less than a second of silence.
Italics	Indicate emphasis.
<u>Underlined</u>	indicates a phrase I want to highlight for the reader.

iv Six lines removed where the prosecutor says that the first step is to find out whether there is "substance to the charge".

v In accordance with later definitions of "profession" this does not only refer to the traditional "status professions" but also includes so-called semi-professional groups (see, for example, Bergmann 1998; Miller 1991).

vi Six lines removed where the prosecutor speculates about whether moralizing is negotiable in American courtrooms and maintains that such a thing is not possible in Sweden (with the exception of defence lawyers).

Acknowledgements

This study was sponsored by the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research. I am most grateful to Jaber F. Gubrium and Malin Åkerström for their valuable comments, suggestions, and firm advice.

References

Adelswärd, Viveka (1989) "Defendants' Interpretations of Encouragements in Court: The Construction of Meaning in an Institutional Context." *Journal of Pragmatics* 13:741-749.

Adelswärd, Viveka, Karin Aronsson and Per Linell (1988) "Discourse of blame.

Courtroom construction of social reality from the perspective of the defendant." *Semiotica* 71:261-284.

Akerström, Malin, Katarina Jacobsson and David Wästerfors (2003) "Reanalysis of Previously Collected Material." Pp. 344-357 in *Qualitative Research Practice,* edited by C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium, and D. Silverman. London: Sage.

Anleu, Sharyn Roach and Kathy Mack (2005) "Magistrates' Everyday Work and Emotional Labour." *Journal of Law and Society* 32(4): 590-614.

Atkinson, Maxwell J. and Paul Drew (1979) *Order in Court. The Organisation of Verbal Interaction in Judicial Settings.* London: The MacMillan Press.

Atkinson, Maxwell, J. (1992) "Displaying Neutrality: Formal Aspects of Informal Court Proceedings." Pp. 199-211 in *Talk at Work. Interaction in Institutional Settings,* edited by P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge: University Press.

Atkinson, Paul (1992) "The Ethnography of a Medical Setting: Reading, Writing and Rhetoric." *Qualitative Health Research* 2 (4):451-474.

Bandes, Susan, A. editor (1999) *The passions of law*. New York: New York University Press.

Baumgartner, M. P. (1994) "The Myth of Discretion." Pp. 129-162 in *The Uses of Discretion*, edited by K. Hawkins. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Beagan, Brenda, L. (2000) "Neutralizing differences: producing neutral doctors for (almost) neutral patients." *Social Science & Medicine* 51:1253-1265.

Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality.* London: Penguin Books.

Bergmann, Jörg R. (1998) "Introduction: Morality in Discourse." *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 31 (3-4):279-294.

Billig, Michael (1996) *Arguing and Thinking. A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology.* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clayman, Steven E. (1992) "Footing in the Achievement of Neutrality: the Case of News- Interview Discourse." Pp. 163-198 in *Talk at Work. Interaction in Institutional Settings*, edited by P. Drew and J. Heritage. Cambridge: University Press.

Conley, John M. and William M O'Barr (1990) *Rules Versus Relationships. The Ethnography of Legal Discourse*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Diesen, Christian, Claes Lernestedt, Torun Lindholm and Tove Pettersson (2005) *Likhet inför lagen*. Stockholm: Natur och kultur.

Emerson, Robert M. and Blair Paley (1994) "Organizational Horizons and Complaint Filing." Pp. 231-248 in *The Uses of Discretion*, edited by K. Hawkins. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Free, Marvin D. (2002) "Race and Presentencing Decisions in the United States: A Summary and Critique of the Research." *Criminal Justice Review* 27 (2):203-226.

Frohmann, Lisa (1997) "Convictability and Discordant Locales: Reproducing Race, Class, and Gender Ideologies in Prosecutorial Decisionmaking." *Law & Society Review* 31 (3):531- 555.

------. (1996) ”Hard Cases: Prosecutorial Accounts for Filing Unconvictable Sexual Assault Complaints.” *Current Research on Occupations and Professions* 9:189-209.

------. (1991) ”Discrediting Victims’ Allegations of Sexual Assault: Prosecutorial Accounts of Case Rejections.” *Social Problems* 38 (2):213-226.

Garfinkel, Harold (1988) ”Evidence for Locally Produced, Naturally Accountable Phenomena of Order, Logic, Reason, Meaning, Method, etc.” *Sociological Theory* 6:103-109.

Harris, Lloyd C. (2002) “The emotional labour of barristers: an exploration of emotional labour by status professionals.” *Journal of Management Studies* 39 (4): 553-584.

Hobbs, Pamela (2003) ”’Is that what we’re here about?’: a Lawyer’s Use of Impression Management in a Closing Argument at Trial.” *Discourse and Society* 14 (3):273-290.

Holsánová, Jana (1998) ”Att byta röst och rädda ansiktet. Citatanvändning i samtal om ’de andra’.” *Språk & Stil* 8:105-133.

Holstein, James A. (1993) *Court-Ordered Insanity: Interpretive Practice and Involuntary Commitment.* Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Holstein, James A. and Gale Miller (2003) “Social Constructionism and Social Problems Work.” Pp. 70-91 in *Challenges and Choices: Constructionist Perspectives on Social Problems*, edited by J. A. Holstein and G. Miller. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Holstein, James A. and Jaber F. Gubrium (2000) *Constructing the Life Course*. 2nd ed. New York: General Hall.

Hughes, Geoffrey (1994) ”The Historical Development of the Register Barrier in Professional Language.” Pp. 37-47 in *Text and Talk in Professional Contexts*, edited by B-L. Gunnarsson, P. Linell, and B. Nordberg, B. Uppsala: The Swedish Association of Applied Linguistics.

Karstedt, Susanne (2002) “Emotions and Criminal Justice.” *Theoretical Criminology* 6(3):299- 317.

Katz, Jack (2001) ”From How to Why. On Luminous Description and Causal Inference in Ethnography (Part 1).” *Ethnography* 2 (4):443-473.

Komter, Martha L. (1994) ”Accusations and Defences in Courtroom Interaction.” *Discourse & Society* 5 (2):165-187.

Lange, Bettina. 2002. “The Emotional Dimension in Legal Regulation.” *Journal of Law and Society* 29 (1):197-225.

Latour, Bruno (1987) *Science in Action.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Leijonhufvud, Madeleine (1996) *Etiken i juridiken.* Stockholm: Norstedts Juridik.

Linell, Per and Linda Jönsson (1991) “Suspect stories: perspective-setting in an asymmetrical situation.” Pp. 75-100 in *Asymmetries in Dialogue*, edited by I. Marková and K. Foppa. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Lipsky, Michael (1980) *Street-Level Bureaucracy. Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lutfey, Karen (2004) “Assessment, Objectivity, and Interaction: The Case of Patient Compliance With Medical Treatment Regimens.” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 67(4):343- 368.

Ma, Yue (2002) ”Prosecutorial Discretion and Plea Bargaining in the United States, France, Germany, and Italy: A Comparative Perspective.” *International Criminal Justice Review* 12:22-52.

Maynard, Douglas W. and John F. Manzo (1993) ”On the Sociology of Justice: Theoretical Notes From an Actual Jury Deliberation.” *Sociological Theory* 11 (2):171-193.

Mac Murray, Bruce K. (1988) ”The Nonprosecution of Sexual Abuse and Informal Justice.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 3 (2):197-202.

Miller, Gale (1991) *Enforcing the Work Ethic: The Rhetoric and Everyday Life in a Work Incentive Program*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Philips, Susan U. (1998) *Ideology in the Language of Judges. How Judges Practice Law, Politics, and Courtroom Control.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Potter, Jonathan (1997) “Discourse Analysis as a Way of Analysing Naturally Occurring Talk.” Pp. 145-160 in *Qualitative Research. Theory, Method and Practice*. Edited by D. Silverman. London: Sage.

------. (1996) *Representing Reality. Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction.* London: SAGE.

Rainville, Gerard (2001) ”An Analysis of Factors Related to Prosecutor Sentencing Preferences.” *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 12 (4):295-310.

Rogers, Linda J. and Edna Erez (1999) “The Contextuality of Objectivity in Sentencing Among Legal Professionals in South Australia.” *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 27:267-286.

Scott, Marvin B. and Stanford M. Lyman. (1968) ”Accounts.” *American Sociological Review* 33:46-62.

Snow, David. A. & Anderson, Leon (1987) “Identity Work Among the Homeless: The Verbal Construction and Avowal of Personal Identities.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 92 (6): 1336-1371.

Spohn, Cassia, Dawn Beichner, and Erika Davis-Frenzel (2001) ”Prosecutorial Justification for Sexual Assault Case Rejection: ’Guarding the Gateway to Justice’.” *Social Problems* 48 (2):206-235.

Steinberg, Allen (1984) ”From Private Prosecution to Plea Bargaining: Criminal Prosecution, the District Attorney, and American Legal History.” *Crime & Delinquency* 30 (4):568-592.

TI (2006) “Corruption Perceptions Index.” Transparency International. Available online. Retrieved March 2008 (http://www.transparency.org)

Wennstam, Katarina (2004) *En riktig våldtäktsman: en bok om samhällets syn på våldtäkt.* Stockholm: Bonnier.

Wilmot, Keith A. and Cassia Spohn (2004) ”Prosecutorial Discretion and Real-Offense Sentencing: An Analysis of Relevant Conduct Under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines.” *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 15 (3):324-343.

Citation

Jacobsson, Katarina (2008) "'We Can't Just Do It Any Which Way' – Objectivity Work among Swedish Prosecutors." *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Jack Fong
California State Polytechnic University, USA

American Social "Reminders" of Citizenship after September 11, 2001: Nativisms and the Retractability of American Identity

Abstract

My discussion considers how crisis dramatically changes social relationships and interaction patterns within a multicultural context. Specifically, I note the inherent social asymmetry of multicultural configurations, thus rendering it vulnerable for the dominant ethnic/racial group, the *ethnocracy*, to exact symbolically and materialistically punitive measures against minorities during periods of national crisis. I situate my discussion of dramatically changed social interactions in the post-September 11, 2001 period, when the attacks on the World Trade Center towers triggered nativism against Arab Americans, or any group phenotypically similar to the construction of "Arab." I note how this nativism is not new but is a historical and consistent articulation of the ethnocratic stratum that retracts the American identity and notions of citizenship away from minorities during times of national crisis. The discussion concludes with how American multiculturalism is still full of unresolved ethnic and racial symbolisms that hark back to nineteenth century attempts by the White power structure to idealize, culturally and phenotypically, the constitution of an "ideal" American.

Keywords

Racism; Nativism; Multiculturalism; Ethnocracy; Ethnicity; Identity; Citizenship

The event of September 11, 2001 has brought Americans to yet another historical crossroad. Our shocked population immediately grieved, searched for consolation from its citizenry, and attempted to heal. Others, however, searched for scapegoats. In the meanwhile the state apparatus began to prepare for war. The "first war of the twenty first century" as the Unites States president referred to it, would be pitched on television in the following weeks. The political discourse of the United States, constructed by President Bush and his jingoists, henceforth viewed the engagements to ensue as part of its foreign policy to eradicate terrorism.

In the domestic sphere, however, the events following 9/11 unearthed historical tendencies of the United States' dysfunctional legacy involving mistreatment of American minorities during national crises. As such, I hope to examine how events following 9/11 functioned to highlight historically unresolved issues related to ethnic/race relations and notions of citizenship in the United States. The cultural reading I hope to provide should present some of the disenchantments regarding the

©2005-2008 Qualitative Sociology Review

history of American nation construction, that is, I hope to demonstrate how ethnicity and race—beyond the aesthetic and atmospheric cultural diacritica that are its outputs—have *material consequences*, sometimes grave.

Ethnic and race identities, then, are large cultural repositories that collect histories. Cultural histories, narratives, and denials are frequently dumped into its reservoirs where its constituents, in turn, churn out new hopes and new histories. Ethnicity and race, then, are the most visceral collective units that make visible multicultural dynamics that are frequently in contestations with one another, creating new modes of interaction and perspectives on Americanism.

Decades ago, however, scholarly address of ethnicity in, say, nation construction, tended to view ethnic and racial articulations as nuisances—as "impediments to effective state-integration" (Connor 1972: 319). If there was an address of ethnic diversity, it was formulated in a manner that does not make it theoretically or technocratically problematic for integration (Connor 1972). Such is the nature of the modernist paradigm insofar as ethnic and racial identities are concerned: it assumes that actors of antagonistic identities will normatively and ultimately defer to the state's construction of nation through assimilation. Conditions around the world, however, point to the consistent staying power of ethnic identity and its accompanying symbolisms. This pattern was also observable in the United States in the weeks following 9/11. Indeed, modernization has not withered away ethnic identity in the context of diversity. The opposite behooves consideration: modernization has strengthened the internal colonial tendencies of the dominant group when national crises threaten its hegemony.

My discussion aims to make visible how the media insinuates and how the public acts on "commonly shared dispositions" of the dominant White society (Bourdieu 1984; Adkins and Grant 2007). In the one month following September 11, I extrapolate considerations from: (1) two news reports on CNN and MSNBC that reported on racist backlashes against minority Americans with (2) a popular well-intentioned public service announcement from the Ad Council that urged unity among Americans. Although superficially the narratives from the two contexts appear as diametrically opposite events, the combined synergy of their implications is still based on a White Americancentric attitude that minorities are "less" American than those of phenotypically European stock.

The aforementioned problem must be addressed so that an honest assessment can be made that US multiculturalism is highly asymmetrical in configuring social interaction *and* unresolved in terms of how multicultural politics are articulated. Moreover in terms of global implications for understanding asymmetrical multiculturalism overall, it can remind and warn all citizens on the destructive tendencies inherent in any ethnic/racial group when they have a monopoly on all forms of socio-cultural capital and control of socio-political institutions. My article attempts to make exigent this reminder given that the vast majority of states around the world are multiethnic (Gurr 1993).

In the case of the United States, the diacritica of US multiculturalism after 9/11 reveals how American society is still configured along "spatial segregation" where "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" (Moor and Pierce 2007: 173). Robert Putnam (2007) noted that in America, this pattern has reduced societal trust and social solidarity among different groups. More interestingly, not only is there a high level of distrust directed against "other" groups, but distrust of people belonging to *their own ilk*. For Anthony Giddens commenting on

Putnam's findings, "diversity seems to encourage social isolation, not enrichment" (Giddens 2007: 86).

This pattern, if not already explicit to most people, will be when in times of national crisis, bitter cultural articulations emerge and sometimes violently intensify the already segregated configuration of American interaction, dramatically changing social relationships. Due to the lingering urgency perennially tied to memories and implications of 9/11, I have opted to address the media articulations first before considering some theoretical models that can "read" the implications of the media articulations.

Backlash

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, notions of who constituted being an "American" fell into disarray. As the hegemonic construction of "nation" harnessed patriotic sentiments that would be channeled for geopolitical justice, these same sentiments indirectly or directly—depending on one's political orientation—contributed to the domestic emergence of hate crimes directed against Arab, Muslim and South Asian Americans fitting the phenotypical imagination of what an "Arab" or a "Middle Easterner" might look like. Indeed, there was an increase in hate crimes in the United States directed against male Sikhs—who are neither Arabic nor Muslim—due to their wearing of turbans. One victim, a forty-nine year old Sikh man by the name of Balbir Singh Sodhi, was shot to death on September 15, 2001 in Mesa, Arizona, by Frank Silva Roque.

> On Saturday morning, Balbir Sodhi went to Costco where he had been named Businessman of the Year. Costco had sold out their American flags. While there, Sodhi spotted a Red Cross Fund for victims of September 11 and donated around $75, all the money he had in his pocket at the time. Then he went back to the gas station because the landscapers were coming. Sodhi was beautifying the spot with flowers and a lawn. The landscapers spent most of the morning working on the area around the station. They called Sodhi out to take a look at their work.
>
> Frank Silva Roque, 42, who worked for Boeing's helicopter division and had recently moved to Mesa from Alabama, drove up to the gas station in his pickup truck. Instead of stopping at one of the pumps, he drove straight up to Balbir Sodhi and shot him with a .380 calibre firearm. Three rounds hit him in the back. When police arrived at Roque's mobile home he yelled, 'I'm an American patriot, arrest me and let the terrorist go wild.' (Thayil 2006)

Before the police arrested Roque he had already shot at a Lebanese clerk and riddled an Afghani family's home with bullets.

In the following days Frank Sesno, Washington Bureau Chief for CNN reported:

> SESNO: It is an ugly, yet sadly predictable undercurrent following last week's terror and destruction [Images of rowdy teen with flag screaming]—expressions of hate directed against Arab Americans: a mosque in Cleveland rammed by a car [Images of car being towed out of damaged mosque], an Iraqi pizzeria in Massachusetts torched [Images of worker, perhaps owner, cleaning up]… One watchdog group has catalogued more than two hundred incidents so far. The FBI is looking into more than fifty specific complaints. [Muslim woman speaks]: 'There have been some

> women who have been attacked and many of my family members and friends have advised me to change the way I dress.' (CNN 2001: September 18)

NBC reported:

> There's outright fear in the Arab community. Another mosque in Washington was attacked today. In Detroit, an Arab American newspaper is getting hundreds of hate calls: [actual voicemail message is played] 'I hope every Arab-born dies, slimy piece of shit race.' In suburban Chicago police broke up an angry mob of three hundred outside a mosque. Today, fourteen year old Aliyah Salima hides behind closed curtains and locked doors-she saw those 'ugly' Americans: [Aliyah speaks] 'I was scared they would hit me with a flag pole, beat me with my own flag.' (MSNBC 2001: September 22)

Yet in this period of post-9/11 America, where certain articulations of collective pain was violently fused with nationalist anger, a sector of American civil society surprisingly emerged to produce what is, on the surface, a visual anthem celebrating America's multicultural diversity.

The Ad Council produced the well intentioned "I'm an American" public service announcement (PSA) that aired ten days after 9/11, for duration of three to four months. The vast majority of Americans have seen this fifteen to twenty-second PSA on television, where individuals in different settings proclaim they are "American" while a warm fiddle melody nurtures a folkloric mood in hopes of invoking a sense of togetherness. The individuals in the ad were mostly American minorities, that is, phenotypically non-Whites, with a few personalities proclaiming their "Americaness" with a heavy foreign accent. In essence the PSA was the first visually condensed celebration of America's multicultural population, stripped of propagandistic voiceovers by politicians or school officials. Indeed, upon seeing this PSA I awaited to record its future airing—there were certain cues about the PSA I felt I was just on the verge of understanding.

According to ad executives and Roy Spence, President of the Texas-based ad agency GSD&M that designed the PSA for the Ad Council, it was "the most important work we have ever done" (Ad Council 2004: 28). The Ad Council noted in its 2004 report "Public Service Advertising that Changed a Nation":

> Photographers filmed scores of Americans of every background and age imaginable in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Reno, Dallas, Austin, and Raleigh. By the time the spots were completed, over 100 people had donated their time and talents. (2004: 28)

After the PSA aired, Judy Trabulsi, one of the co-founders of GSD&M noted, "I would say the campaign received easily over 500 emails. Maybe it's closer to 1,000. It's just totally amazing that almost three years later there is still so much interest in a spot that ran for maybe three or four months in 2001" (Ad Council 2004: 28). Ad Council President and CEO Peggy Conlon noted: "It was a tremendous collaborative effort that shows how quickly the ad industry can respond when it is needed most…The unprecedented volunteer effort by the advertising industry was our gift to America" (2004: 29). Indeed, the Ad Council and GSD&M still celebrate that teachers, human resources executives all covet copies of the ad so as to "incorporate it into diversity training" as well as for "everyday Americans who want it

for inspiration" (2004: 29).

Therefore, following September 11, we have what *appear* to be two conflicting trajectories in how nation-construction occurred in the United States: (1) racist backlash was meted out among ethnic minorities of the United States, especially if they phenotypically appeared Middle Eastern. The first trajectory is based on the overlooked site of domestic conflict where American ethnic minorities are rendered vulnerable to hate crimes committed by members of the *ethnocracy*—the dominant ethnic/racial group that controls social and political capital—with the latter group engaged in the extrajudicial punishment of the former (Stavenhagen 1986, 1996; Brown 1994); (2) the second trajectory includes the ethnocracy's attempt to convince all Americans and American minorities (as in the Ad Council's "I'm an American" PSA) that the latter's citizenship status and legitimacy are indeed sound because they really do belong to the multicultural tapestry that comprises the American cultural tapestry.

There are some important implications that can be drawn from these dynamics. Although the aforementioned trajectories appear diametrically opposed (that is, at the level of lived experience is the racist backlash directed against Americans who phenotypically appeared Middle Eastern, and at the level of political and cultural discourse, the desire to generate unity), in reality the cultural implication is the same: they are both, in fact, derivative of how "American" is still constructed along a Eurocentric theme and therefore, the American identity is *retractable* from its ethnic minorities during times of crisis.

Atavisms of Nativisms

As I attempt to make visible the patterns of prejudices in the United States' post-9/11 multicultural experience, I attempt to answer why and when the processes of retracting the American identity occurs, as well as identify its trajectory and the group that engender the process. The retractability of American identity during times of crisis is an important and anomalous socio-cultural feature that must be made visible because the asymmetrical nature of multiculturalism, and more importantly, its consequences, are rarely addressed in the narrative of the American experience. By asymmetrical multiculturalism I intend to convey the view that there is an inherent inequality in how citizenship is experienced through multicultural relationships, and that this inequality exhibits a key attribute: the inequality is relatively obscured in times of national stability, thus allowing multicultural articulations to prioritize an expression that celebrates diversity *through relativism*. In times of national crisis, however, some constituents of the ethnocracy will abandon its relativistic stance by situating cultural groups on a hierarchical scale, to be followed by the retraction of American identity from minority cultural groups.

My discussion of multiculturalism during crisis can be seen in opposition to scholars that only sloganeer the benefits of diversity as a *multicultural constant*. Multiculturalism in crisis activates within the individual of the collective group a strong primary identification, skewed toward ethnic and racial nationalism. My assertion, then, is diametrically opposed to the ideas of Amartya Sen explicated in his important 2006 work, *Identity and Violence: the Illusion of Destiny*. It is imperative that I explore and critique Sen's assertions, which ultimately are faulted in only one area: his celebration of an individual's hybridified identities without considering how crisis can nullify them. Only when this task is achieved can we move forward toward discussing nascent primary identities that arise during times of national crisis, especially those that emerged following September 11, 2001.

Amartya Sen's Celebration of Diversity

Multiculturalism is an important narrative and strategy for social coexistence. It is employed nationally in pluralistic societies and globally in diplomatic discourses to celebrate the importance of tolerance and diversity. Acknowledging multiple identities in each one of us and within the group thus celebrates the fluidity of human beings, and not the insular construction of people based exclusively on just ethnicity, religion, class or gender.[i] The implication inherent in such a perspective is clear: that we should not be led down one living mode that is subsumed under an absolutist identity. Amartya Sen in his important work warns us about embarking on such a path, lest we engage in an insular politics of exclusion by not embracing the diversity in others as well as in ourselves.

For Sen, each individual is a compilation of a variety of group cultures based on residency, geographic origin, gender, class, politics, profession, sport interests, and social commitments, to name but a few. It is the interaction of these various affiliations that give us our rich identities. Indeed, Sen argues, "none of them can be taken to be the person's only identity or singular membership category" (2006: 5). Sen, a self-acknowledged Smithian, celebrates the choices that individuals have: "It is…hard to believe that a person really has no choice in deciding what relative importance to attach to the various groups to which he or she belongs" (2006: 5). Sen is impassioned in his plea for readers to see the diversity inherent in each of us. Celebrating one's different affiliations and not an overarching single affiliation also prevents oppressive and prejudicial elements from pigeonholing an actor or a people into narrow cultural compartments across the present and across time (for example, India is *not* only a Hindu civilization according to Sen). For Sen even within "one" culture there is heterogeneity, hybridity, and an implied continuous amalgamation of shared beliefs.

Most importantly, by approaching diversity inherent within each individual, Sen documents the contributions made by individuals of different affiliations toward not only their own cultures, but toward different cultures across the present as well as across time. Culture cannot be seen as "an isolated force independent of other influences" and the assumption that culture is a hermetically sealed repository of shared meanings and way of life is "deeply delusive" (2006: 113). Sen emphasizes this point as he discusses the fluidity of "Indian" culture and contrasts it to the "one culture" view that India is a Hindu civilization:

> Muslims are not the only non-Hindu group in the Indian population. The Sikhs have a major presence, as do the Jains. India is not only the country of the origin of Buddhism; the dominant religion of India was Buddhism for over a millennium, and the Chinese often referred to India as 'the Buddhist kingdom.' Agnostic and atheistic schools of thought—the Carvaka and the Lokayata—have flourished in India from at least the sixth century B.C. to the present day. There have been large Christian communities in India from the fourth century—two hundred years before there were substantial Christian communities in Britain. Jews came to India shortly after the fall of Jerusalem; Parsees from the eighth century. (Sen 2006: 47-48)

Moreover:

> Being a Muslim is not an overarching identity that determines everything in which a person believes. For example, Emperor Akbar's tolerance and heterodoxy had supporters as well as detractors among influential Muslim groups in Agra and Delhi in sixteenth-century India. (Sen 2006: 65)
>
> When…Akbar, the Great Mughal, was making similar pronouncements on religious tolerance in Agra from the 1590s onward (such as, 'No one should be interfered with on account of religion, and anyone is to be allowed to go over to a religion that pleases him'), the Inquisitions were quite extensive in Europe, and the heretics were still being burned at the stake. (Sen 2006: 50)

As a result:

> In partitioning the population of the world into those belonging to 'the Islamic world,' 'the Western world,' 'the Hindu world,' 'the Buddhist world,' the divisive power of classificatory priority is implicitly used to place people firmly inside a unique set of rigid boxes. (Sen 2006: 11)

Sen's sentiments are thus for a multicultural coexistence based on cultural liberties, where one can freely choose his or her associations and affiliations over inherited and unchosen cultural scripts that are made to take precedence, i.e., become a primary identity ahead of other social affiliations (though Sen reminds us that the merits of cultural diversity must depend heavily on "how that diversity is brought about and sustained"; 2006: 116).

A Critique of Sen

Sen's assertions that there is or should be for individuals choice in affiliating with cultural pluralities is an ideal that, in American multiculturalism, only attainable consistently for a certain social stratum: the dominant cultural group in power that has a monopoly on political capital to dictate nation-construction. I also fundamentally disagree with Sen's assertion that "important as culture is, it is not uniquely significant in determining our lives and identities…race, gender, profession, politics, also matter, and can matter powerfully" (2006: 112). My contention is that certain social circumstances will activate the articulation of ethnic consciousness to be a primary identity that incorporates race *and* gender, for example, as key components of a total politicized ethnicity. I make this argument as a response to how Sen tends to mechanistically treat ethnicity, race, gender, and political affiliations as separate categories.

I also reject the distinction that race is a biological phenomenon whereas ethnicity is a symbolic, and thus, cultural one. The experience and consequence of race in America is, after all, experienced phenotypically as *visual ethnicity* and thus, must be construed as a socio-cultural and socio-political phenomenon. I also derive my perspective from Pierre Van Den Berghe's criticism on the position that frequent usage and interpretation of cultural markers by ethnic groups thus qualifies ethnicity as a purely symbolic phenomenon (Van Den Berghe 1996).

Although Van Den Berghe concedes that ethnicity can be a primarily symbolic articulation, this feature is exhibited only when ethnic groups live in regional proximity with one another over time, thus diluting the genetic and phenotypical markers that would otherwise set them apart. That is, if there are long periods of exogamy,

conquest, or the condition of being conquered, the resulting populations in neighboring ethnic groups will "look…much alike" (Van Den Berghe 1996: 58). Only when there are visual similarities will cultural markers such as language be more effective than genetic or phenotypical markers for differentiating between cultural communities, or *ethnies*:

> Norwegians and Swedes…could never be racists toward one another, even if they wanted to. They have to listen to one another before they can tell who is who. The Nazis tried to be racists with the Jews but their biological markers worked with perhaps 10 to 15 percent reliability. In practice, they used mostly cultural markers: circumcision, synagogue attendance, the Star of David, denunciations, surnames, etc. They actually had a very difficult time picking out the Jews from their Gentile neighbors, especially in the assimilated Jewry of Western Europe (Van Den Berghe 1996: 61).

Van Den Berghe also notes that *when* phenotypical markers "do a reliable job" of differentiating between groups, the exclusive use of the markers for discernment, and in a less-than-desirable scenario, prejudicial punishment, takes precedence. European colonization of the world is an example where the great distances involved in territorial acquisition inevitably activated this phenotypical awareness, which was ultimately articulated biologically to justify and reinforce ethnic stratification and the belief in racial superiority. In other words, phenotypical discernment and consciousness is "activated" between groups that are phenotypically different, such as between the Zulus and Boers of Africa: "you could shoot at 500 meters and never make a mistake" (1996: 61).

> Facial features (notably eye, lip and nose shape), hair texture and physical stature are also used where they are diacritic… In Rwanda and Burundi where the Hutu-Tutsi-Twa distinction is marked by large group differences in height, stature is widely used as a criterion. It works better in Rwanda where a rigid caste system hindered interbreeding, than in the more fluid social structure of Burundi, but in both cases, the physical distinction was used as a quick and dirty basis for sweeping genocidal action. (Van Den Berghe 1996: 61)

Since ethnic communities in the US exhibit both phenotypical and cultural differences, US multiculturalism is a socio-cultural imbroglio, historically conflict-prone, with many of its actors prone to hyper-discernments of the "other." Yet this process must be seen in terms of degree as groups that control socio-political institutions are more prone to exhibit an insidious articulation of this discernment, while the subordinated group/s tend to utilize the discernment for defensive purposes.

Given this context, we must answer an important question provided to us by Sen: is multiculturalism just a series of configurations that are continuations of "all the preexisting culture practices that happen to be present at a point in time (for example, new immigrants may be induced to continue their old fixed ways…and discouraged—directly and indirectly—from changing their behavior pattern at all)," or one where there is no undermining of one's choice to affiliate, assemble, and diversify one's identities beyond one or two key primary identities (2006: 116)? As aforementioned, my current response insofar as minority populations are concerned points to the former, with an added consideration: minority group members who continue "their old fixed ways" do so as a defensive posture resulting from their

experiences with participational and institutional discrimination. Moreover, this mode is one that is *selected* under exigent social circumstances.

Although Sen concedes that the freedom to choose one's identity "in the eyes of others can sometimes be…limited" he neglects how systemic crisis, the failure of institutions and infrastructure—and national crisis, a political emergency threatening the construction of an overarching union—can severely alter human relationships for the long term, limiting actors' choices and his or her menu of identities as lived modes (Sen 2006: 31). That is, hypothetically speaking, a fourth generation Japanese American, or *yonsei*, who is card-carrying member of the Sierra Club and a member of the California Teacher's Association are not helpful identities if there is a race conflagration is directed against them. And since September 11, a phenotypically Arab American may find a large segment of the American population dismissive of his Christian background,[ii] Oxford education, or his or her other superfluous affiliations. In the context of crisis, it is in the interest, then, for the actor of the ethnic minority group to choose a return to a primary identity where, as Barth argues, its boundaries "define the group [and] not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (1969: 15). Indeed:

> Where there is less security and people live under a greater threat of arbitrariness and violence outside their primary community, the insecurity itself acts as a constraint on inter-ethnic contacts. In this situation, many forms of interaction between members of different ethnic groups may fail to develop, even though a potential complementarity of interests obtains. Forms of interaction may be blocked because of a lack of trust or a lack of opportunity to consummate transactions. (Barth 1969: 36)

Sen's relativism fails acknowledge the power of an ethnocratic stratum in constructing multicultural configurations. Stavenhagen's concept of ethnocracy argues that the ethnic/racial group with the most political, economic and cultural power will attempt to dominate other ethnies in the image of its own and through its institutional structures "impose its own particular ethnic interests on the whole of national society" (1996: 197). Brown defines the ethnocratic state as "where the state acts as the agency of the dominant ethnic community in terms of ideologies, its policies and its resource distribution" (1994: 36).

Brown lists three main tendencies of the ethnocratic state: First, the majority ethnie is disproportionately and overwhelmingly granted access to state elite positions, the civil service, and armed forces. Moreover, "where recruitment…from other ethnic origins does occur, it is conditional upon their assimilation into the dominant ethnic culture" (1994: 36-48). Moreover, Brown notes that "the state elites use these positions to promote their ethnic interests, rather than acting as either an 'autonomous' state bureaucracy or as representatives of the socio-economic class strata from which they originate" (1994: 36-48). But Brown was not the only one to notice this ubiquitous pattern of multicultural asymmetry. In 1987, Weiner noted some basic features of multicultural societies:

> In country after country, a single ethnic group has taken control over the state and used its powers to exercise control over others… In retrospect there has been far less 'nation-building' than many analysts had expected or hoped, for the process of state building has rendered many ethnic groups devoid of power or influence. (Weiner 1987: 36-37)

Second, the ethnocratic state positions its own values at the top of a *vertical* multicultural scale, and constructs its history in a hegemonic fashion. Although ethnocratic states often claim a sort of universalism, the ethnocentric assumptions underlying their domestic policies render the state neither "ethnically neutral nor multi-ethnic, but…mono-ethnic" (Brown 1994: 36). Finally, ethnocratic states utilize the outputs of their institutional structures, "its constitutions, its laws and its political structures" to reinforce a monopoly on power for the ethnocratic polity (Brown 1994: 37). Overall, politics in an ethnocratic state is based on the "introduction of values and institutions of the ethnic group into the peripheral communities" (Brown 1994: 38).

The implicitness or explicitness of what peace activist John Brown Childs terms as a *politics of conversion* and the politics of exclusion (if the conversion fails) indicate that multicultural affiliations are not exclusively a product of individual choices, i.e., the personally selected affiliations of individual Americans did not construct the multicultural diacritica we have in the US today nor in its past (Childs 2003: 21-22). Instead, the current US multicultural discourse is a product of ethnocratic nation construction. This packaged top-to-bottom multiculturalism is further employed by the ethnocracy as a euphemistic political cloak to hide the failure of integrationist policies: this is the latent essence of US multiculturalism.

It is the ethnocracy and its control of major social institutions, particularly law enforcement and quasi-military and military governmental institutions, which renders US multiculturalism as skewed, asymmetrical, riddled with inequalities, and prone to ethnic and sectarian violence. One only needs to examine nativist backlashes against ethnic communities during national crises. Indeed, the ethnocracy is *most visible* as a complicit stratum in maintaining an asymmetrical multicultural configuration when it retracts the American identity away from its minority ethnies during such a crisis.

Sen's neglect of ethnocratic tendencies during national crises means his conceptualization of multiculturalism is segmented. Moreover, Sen's arguments are not inviolable once we examine how national crises can significantly alter social relationships, potentially reconfiguring and filtering out superfluous identity affiliations so as to generate a "safety zone" within one key primary identity. Barth is thus correct in noting that the "processes whereby ethnic units maintain themselves are thus clearly affected…by the variable of regional security" (1969: 37).

US ethnocratic tendencies during systemic and national crises, and nation-construction via the retractability of American identity from actors of minority nations, reinvigorate the need to revisit the tenets of the internal colonial thesis. Defined by Michael Hechter in his 1975 work *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in National Development, 1536-1966*, internal colonialism is a process where the "core of the nation state comes to dominate the periphery politically and exploit it materially" (1975: 9). Under the structural constraints of internal colonialism:

> There is crystallization of the unequal distribution of resources and power between the two groups. The superordinate group, or core, seeks to stabilize and monopolize its advantages through policies aiming at the institutionalization of the existing stratification system. (Hechter 1975: 9)

What is most impressive about Hechter's analyses is his anticipation of the consequences of internal colonialism upon minority ethnie actors in ostensibly egalitarian societies:

> In societies having an egalitarian ideology it is rather difficult for persons in disadvantaged ethnic groups to imagine that poverty has befallen them entirely by chance… Perhaps they will come to think their material disadvantage occurs precisely on account of their ethnic distinctiveness…they will not have far to look for evidence supporting this perception because discrimination abounds against all such groups… Peoples' reactions to this dilemma…for whom escape is impossible, will tend to identify on the basis of their ethnic distinctiveness. (1978: 299)

Hechter also reminds us that the concept is not new:

> Despite its current popularity, the concept of internal colonialism is not a new one. V.I. Lenin was, perhaps, the first writer to use this notion in an empirical investigation of national development. Several years after, Antonio Gramsci discussed the Italian *Mezzogiorno* in similar terms. More recently, Latin American sociologists have made use of this concept to describe the Amerindian regions of their societies. (Hechter 1975: 9)

Havens and Flinn defines internal colonialism as "*structural* [italics added] arrangements typified by a relatively small dominant group which controls the allocation of resources, and a large, subjected mass composed of various groups…blocked from means of social mobility" (1970: 11). The authors further explain:

> It emphasizes that these dualisms exist as a result of the exploitation of the subjected groups. The dominant group is not a source of structural change, but, rather, a preserver of the structure in order to reap the benefits of such a set of social relations. (Havens and Flinn 1970: 11)

Thus, like a colony:

> members of the subject people are given to believe that they can improve their positions through individual effort and merit, providing that they learn the dominant culture, develop the attitudes and values displayed by members of the dominant group, and acquire skills useful to members of the ruling class. (Geschwender 1978: 82)

Carmichael and Hamilton's 1967 work *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation in America* provides another reading of internal colonialism on American minority ethnies engaged political and cultural struggles against ethnocratic hegemony. Moreover, Carmichael and Hamilton's perspective is still relevant today because it continues to explain how even in an ostensibly pluralistic American body politic, the ethnocratic power structure "quickly becomes a monolithic structure on issues of race" and "when faced with demands from black people the multi-faction whites unite and present a common front" (1967: 7). Carmichael and Hamilton's adaptation of internal colonialism along racial lines is prescient because it addresses decades later what scholars currently exploring immigration and its consequences have uncovered: immigration trends perceived as threatening to an overarching construction of union will compel some ethnocratic constituencies to regain control of its imagined universe by proliferating nativist nationalisms (Chavez 2001; Brettell and Hollifield 2000; Sanchez 1997; Cornelius, Martin, and Hollifield 1994; Castles and Miller 1993).

Sassen shares similar perspectives when she describes globalization as a

process that includes the denationalization territory, but notes "it is opposite when it comes to people, as is perhaps most sharply illustrated in the rise of anti-immigrant feeling and the renationalizing of politics" (1998: xxviii). Therefore, internal colonialism could be understood along these criteria: (1) it relegates minority ethnies to subordinated citizens; (2) as well as denying them proportional representation in the political structure; (3) they are constructed as scapegoats during times of crisis; and finally, (4) they are punished through public policy and nativist violence. Ethnocratic discrimination is thus a total consolidated trajectory that affects interactional, cultural, political, and economic lives of minority ethnies.

The asymmetry in US multicultural configuration and its concomitant ethnocratic tendencies are not acknowledged explicitly in the narrative of US multiculturalism. As such, when members of minority ethnies are in turn discriminatory toward members of the ethnocracy, the dynamics are elevated to the same degree as ethnocratic discrimination and termed *reverse racism*. This of course, is a fallacious juxtaposition, since history has shown that ethnocratic antagonisms against minority ethnies, due to former's monopoly on social institutions and domestic policy, exhibit the potential for a greater degree of oppression—a feature that non-ethnocratic discrimination cannot match institutionally, structurally, or in public policy.

Ethnocratic labeling of minority ethnies' antagonisms as reverse *this* or reverse *that* presumes a level playing field where all discriminations are equal. This relativistic orientation toward US multiculturalism overlooks the degree of difference in the logistical capacity for different groups to incite and propagate conflict. Because the ethnocracy controls socio-political institutions, it also controls the reproduction of institutional oppression. During national crises, it controls the retractability of American identity from its minority ethnies. The vast majority of American minorities that have immersed themselves in the American experience cannot claim that their history was ever completely free from negative domestic policies and behavioral hostilities directed against them at one time or another.

Therefore, I find it quite surprising that Sen can view multiple identities in such a relativistic and atmospheric way, overlooking the fact that many peoples, especially those in the United States, will have a primary identity—most often ethnic—that they *choose* to be most important for them as a defensive mechanism. For the ethnocracy, the primary identity metes out punishment. For the minority ethnies, the primary identity functions as a defensive mechanism to address the historical backlash that occurs against them intermittently, yet consistently, in US *demotic* history. Indeed, if there is one defining unresolved domestic cultural issue in US history, it has been the way the ethnocracy has "dealt with" different minority ethnies during crisis.

Although I concede with Sen that there are certainly for many individuals a "variety of motivations…with various affiliations and commitments," the key is how these various motivations and affiliations are intimately linked to choices in the social context that may or may not accommodate them (2006: 21). That is, there needs to be a situational context and temporal dimension in terms of how we view choices. There will be, at times, structural demands and events that curtail choices, prompting the actor to align with imperatives of the collective, frequently based on his or her ethnie, and thus "narrowing" (I prefer to view it as "specifying") his or her menu of identities, likely down to two, or even one affiliation. Such a state exists under crisis. Choices that individuals and groups have "pulsate" in accordance to societal stability. Yet Sen appears to treat rational choice and collectivism as mutually exclusive

phenomena: the former is in tandem with the capacity to contain a multiplicity of identities while the latter more resistant to it.

Sen would find the latter collectivism, if in the form of ethnic identification, to be counterproductive, reactionary, isolationist, and because of its monoculturalist expression, potentially conducive to fomenting, at the very least, communal divisiveness and at worst, sectarian violence. In *Development as Freedom* Sen notes that ethnicity is too "narrow" an identity (1999). For Sen, even analytically situating an actor in his or her ethnic collective neglects "the relevance of the person's plural social relations, seriously underestimating the richness of the multiple features of her social situation" (2006: 178).

Like most development scholars Sen appears to still be working within a mainstream development paradigm where the unit of analysis is still the health of the nation-state. Identity politics that emerge from narrow constructions of identity, which Sen considers to be combative with one another, may serve to destabilize the state, the guarantor of a modicum of stability. Stavenhagen suggests that scholars like Sen "prefer to ignore the issue precisely because it may question the premises of the nation-state" (1986: 91). As a result, Sen fails to see how (1) a primary ethnic identity and its concomitant collectivist orientation can be a result of rational choice that (2) engenders ethnic collectivism to function as a political instrument.

Nativism, Historical Identification, and Ethnocracy

To facilitate a discussion regarding the tensions of United States multiculturalism requires us to relegate Sen's overly hopeful views aside and re-invoke three concepts by classic and prescient thinkers on ethnicity and race: John Higham and his examination of *nativism* and Milton M. Gordon and his examination of *historical identification* (Higham 1963; Gordon 1969). Higham and Gordon's analyses are further enhanced when fused with the propositions by contemporary development and political scholars, Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1986, 1984, 1996) and David Brown, both of whom will contribute greatly to our understanding of multicultural asymmetry through their discussion of the concept of ethnocracy. The analytical fusion of aforementioned concepts thus functions as heuristic devices for making visible the precarious nature of multiculturalism sentiments and relations during crises.

Higham's important 1963 work *Strangers in the Land* delineates a unique type of discrimination known as *nativism*. Whereas "racism" refers to the discrimination toward a group due to beliefs about the racial inferiority of that group, nativism refers to the dominant group's discrimination of a minority group based on its "foreign (i.e., 'un-American') connections" as well as its institutions and ideas (1963: 3-4). Whereas racist discrimination includes discrimination of groups perceived to be foreign, it is not exclusively based on this theme since discrimination can be directed to groups already assimilated in American life (via language for example), as in the case of anti-Black discrimination. Nativism, however, is flexible, and is a sentiment that changes as certain minority groups become what Higham describes as "irritants" to shifting "conditions of the day" (1963: 4).

Higham identifies three forms of nativism, further expanded upon by Sanchez (1997). The first was anti-Catholicism, "nurtured in Protestant evangelical activism, which deemed Catholics as incapable of the independent thought characterized as critical to American citizenship" (1997: 1019). The second and third forms, however, are more pertinent to the scope of our discussion: antiradicalism, as exemplified by

the notions that foreigners were a threat to the stability of American institutions, and a racial nativism that Anglo-Saxonized the "origins of the American nation" (1997: 1019).

Higham argues that the third form of nativism based on an Anglo-Saxon construction of American identity ideologically crystallized into beliefs regarding what America *should be,* and not what America *should not be*—the latter of which thematically characterized the first two nativist atavisms. Thus, even at a time before race and ethnicity became firmly ensconced in the identity politics generated by the Civil Rights discourse, influential Americans were already celebrating its primordialist pedigree. For example Higham noted that in 1837 Horace Bushnell, a prominent American theologian at the time, warned Americans to protect:

> their noble Saxon blood against the miscellaneous tide of immigration, and in the 1850s there were occasional suggestions that a Celtic flood might swamp America's distinctive Anglo-Saxon traits. But on the whole, racial nationalists proclaimed an unqualified confidence in the American destiny. Sometimes they explicitly averred that the Anglo-Saxon would always retain predominance over all comers. (1963: 5)

Although an Anglo-Saxon theme still continues to characterize post 9/11 nativism, its salience was preceded by different historical atavisms where legacies of anti-Catholic and anti-radical traditions had "opened channels through which a large part of the xenophobia of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries would flow" (1963: 11). From this position, a more incisive assessment of multiculturalism must take place in order to understand why there is such staying power to atavisms of nativism.

Although Higham described the historically nativist tendencies of the American experience as a perennial one, nativist vacillations rise and fall according to how crisis situations intensify national feelings. For Higham, nativism represents periodic outbursts of frustration against the failure of assimilation as well as the dominant group's fear of minorities' "disloyalty" against the dominant culture and its history. Such minority groups are frequently the most recently arrived immigrants who are at the prototypical stage of some form of rudimentary assimilation. The point that needs to be underscored, then, is that national crisis is an important societal mechanism which alters multicultural relationships by shifting it toward what Gordon called *historical identification* (1969: 54).

Gordon's important contribution of historical identification in *Assimilation in American Life* would highlight *when* different cultural groups *did not* assimilate toward a dominant culture. For Gordon, historical identification was but one (and the least frequently occurring) of three forms of social interaction. Gordon argued that members of the same ethnic group within the same class interact most frequently. However, if and when interethnic interaction did occur, it would still occur within the confines of the same social class. This second form of interaction he designated as *participational identification*, which Gordon explained as when "a person of the same social class but of a different ethnic group…shares behavioral similarities but not a sense of peoplehood" (1969: 53). The key characteristic of participational identification is that in times of relative stability, interethnic interaction characterizes a relatively healthy multiculturalism. Structural and cultural separations that do exist between ethnic/racial groups exist in a latent or weakened form.

The line of Gordon's arguments suggests that during times of national crisis in the United States the ethnic/racial group becomes the dominant locus of

identification, i.e., the ethnic/racial group is the mechanism which allows for historical identification. The structural separations between cultural groups are intensified and solidified. Historical identification, then, occurs when there is a need for "those of the same ethnic group but…different social class" to share a "sense of peoplehood" (1969: 53). For Gordon, the sentiment that most compels people to historically identify across class lines is based on the expression "I am ultimately bound up with the fate of these people." The key point, however, is Gordon's stipulation that historical identification represents a function of the "unfolding of past *and* current historic events [italics added]" (1969: 53). Higham would be the scholar who argued that the unfolding of the past and present occurs through a politics of exclusion, nativism.

Three important cues can be derived from a fusion of Higham and Gordon's analyses of multicultural configurations: (1) during times of social stability, nativism is relatively muted; (2) during national crisis, nativism is a form of historical identification that emanates from the ethnic/racial group with the most political capital; (3) nativism affects the degree of assimilation during times of national crisis; and (4) nativism is activated as a form of cultural protectionism during national crisis to sustain the political and cultural hegemony of the dominant ethnic/racial group, the ethnocracy.

During crises in the United States the discourse of nativism validates Americans who possess a White heritage. Indeed, the well-intentioned "I'm an American" PSA is but a poor attempt at multicultural understanding insofar as how servility is implied: the images appear as if ethnic minorities were queued up to articulate a message where the proclamation of "I'm an American" paralleled a means of begging for their identity back. I couldn't help but wonder what stratum of American society they were proclaiming this message to. Who did they have to remind?

Consider that White Americans did not repeat this process six years earlier during the 1995 aftermath of Timothy McVeigh's bombing of Oklahoma City's Murrah Building. The Ad Council was nowhere to be found: White Americans did not have to go on national television to remind all other Americans that they were American. Instead news reports included vitriolic and hostile phone messages left at Muslim organizations, blaming the group for being responsible for the tragedy. Moreover, the public did not seek out European Americans to mete punitive measures against them, i.e., there was not a White equivalent of Balbir Sing Sodhi: the American identity of the former group was never questioned nor retracted. This is the privilege the ethnocrac*y* is accorded in maintaining asymmetrical multicultural production. In this context, it is important for us to always be conscious regarding Leo Chavez's points in *Covering Immigration*, as to whether "America is defined by its racial/national origins—British and northwestern European" or whether America is still "a nation of immigrants that is defined more by the principles that guide it and are learned by immigrants" (2001: 17).

My response to Chavez is that the notion of "America" is still primarily defined by the former, through its ethnocracy, the social stratum with the most social, cultural and financial capital, and the one that controls the institutions of the state. The staying and reproducing power of ethnocracy, defined by Stavenhagen as the "ethnic group…[that] attempts to impose its own particular ethnic interests on the whole of the national society," can thus be analyzed by how it articulates discriminatory and punitive actions against ethnic minorities (1996: 197). Stavenhagen employed the term on a global scale under the auspices of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and was able to make visible consistent patterns of ethnocratic injustices many multicultural states. For Stavenhagen, there exists a

need to have ethnic minority-specific development strategies, especially if these communities are experiencing ethnic cleansing (1986, 1996). Unlike Stavenhagen, I deploy the concept of ethnocracy at the level of American civil society and its grass roots. I attempt to demonstrate that both the televised news media and localized communal hostilities are articulations of American identity that reproduces the privileges and powers of its ethnocracy. As such, the term is an excellent mechanism for viewing the asymmetrical nature of multicultural configurations in the United States.

According to Stavenhagen in *Ethnic Conflicts and the Nation-state* and Brown in *State and Ethnic Politics in South-East Asia*, the asymmetrical nature of multiculturalism is a condition skewed by its ethnocracy. Moreover, Stavenhagen and Brown's views suggest that if one were to observe multicultural societies within the continuum of time, different ethnocracies will emerge. Thus the implication by both authors is that *any* ethnie that becomes ethnocratic will have a greater tendency of meting out abuse. A quintessential manifestation of this dynamic can be seen in Iraq today where the Sunni ethnocracy has been dismantled while the Shia (much more so than the Kurds) are in the process of establishing and inculcating their cultural system upon Iraqi society. Certainly the *de jure* status of Iraqi society is that of a democratic state, but the hyper-power now possessed by the Shia group constitutes them as the *de facto* ethnocracy of the country.

Therefore, the identification of an ethnocracy is not meant to be a political camouflage that indirectly implicates one ethnic or racial group in a static social, cultural and political context. The process aims to make the ethnocracy a heuristic device for understanding asymmetrical multicultural power politics. That is, any cultural group with control of institutions and all forms of social capital will be most prone to displaying and imposing their power. The point to be underscored is that nativist retractability of identity harnesses the *de facto* ethnocratic monopoly of social, cultural and political capital that allows this stratum to be punitive at a historical juncture of its own choosing, i.e., to be able to engage in and reproduce a politics of exclusion against its ethnic minorities when crisis activates xenophobia.

In the context of the United States, ethnocratic power can construct cultural and social obstacles that entrench minorities, especially recent immigrants, at a cultural and linguistic ground zero, making it difficult for them to assimilate (Rumbaut 1997). Chavez suggests that nativism's ability to historically establish assimilative obstacles functions as a method by which the dominant group can attend to how immigrant actors are to be "dealt with." Chavez further argues that nativists "view today's immigrants as a threat to the 'nation,' which is still conceived as a singular, predominantly White American, English-speaking culture," a sentiment which parallels Higham's contentions (2001: 8). Countering this dynamic are ethnocratic accommodations that are relatively more favorable toward groups that emerge from the geographical womb of Europe.

> Minority groups…differ in rate at which they do achieve some degree of acculturation and assimilation. Historically, such national origins groups as the Scandinavians, the Germans, and the Scots and Welsh moved up quickly and with little friction. Other national origins groups, such as the Irish, Italians, Greeks, and Slavs, faced stiff resistance and moved slowly… Racial groups experienced the greatest resistance. They were subjected to greater degrees of prejudice and discrimination and have moved most slowly of all. (Lemay 2005: 37)

The retraction of American identity against non-Euro or non-English-speaking Americans can emanate from the institutions of state, from civil society, or from public interaction. In different contexts, the retraction of American identity is a convenient consciousness of hate and xenophobia that efficaciously identifies a scapegoat. In the context of post-9/11, it would be in the realm of public interaction as well as through one organ of civil society, the Ad Council, which engaged in or contributed to nativism, respectively. But there are historical precedents to the retractability of American identity from minorities, at two levels.

The first is at the participational level of communal interaction where nativism punishes undesirable Americans, as in the 1982 murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit by two autoworkers who were laid off due to the ascent of the Japanese auto industry, and both of whom who thought Chin was Japanese. Chin had been out with friends celebrating his bachelor's party when he was taunted by Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz. One of the murderers, Ronald Ebens, yelled, "It's because of you little motherfuckers that we're out of work!" Ebens and his stepson Michael Nitz subsequently followed Chin out of his bachelor's party at *Fancy Pants*, a Detroit strip club, and bashed Chin's leg and shortly after, his skull, with a baseball bat. Neither Ebens nor Nitz served one day in prison. Instead each was fined $3,000. A civil rights trial against both parties resulted in the acquittal of Ebens and Nitz. The murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi,[iii] whose tragic story was used to begin this discussion, is another prime example among many. In the context of post-9/11, however, this can readily be seen in the case of anti-Arab American sentiment:

> Consider the well-known example of the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Many in the media and most American believed an Arabic or extremist Muslim group was responsible for the bombing. Only when federal authorities arrested Timothy McVeigh, a Christian Identity believer, did the nation think otherwise… Close to 200 violent incidents against Arabs had been reported. Another incident of scapegoating included TWA Flight 800. It exploded shortly after leaving JFK airport in New York on July 17, 1996. Again, until federal authorities assessed mechanical failure as the cause of the explosion, rumors within the media persisted that some Arab group had committed an act of terrorism. (Lemay 2005: 70)

The next level is institutional: for example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which was passed to protect White workers from Chinese laborers in California and Executive Order 9066 of 1942, the latter of which placed Japanese Americans into concentration camps and "were not required by military necessity" but fostered by "widespread ignorance...as well as fear and anger at Japan" (Kitano 1997: 256); the passage of Proposition 187 by California's conservative stratum which, along with the Illegal Immigration Act and Immigrant Responsibility Act, was directed at the immigration "crisis" constituted mostly by Mexican and Central American immigrants; and the 1998 elimination of California's bilingual education via the passage of proposition 227, affecting the growing first generation Latino community most significantly as well as other immigrant groups. Further legitimating the processes of deculturation, the man behind Propositions 227, Ron Unz, commented that America's cultural success is based on *assimilated* immigrants (Hornblower 1998).

Another example can be seen in the period up until Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941. During this period, there was already Italian American

fascist organizations with daily and monthly newspapers that espoused their views, sympathies and connections to Italian fascism. Lemay notes that Italian Americans who joined a Fascist organization took an oath: "In the name of God and Italy, I swear to carry out the orders of my Duce and to serve with all my strength, and if necessary my blood, the cause of the Fascist Revolution" (Le May 2005: 255). During this same period Nazi ideology has become inculcated in American life in groups such as the Nazi front organization, the American Fellowship Forum.

Two years before Pearl Harbor, American Nazis staged a massive rally at Madison Square Garden in New York City, which 22,000 people attended, the "single most striking display of Nazism in the history of the United States" (Lemay 2005: 261). Yet there was not an equivalent Executive Order 9066 that amassed in the same numbers of explicitly pro-fascist German and Italian Americans, even though evidence against the latter two groups' seditious politics was overwhelmingly more abundant than that which could similarly be incriminated against the Japanese American population.

Conclusion: the Implications and Interpretations of Asymmetrical Multiculturalism

The retractability of "American," which has historically occurred in United States as punitive public policy toward its ethnic minority populations, continues to contribute to multicultural tensions in different incarnations. How have ethnic minority populations generally reacted to past forms of nativisms? In the case of newly arrived Asian and Latino immigrants, Sanchez argues that there is, at the very least, a "newfound ambivalent Americanism" (Sanchez 1997: 1019).

Alejandro Portes argues that second and third generation immigrant groups exhibit *linear ethnicity* and *reactive ethnicity*. Linear ethnicity refers to an immigrant actors' reproduction and "continuation of cultural practices learned in the home country" while reactive ethnicity pertains to a relatively "adversarial stance" by immigrants that react to experiences of being "lumped together, defined in derogatory terms, and subjected to the same discrimination by the host society" (Portes 1995: 256). Portes' preliminary findings, however, are limited to his analyses of immigrant children of Haitian, Mexican, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean and Cuban communities. Nonetheless, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean and Cuban youths, return to "community-mediated opportunities" through ethnic enclave markets and ethnic churches that "consolidate its attachment to the immigrant community and hence pull them away from rapid acculturation" (Portes ibidem: 257). This finding echoes results from a study conducted fifteen years earlier where Portes and his colleagues documented that Cuban and Mexican immigrants' experiences with discrimination had resulted in a more "critical appraisal of the host society" (Portes 1980: 200). As a result of this perception, ethnic identification by the Cuban and Mexican community are credited with the formation of Latino enclave economies in Florida and Texas, respectively.

> We find it particularly noteworthy that the better the immigrants understand the host country, language and the more they endorse its values...the more skeptical they are of the realities of that society and of their actual condition within it. The socialization process suggested by these findings is not one that necessarily leads to integration and consensus building, but one which can produce an increased awareness of an inferior economic and social position and, hence, *a defense of common interests through ethnic*

solidarity. (italics added; Portes 1980: 200)

Portes' reactive ethnicity, or what Manuel Castells parallels with his concept of *resistance identity*, are useful concepts that identify the presence of concentrated sites of cultural awareness and resistance to ethnocratic attempt at deculturation. In his work, the *Power of Identity*, Castells demonstrates that resistance identity can take many forms and is a cross-cultural phenomenon. Indeed, at one historical period or another, oppressed American groups have resisted through political, cultural and radical means. Reactive and resistance identities are counter assimilation tools—even more so during periods of nativism—generated by "actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to those permeating the institutions of society" (Castells 1997: 6).

What I have attempted to demonstrate in the context of post-9/11 United States is that when the ethnocracy exerts its hegemony during times of national crisis, it does so through nativism and the retractability of the American identity from its ethnic minorities, which can have life and death consequences. As such, the notion that all racisms are equal as exemplified in the simplified concept of "reverse discrimination," overlooks this unique asymmetrical pattern of discrimination and the ethnocratic capacity to mete out qualitatively more severe punitive measures against its ethnic minorities.

The retractability of the American identity from ethnic minorities makes visible the problematic anatomy of United States multiculturalism. First, it renders impossible an assumed trajectory of assimilation toward any cultural ideal, a view that defined the assimilation discourse of the 1950s and 1960s. More significantly, in the context of national crisis, we see the pattern of linear ethnicity—initially posited to be one type of cultural articulation by ethnic minorities that resist racism—now exhibited by the ethnocracy itself to resist ethnic minorities. Moreover, historical assessments by Higham, Gordon, Stavenhagen, Brown and Portes suggest that this pattern will continue to define America's multicultural terrain, especially as national crises activate atavisms of nativist backlash and the ethnocratic retractability of minority identity.

Second, a key pattern that can be discerned as a collective coping mechanism by American groups is that of continued autonomizing tendencies by ethnic and racial actors through their ethnic communities. Assimilation, if it occurs at all, will take the form of what Portes termed *segmented assimilation* where those who most closely approximate the ethnocracy phenotypically will be given vertical access to social capital and where ethnic minority groups assimilate with one another horizontally. As such, multiculturalism—if situated in a context intimately tied to experiences and memories of national crisis—will become an even more fragmented social and ideological configuration that continues to be diametrically opposed to pluralistic and relativistic celebrations of ethnic diversity.

During times of national crisis, multiculturalism can become messy, filled with tensions and violence, and entangled with inequalities and the histories of competing groups. The dominant group in society, then, most readily achieves interpretations of a superordinate identity. This conceptualization, however, is highly asymmetrical, as national crisis has made visible in the post 9/11 context. Middle Eastern and/or Muslim Americans, as well as South Asians in America, are now learning what other ethnic minority immigrants have already experienced in their relationship with the ethnocracy: that the American dream is at best, tentative during times of stability and

at worst, retractable from them during times of national crisis.

It is hoped that the cues and definitions generated in this discussion will point to how identity groups need to focus not only on how state public policy has historically generated discrimination against ethnic minorities, but also on how various apparatuses in civil society and at the grass roots level are also complicit in the retraction of identity. My attempts at incorporating different definitions and concepts to view multicultural asymmetry is thus a direct critique on not what previous assumptions of assimilation entailed but what it excluded. Additionally, my preferred reading that American nativism is a historical tendency is based on the hope that readers will not feel that post-9/11 attempts by the ethnocracy at nation-construction is a phenomenon that is "too close" to view fully in a socio-historical perspective. Given the recognition of this situation, it should be remembered that non-state actors belonging to the ethnocracy and their reactions to national crisis could be as inimical to others' way of life as state-sanctioned punitive policies. To neglect this tendency of asymmetrical multiculturalism only continues the reproduction of ethnocratic hegemony.

Endnotes

i I agree with William Safran's sentiments that the ethnic phenomenon contains overwhelming conceptualizations that "range from middle-level to grandiose and from commonsensical to contradictory," see William Safran, "Introduction: the Political Aspects of Language," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol 10: 1-14 (2004), p. 1. Nonetheless my intentions are not to explore the semantics of what Gabbert (2006), p. 88, designates as the *ethnonyms*; instead, I am examining the material consequences of multicultural coexistence. See Wolfgang Gabbert, "Concepts of Ethnicity," *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (April 2006), pp. 85-103.

ii Over 70 percent of Arab Americans are practicing Christians (Lemay 2005: 69).

iii Even a decade prior to September 11, 2001, Margaret Gibson's 1989 ethnographic study of Sikh immigrants in a northern California town revealed that "white residents are extremely hostile toward immigrants who look different and speak a different language…Punjabi teenagers are told they stink…told to go back to India…physically abused by majority students who spit at them, refuse to sit by them in class or in buses, throw food at them or worse; see Margaret A. Gibson, *Accommodation without Assimilation: Sikh Immigrants in an American High School* (Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 289.

References

Ad Council (2004) *Public Service Advertising that Changed a Nation*. New York: The Advertising Council, Inc.

Barth, Frederik (1969) *Ethnic Group Boundaries*. Long Grove: Waveland Press, Inc.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1984) *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste.*Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Brettell, Caroline B. and James F. Hollifield (2000) *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*. New York: Routledge.

Brown, David (1994) *State and Ethnic Politics in South-East Asia.* New York: Routledge.

Carmichael, Stokely and Charles V. Hamilton (1967) *Black power: The politics of liberation in America*. New York: Vintage.

Castells, Manuel (1997) *The Power of Identity.* Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.

Castles, Stephen and Mark J. Miller (1998) *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Chavez, Leo (2001) *Covering Immigration: Popular Images and the Politics of the Nation.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Childs, John B. (2003) Transcommunality: From the Politics of Conversion to the Ethics of Respect. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

CNN News (2001) News report on hate crimes taped of television. September 18.

Connor, Walker (1972) "Nation-building or Nation-destroying." *World Politics* 24 (3): 319-55.

Cornelius, Wayne A., Philip L. Martin and James F. Hollifield (1994) *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Geschwender, James A. (1978) *Racial Stratification in America.* Dubuque, Iowa: W. M. C. Brown Company Publishers.

Giddens, Anthony (2007) "Doubting Diversity's Value." *Foreign Policy* 163 (November/December): 86-88

Gordon, Milton M. (1969) *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Gurr, Ted Robert (1993) *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflict.* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Havens, A. Eugene and William L. Flinn (1970) *Internal Colonialism and Structural Change in Columbia*. New York: Praeger Publishers.

Hechter, Michael (1975) Internal Colonialism. The Celtic Fringe in British National Development. Berkeley: University of California Press.

-------. (1978) "Group Formation and the Cultural Division of Labor." *The American Journal of Sociology* 84 (2): 293 – 318.

Higham, John (1963) *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*. New York: Atheneum.

Hornblower, Margot (1998) "The Man Behind prop 227: Meet Ron Unz the Tycoon Who Waged a Campaign to all but Outlaw Bilingual Education in California." *Time*, June 8

Kitano, Harry H. L. (1997) *Race Relations.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

LeMay, Michael (2005) *The Perennial Struggle: Race Ethnicity, and Minority Group Relations in the United States.* Upper Saddle, New Jersey: Pearson, Prentice Hall.

Moore, Wendy Leo and Jennifer Pierce (2007) “Still Killing Mockingbirds: Narratives of Race and Innocence in Hollywood’s Depiction of the White Messiah Lawyer.” *Qualitative Sociology Review* 3(2): 171-187.

MSNBC News (2001) Voice-over report on hate crimes. September 18. New York: General Electric.

Portes, Alejandro (1995) *The Economic Sociology of Immigration: Essays on Networks, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Portes, Alejandro, Robert Nash Parker and Jose A. Cobas (1980) “Assimilation or Consciousness: Perceptions of U.S. Society Among recent Latin American Immigrants to the United States.” *Social Forces* 59 (1): 200-224.

Putnam, Robert (2007) “*E Pluribus Unum*: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century, The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture.” *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30 (2): 137-174.

Rumbaut, Ruben G. (1997) “Paradoxes (and Orthodoxies) of Assimilation.” *Sociological Perspectives* 40 (3): 483-512.

Sanchez, George J. (1997) “Face the Nation: Race, Immigration, and the Rise of Nativism in Late Twentieth Century America (Special Issue: Immigrant Adaptation and Native Born Responses in the Making of Americans).” *International Migration Review* 31(4): 1009-22.

Sassen, Saskia (1998) *Globalization and its Discontents*. New York: The New Press.

Sen, Amartya (2006) *Identity and Violence: the Illusion of Destiny.* New York: W.W. Norton.

------. (1999) *Development as Freedom*: New York, NY: Random House.

Stavenhagen, Rodolfo (1996) *Ethnic Conflicts and the Nation-state* New York: St. Martin’s Press.

------. (1986) “Ethnodevelopment: A Neglected Dimension in Development Thinking.” Pp. 71-94 in *Development Studies: Critique and Renewal,* edited by R. A. Krahl. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Thayil, Jeet and Onkar Singh (2003) “I Don’t Know Why God Picked My Family to Suffer so Much.” *Rediff News* .Retrieved March 2008 (http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/jun/19spec.htm)

Van Den Berghe, Pierre (1996) “Does Race Matter?” Pp. 57-62 in *Ethnicity*, edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weiner, Myron (1987) “Political Change: Asia, Africa and the Middle East.” Pp. 33-64 in *Understanding Political Development,* edited by Myron Weiner and S. P. Huntington*.* Boston: Little Brown.

Citation

Fong, Jack (2008) “American Social “Reminders” of Citizenship after September 11, 2001: Nativisms and the Retractability of American Identity.” *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Giampietro Gobo
University of Milan, Italy

Crafting Blindness: Its Organizational Construction in a First Grade School

Abstract

This article is based on a case study conducted in an Italian primary school where the interactions between a sightless girl (named Jasmine, aged 8) and her classmates were extensively observed. The initial aim was to understand and describe the problems encountered by the sightless pupil, who acted in a social, organizational and physical environment which was not designed for handicapped people. However, other theoretical issues emerged during the research. The main finding was that sightlessness seems socially and organizationally constructed before it becomes a biological/physical handicap. The organizational processes through which the blindness is slowly and routinely constructed were extensively described.

Keywords

Blindness; Social construction; Disability studies; Organization; Grounded theory; Ethnomethodology; Ethnography; Ergonomics

More than fifty years of sociological literature have shown that many of the problems afflicting societies are "socially constructed". This statement is by now obvious in sociology, and numerous researchers have documented it with historical inquiries. For instance, the concept of alcoholism as a 'social disease' requiring specialist treatment by professionals like doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists and social workers has been current for fewer than fifty years. As Harlan Lane (1997) writes:

> The Temperance Movement of the last century viewed excessive drinking not as a disease but as an act of the will; alcoholics victimized their families and imposed on the rest of society. The movement advocated not treatment but prohibition. (p. 153)

Gusfield (1982) was one of the first to document this change.

Likewise, child abuse as a social problem dates from the 1950s. Hence for every issue, from sexuality to disability, from race to illness, from deviance to academic performance, the social and political bases of their construction have been uncovered.

The work of sociologists has often been to deconstruct or reconstruct the diverse approaches (social, ideological, political, cultural, etc.) that compete with each other

to impose a certain vision and version of a problem. For instance, in his study on deafness, Lane (1997) shows that:

> […] two constructions of deafness in particular are dominant and compete for shaping deaf peoples' destinies. The one construes deaf as a category of disability; the other one construes deaf as designating a member of a linguistic minority. (p.154)

Although this article recognizes and draws upon all these contributions, it nevertheless seeks to go beyond them by moving in the following four directions. Firstly, the aim is to show the birth and development of a concept (in this case that of blindness) through direct observation of the micro-interactions which turn a body into a sighted person. The study will therefore not be historical, but rather phenomenological and ethnomethodological.

Secondly, the article does not describe how the sightless girl perceived the world around her. There are already several studies which have done this work brilliantly: for instance, those by David Goode (1979 and 1994), who studied deaf-blind children affected by rubella syndrome. Unlike these studies, this one concentrates on the sightless girl's relationships with her schoolmates, the teaching assistant, and the class teacher. This focus and methodological choice have been partly dictated by circumstances because, as we shall see, the school's headmaster refused to give permission for Jasmine's schoolmates to be interviewed.

Thirdly, the article also bears in mind the role performed by artifacts in the organizational construction of blindness. Disabilities studies do not usually give much importance to technologies and to artifacts in general, concentrating instead on relations among social actors. The Actor-Network Theory of Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, John Law and others, with its well-known concept of "actant" and its attention to relations between non-humans and humans, has therefore been of assistance in this regard.

Fourthly, disability studies often lack actionable proposals; at times because of an ideological prejudice (as in the case of ethnomethodology, which with its concept of "methodological indifference", prefers not to go beyond descriptions); more often because of a general inattentiveness which stops at description of the phenomenon and fails to make operational proposals prompted by observation of the phenomenon.

Obviously none of these tasks is an easy one: not least because of the theoretical approaches adopted by these studies (interactionism, postmodernism, constructivism, etc.), which are more interested in discovering problems than in proposing solutions for them – apart from a call for such unlikely macro remedies as reform of the social services, change in professional styles, or changes in social arrangements.

This study seeks to go beyond the (nevertheless useful) reconstruction of the perspectives of the participants in the field by taking a step forward towards operationality. To this end, it will draw on ergonomics, which is a discipline that (if ethnographically oriented) can be of great help both to sociology and in the solution of practical problems.

The literature

Sightless persons have been widely studied by sociologists. Since Robert A. Scott's seminal work (1969) on the social construction of blindness, several studies have been conducted on such subjects. C. Olson (1977 and 1981) showed that blindness is overestimated as a communicative and rational obstacle; David Goode (1979 and 1994), stimulated by his mentors Harold Garfinkel and Melvin Pollner, observed ethnographically the richness of the social and symbolic world of deaf-blind children affected by rubella syndrome, discovering that they had communicative skills unknown even to the doctors and nurses who treated them. Edwin C. Vaughan (1991, 1993, 1998) documented the conflicts between blind people and agents of rehabilitation, and the difficulties encountered by blind people in emancipating themselves from the constraints imposed by the latter. In this regard, Vaughan and Omvig (2005) sought alternatives that would give empowerment to blind people.

These and many other studies have amply documented how:

> […] deaf-blind children were socially constructed in the sense that their very bodies and actions were given life, form, and meaning through immediate social relations and practices that surrounded them and in which they participated. (Goode 1994: 9)

However, it is necessary to clear up a possible misunderstanding: when it is said that deafness or blindness are socially constructed, the intention is not to argue that the two phenomena do not exist, that they are myths constructed out of nothing. For these phenomena are certainly more palpable and ostensible than schizophrenia or depression, or other psychoses. The intention is instead to argue that the characteristics attributed to subjects with these physical disabilities are culturally determined, and that they have little or nothing to do with the physiological characteristics of the differently abled. In other words, what sightless persons can or cannot do depends only to a minimal extent on their intrinsic characteristics. Thus Merleau-Ponty describes the body as a unity that is "always implicit and vague" (1945: 198). Indeed, as Goode (1994) writes:

> […] children were assigned multiple and, to a large degree, conflicting identities that reflected differences in the microsociology of face-to-face relations with the children. Doctors saw these children through the organization of doctors' work with them, and direct-care staff experienced the children through the organization of their custodial and teaching work with them. (p. 10)

The problem therefore is not to deny the difference in cognitive and visual abilities, but rather to reverse the perspective. We know from the work of the cognitive psychologist Eleonor Rosch (1973 and 1978) that a category is a structure in constant change. Moreover, we have learnt from Harvey Sacks' (1972) concept of 'membership categorisation device' (MCD) that associations among categories are also mutable and culturally unstable. Hence, to return to the topic of this study, we may ask: can a sightless person drive a car or fly a plane? Whilst in the former case the scene in the film *Scent of a Woman*, where a blind, medically retired Army officer (Al Pacino) drives a Ferrari at high speed along the streets of New York, seems nothing more that an amusing cinematic gimmick, what can we say about the man the following photographs?

Seeing
is Believin

G-SEEE

Indeed, “seeing is believing”: the man in the photographs is a blind pilot. Likewise, a blind person can ski (with someone leading the way) and do many other things unimaginable within certain categorizations. Hence the problem is how to revise, from a constructivist perspective, the ways in which certain representations (in this case of blindness) which are eminently cultural and do not replicate reality, are constructed.

Theoretical approach and methodology

The research was conducted by conjugating two different but (I submit) complementary approaches – Ethnomethodology and Grounded Theory – as already proposed by Lester and Hadden (1980). The former approach, of phenomenological orientation, was extremely useful in addressing blindness as a process, as an organizational construct, as an ongoing event. Ethnomethodology therefore drove the logic of discovery and estrangement with the aim of reconsidering blindness in new light. Ethnography was instead the methodology best suited to the data collection, because it is able to gather information which is both rich in detail and unmediated by the participants’ interpretations (Gilbert and Mulkay 1983; Heritage 1984: 236). Grounded Theory (in the version of Strauss and Corbin 1990) furnished a procedural rigour in the collection and analysis of the data which, to my mind, is still unsurpassed.

As said, added to these approaches were the main theoretical principles of Actor-Network Theory, these being particularly useful for reconsideration of the role of artifacts, furnishings, and technologies.

The research

This study reports ethnographic research conducted in a third-year class (16 pupils) of an Italian elementary school in which a sightless girl was one of the pupils. Subject to study were the organizational practices, resources and environmental constraints of the school that combined to construct a particular notion of handicap, and in particular the identity of the sightless girl. The fieldwork lasted a total of ten months, during which I and one of my assistants participated in school activities. In particular, my assistant was constantly present in class as part of her teacher training course.

The initial intention was to study the integration of the sightless child with the rest of the class. The plan was to use three research methodologies: (a) participant observation; (b) in-depth interviews with the pupils and the teachers; (c) the sociograph. However, as the research proceeded, both the focus and the methodologies changed. As regards the former, we almost immediately discovered that sightlessness is a ‘social event’ besides being a biological, psychophysical and medical one; a conceptual product constructed in everyday interactions among pupils, teaching staff and non-teaching staff. For example, because children have mental schemas that differ profoundly from those of adults, they do not initially have a specific social representation of a sightless person: in other words, they do not know what a sightless person is, what s/he is capable of doing, or what s/he is not. Indeed, the children observed during the research reported here initially invited their sightless classmate to join the same games that they would have proposed to any other child of the same age. Hence, they formed their conception of sightlessness mainly through the organizational practices and rituals performed (around the

sightless girl) in the various places making up the school environment: the entrance lobby, the corridors, the staircases, the toilets, and the classroom. The organizational and discursive practices that took place in these locations contributed decisively to construction of the sightless girl's identity. We therefore decided to change focus and concentrate on the practices of construction of blindness, abandoning our initial intention to produce a study on integration.

As regards the methodologies, the headmaster of the school did not give us permission to interview the pupils, for fear that they might find our conversations with them upsetting. Consequently, we could only extensively use observation and, in ancillary manner, the sociograph. The latter is a method which measures the cohesion of a class, the strong and weak bonds among the classmates, and the degree of integration among individual pupils.

To conduct the research, I employed the theoretical and methodological apparatus of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967; Sudnow, 1967) and cognitive sociology (Cicourel, 1973). My intention was to observe the organizational practices of the school which transformed a person into a 'sightless pupil'. This transformation was brought about by a set of procedures which began when the girl arrived at the school in the morning and continued throughout the school day. Organizational and discursive practices were therefore observed in all the school's premises.

The results

To collect the ethnographic notes I used the system proposed by Schatzman and Strauss (1973: 99-101) and Corsaro (1985: 295), which divides them into observational, theoretical, emotional and methodological. As regards analysis of the ethnographic notes, I followed the advice of Strauss and Corbin (1990: 59) by dividing the coding into three progressive steps: "open coding" (a sort of deconstruction), "axial coding" (construction) and "selective coding" (to validate hypotheses and observations).

Open coding

We first spent several weeks closely observing the sightless girl while she interacted with her classmates – taking and collating ethnographic notes as we did so. I then began to analyze the data by classifying the content of the ethnographic notes. This analysis yielded a preliminary list of categories (concepts) of rituals. I gave a heading to each category: "arrival at school", "getting ready to enter the classroom", "going to the washroom", "questioning pupils", "turn-taking strategies" to speak in class, "choosing a playmate", etc. For example, I assigned to this last category an episode – recorded by an *observational note* – when a boy asked the teaching assistant why Jasmine (the sightless girl) could not join in a game. The teaching assistant answered as follows: "because she can't see and so might hurt herself". In my relative *theoretical note*, I put the hypothesis that sightlessness is not nearly the self-evident phenomenon as one might believe. The fact that the boy had asked such an apparently obvious question suggested that children have mental schemas of sightlessness which differ profoundly from those of adults (and also researchers). At the beginning of the school year, Jasmine's classmates probably had no precise social representation of a sightless person.[i] In other words, they did not know what a sightless person was (apart for the banal notion that s/he is someone who cannot see), and above what a sightless person can or cannot do?

This was evidenced by the fact that they initially asked Jasmine to join in the same games which they proposed to other children. At this stage of the research, I therefore hypothesized that sightlessness (as regards its behavioral features) was primarily a "process", a conceptual product constructed in everyday interactions at school among pupils, teaching staff and non-teaching staff. I recalled a study carried out many years previously by Sudnow (1967) on the social organization of death in hospital, where he documented how death is a *social* phenomenon before it becomes a biological one. The death of the patient occurred well before his physical demise, when the hospital staff decided – more or less correctly – that he was dying. A series of organizational practices reserved for dying were then enacted, so that it was very difficult for the patient to "save himself".

Axial coding

Having formulated this hypothesis, based on the ethnographic material and suggested by Sudnow's study, I moved on to the next phase (construction) and collected further materials documenting organizational practices and environmental constraints in the school which contributed decisively to constructing a specific notion of handicap, and especially the sightless girl's identity. I used the five components of Strauss and Corbin's (1990) model to construct a preliminary framework: causal conditions, intervening conditions, context, micro-actions, and consequences. Thus the initial and generic research objective was made more precise. If the pupils formed their conception of sightlessness mainly through the organizational practices and rituals performed around the sightless child, then systematic observations would have to be made in the school premises that my observations during the deconstruction phase had indicated as most significant: the entrance lobby, the staircases, the passages, the toilets, and the classroom. I therefore assembled a more specific sample for the new category: the help practices (ethno-methods) enacted for Jasmine by the teaching assistant in these five places. For each of them I identified the most recurrent actions, which were then sampled.

For example, during recreation, the children were accompanied to the toilets before the next lesson began:

Observational note 1

Jasmine usually took more time that her friends to finish her snack, and on occasion was urged by the teaching assistant to eat more quickly: "Come on! You're always the last". Consequently, Jasmine got to the washrooms a little after the others. While her classmates were in the toilets, the class teacher waited at the door, leaving the children alone inside. By contrast, the teaching assistant always accompanied Jasmine into the toilets.

Theoretical note 1

It is likely that this behavior altered the children's concepts of 'private' and 'body' with respect to Jasmine.

Observational note 2

Whereas the children often playfully splashed each other with water while they were in the washrooms, they never played the same joke on Jasmine. On leaving, the children held hands and filed back into the classroom. Jasmine and the teaching assistant were left behind in the toilets and only got back to the classroom when the other children had settled down at their desks.

For me to state that the children "never" played jokes on Jasmine, or that she was "always" accompanied into the washroom, I must have collected a certain

number of substantially similar episodes. In this case, from of a total of 216 recreations (as many as there were in the school year) I extracted a sample of 43 cases, which represented 46% of all episodes, of the "going to the toilet" ritual. Samples were similarly constructed of the most significant rituals (units of analysis) performed in the other places in the school.

The entrance lobby

At Jasmine's elementary school, the cadence of organizational time was set by the ringing of a bell. At 8:20 the bell rang for a first time to tell the children to get ready to go up to the classrooms. At 8:30 it rang again; the children formed pairs and then filed into the classrooms to begin their lessons. During these organizational activities there occurred a series of behaviors which constructed Jasmine's "diversity": (a) whereas the other children came to school on their own or were accompanied by their parents, Jasmine was brought by an escort provided by the social services; (b) whereas the children had to arrive at the school before the first bell rang, lateness by Jasmine was tolerated, and she sometimes arrived even after the second bell; (c) whereas the children played and joked among themselves while waiting for the second bell to ring, Jasmine was taken aside by the teaching assistant, and they talked together separately from the class and the teachers; (d) whereas the children formed pairs to go up to the classroom, Jasmine and the teaching assistant either preceded or followed them. It appears likely from these observational notes that Jasmine's identity (and in particular what it means to be sightless in cognitive terms) was constructed organizationally.

The classroom

The children's work tables were arranged facing the teacher's desk. Jasmine sat in the back row, next to the teaching assistant's desk. The children changed places during the school year so that they could interact with other classmates. But Jasmine stayed at the same work table throughout the year, because it was next to the teaching assistant's desk. I also noted that the children who showed the greatest friendliness towards Jasmine were those who sat at the table closest to her physical proximity bred affection. A further difference was apparent from the differing use of deference rituals (Goffman, 1956) whereas the children addressed the class teacher as "Miss", Jasmine was allowed to use the teacher's first name.

The various subjects taught during the school day may have heightened the differences between Jasmine and the class. During a geography lesson, for example, the class teacher described the morphological features (mountains, plains, rivers) of an Italian region. The pupils stood around the teacher's desk on which the map was displayed. Jasmine stretched out her hands to touch the map. The teacher told her that in so doing she was preventing the other children from following the description, and that in any case the map did not have "enough relief" for Jasmine to be able to understand by touching it. The same thing happened while the teacher explained how the compass worked; Jasmine tried to open the instrument.[ii]

As the teacher was explaining a point, Jasmine would sometimes raise her hand to ask questions or to make remarks, thereby interrupting the lesson and irritating her classmates. On other occasions she raised her hand to ask for the turn, but spoke before being explicitly permitted to do so by the teacher. This event was rather common; the convention that a pupil had to wait for a signal from the teacher before s/he spoke was often breached, because the children coordinated themselves differently; they looked at who had raised their hand first, or if there were still hands

raised by pupils wanting to speak, then acted without waiting for the teacher's signal. These cognitive and social skills were obviously not available to sightless Jasmine. It was grotesque for the teacher to reprimand her by saying: "Wait your turn! Someone put their hand up before you did".

Also the weekly lessons in religious (Catholic) education and English unjustifiably constructed a difference between Jasmine and the class. The religious education teacher (a priest) adopted a protective and permissive attitude towards Jasmine which he never showed to the other pupils. The English teacher was likewise over-indulgent with Jasmine; indeed, a pupil exclaimed one day: "Why does Jasmine always get 'very good' and we almost never do?" The teacher's explanation was that Jasmine had to be helped because she was handicapped.

A framework

Using the suggestions of Strauss and Corbin (1990), I then constructed the following framework.

1. Causal conditions = the professional model used by the teaching assistant to interact with disabled pupils

The main features of the teaching assistant's professional model were the *principles* on which it is based. These included: never leave disabled pupils on their own; always keep them beside you; give them affection; do not let them feel alone; support them; foster their relations with the other children; guide them in their movements; do not let them feel too diverse, etc. As Lane (1997: 155-6) has stressed, every professional (physician, therapist, teacher, etc.) has his or her own vision of the phenomenon. And this vision exerts a professional influence over construction of the latter.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990: 100), in reality a ritual rarely has only one cause the etiology is usually more complex. For example the type of training received by the teaching assistant, her religious beliefs and biography may be included among the causal conditions.

In our observational notes (given below in section *Action/interactional strategies*), causal conditions are signaled by the conjunction "whereas", which frequently occurs in the descriptions.

2. Phenomenon (main concept) = TEACHER'S SUPPORTING PRACTICES

I was interested in the following properties of the teaching assistant's support:

(a) the main aim of her supporting practices;
(b) the rhythm with which they were repeated;
(c) their time.

The indicator of the property "aim" was the *degree of independence* that Jasmine was able to acquire in the course of the school year. Given that this was an excessively general indicator, I concentrated on one of its (sub)indicators: the amount of initiative granted to Jasmine by the teaching assistant.

The indicator of the property "rhythm" was the *frequency* of the supporting action.

The indicator of the property "time" was the *duration* of the supporting action.

The choice of the indicators had to be carefully thought-out, and it had to concentrate on highly significant aspects of the practice examined because the indicators would be subsequently used as variables in the non-numerical matrices.

For the *degree of independence* indicator I selected a four-mode variable comprising none/low/medium/high. For the *frequency of support* indicator I used a five-mode variable: never/rarely/sometimes/often/always. Finally, for the *duration of support* indicator I restricted the variable to three modes: no action/brief action/prolonged action.

3. Intervening actions = the classroom teacher's mental model (or conception of sightlessness).

This model may have helped or hindered the micro-actions.

4. Context = environmental constraints, the behavior of the other teachers, the school staff and Jasmine's classmates as the school year proceeded, and of the children's parents.

5. Action/interactional strategies = (a) arrival at school, (b) control of punctuality, (c) waiting in the entrance lobby, (d) forming the line.

For example, I identified, sampled and systematically observed four micro-actions in the entrance lobby (my observational notes are in brackets):

(a) *arrival at school* (whereas the children came to school individually or were brought by a parent, Jasmine was accompanied by an escort);

(b) *punctuality ritual* (whereas it was compulsory for the children to arrive at the school before the first bell rang – at 8.20 – lateness by Jasmine was tolerated; indeed, she sometimes arrived after the second bell at 8.30);

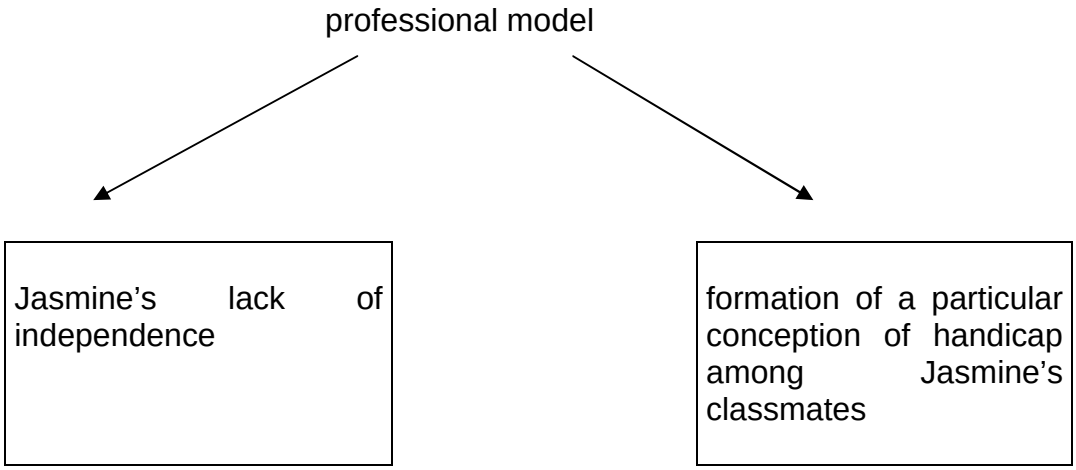
(c) *waiting in the entrance lobby* (whereas the children played and joked among themselves in the lobby, Jasmine was met by the teaching assistant, and they talked together – separately from the class and the teachers – while waiting for the second bell to ring);

(d) *forming the line* (whereas the children lined up in pairs before going to the classroom, Jasmine and the teaching assistant either preceded or followed the class).

6. *Consequences = concept of handicap acquired by Jasmine's classmates.*

As said, Jasmine's identity – and in particular what sightlessness signifies in cognitive terms – was organizationally constructed. The causal chain may have been as follows:

(1) the teaching assistant's professional model guided her supporting practices, which in their turn (2) were the cause of Jasmine's lack of independence and (3) formed her classmates' conception of handicap.



The three assertions were very strong hypotheses which had to be tested and documented with equally strong empirical evidence. The axial coding therefore formulated assertions about the concept (usually related to an action) and its properties.

Selective coding

The third phase began with the construction of a story (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 119) consisting of a restricted number of hypothetical statements (around ten) which, once tested, constituted the framework of the theory. The aim of the research, in fact, was to produce a theory, not just descriptions, the story was entitled "supporting practices" (the main category) and its hypothetical assertions were:

1. the teaching assistant had learned an assistive professional model;
2. this model tended (unconsciously?) to keep Jasmine in a state of dependency;
3. in fact, towards the end of the school year Jasmine had still not developed a significant degree of independence;
4. Jasmine's independence was obstructed not only by the teaching assistant but also by environmental constraints in the school;
5. the supporting practices which rotated around Jasmine contributed crucially to forming the concept of visual disability among her classmates, especially as regards what a sightless person can and cannot do;
6. the same function was performed (albeit to a lesser extent) by the sanctions and rewards distributed by the class teacher, and by the teachers of religion and English;
7. during the school year Jasmine's classmates changed the way in which they related to her;
8. towards the end of the school year Jasmine had not formed any meaningful or close relationships with her classmates;
9. her only close relationship was with the teaching assistant.

Having outlined the story, the next step was to return to the field and sample (for the third time) the actions and events associated with each assertion, thereby collecting further information with which to document their validity. Obviously, the data collected previously were not neglected given that ethnographic research is a

long and laborious process, it is vital that the ethnographer exploit all information to the maximum extent, and especially information that has already been collected. I therefore returned to my "old" notes with a new objective, that of confirming or disproving the assertions of the story.

Each assertion (which was no more than a statement) had to be supported by an accurate description. In other words, it had to be enriched with details and episodes which gave it solidity in the eyes of the reader (concept of 'thick description'). I thus expanded the story, constructed a complex model, and gave greater sophistication to my theory. If ethnographic notes have been written using a word processing program, control of the hypotheses can be facilitated by using the QSR NUD*IST software. This has nine Boolean operators which, once the observational notes have been inserted, enable the hypotheses to be checked automatically by scanning the content of the observational notes.

In some cases, the relations confirmed were outright patterns which could be represented in non-numerical matrices (see Table 1), like those proposed by componential analysis (cf. Spradley 1980: 130) or produced by cross-classification.

Table 1: Patterns of behavior

SETTING	**MICRO-ACTIONS**	**DEGREE OF INITIATIVE** granted to Jasmine	**DURATION** of the teaching assistant's action	**FREQUENCY** of the teaching assistant's action
Entrance lobby	Arriving at school	none	—	—
	Controlling punctuality	high	—	—
	Waiting	none	long	always
	Forming the line	none	long	always
Classroom	Turn-taking	high	no action	—
	Participating in activities at the teacher's desk	high	no action	—
	Question-asking	high	no action	—
	Rotating pupils among work tables	none	no action	—
	Writing compositions	high	brief	rarely
Washrooms	Entering the toilets	low	prolonged	always
	"Water splashing"	—	—	—
	Leaving the toilets	low	prolonged	always

Legend: — = not relevant

The matrix furnishes a succinct representation of the pattern of relations. However, like all typologies, taxonomies and classifications, it is static. The researcher must consequently make it dynamic by describing processes. The information contained in the matrix must therefore be connected with actions so that the reader can perceive the indexicality and meaning of the interaction lying behind the succinct representation furnished by a matrix.

Operational proposals: the role of social ergonomics

The main aim of ergonomics is to improve an environment by re-adapting the technologies already present, or by introducing new ones. There are at least three types of ergonomics: physical, cognitive and social. Physical ergonomics is mainly based on anthropometrics and physiology; it seeks to adapt objects (like chairs, tables, glasses, handles, and so on) to the human body. Cognitive ergonomics concerns human perception, attention and memory, and it aims to adapt objects, tools and environments to human minds, that is, to the ways in which people think, take decisions and act. Social ergonomics – an area which is unfortunately less developed – deals with a more collective dimension of interaction between individuals and technologies.

Over the decades, ergonomics has developed various technical solutions for the improvement of work settings. Sometimes, however, a shortage of resources makes new technologies difficult to introduce, so that it is preferable to alter organizational behaviors. From this point of view, in the case examined here a variety of changes can be proposed.

Firstly, individual intervention by the teaching assistant should be reduced because it had harmful effects, by creating excessive dependency in Jasmine, it hampered her progressive achievement of independence. Moreover, it did not encourage the development of relationships between Jasmine and her classmates: rather than fostering solidarity and social integration, the teaching assistant was a factor in Jasmine's social exclusion.

Secondly, the teaching assistant should have taught the whole class, and not Jasmine alone. Functional differences could be designed for this purpose while avoiding overlaps between the roles of the two teachers.

Thirdly, as regards the specific problem of blindness, a collective distribution of responsibility for Jasmine could sensitize her classmates in practical terms. The emphasis on practical aspects is important. A study conducted by Siperstein and Bak (1980) in England, where children at an elementary school were given lessons to heighten their awareness of blindness, showed that purely technical instruction produces improvements in terms of politeness and carefulness towards sightless classmates, but it does not create friendship. The responsibilization of Jasmine's classmates should instead be developed on practical tasks, for example, many of the activities described in previous sections could be entrusted to the children themselves, thus stimulating greater solidarity in the class.

Fourthly, Jasmine should be given greater freedom of action so that she can develop intellective and psychomotorial autonomy. She could go to the toilets by herself, finding her way by touching the corridor walls, orienting herself by means of the voices and noises in the school, and using the banisters on the stairs. And many other ergonomic devices could be installed for her. It is also important for Jasmine to learn certain falling techniques (forwards, sideways, etc.) in order to increase her autonomy (Wright, 1960).

The independence and autonomy of the sightless person was an objective (curiously) resisted by the professionals (social workers and teachers) concerned with Jasmine. As Scott (1969) pointed out, the blind could be better trained to lead independent dignified lives if the agencies would change their ways. For example in the United States in the 1960s there were more than 800 social service organizations and programs helping the approximately 1,000,000 blind men, women and children in the country. Most of these well-intentioned service groups actually encouraged a sense of helplessness and dependency on the part of their clients. Scott (1969: no page) contended that the agencies have paid far more attention to helping society remove the social problem of blind people from sight than to meeting the needs of the afflicted: "The overwhelming majority of people who are classified as blind can, in fact, see and function as sighted persons in most important areas of everyday life," writes Scott. "There is nothing inherent in the condition that requires a blind person to be docile, dependent or helpless. Blindness is a social role that people must learn to play. Blind men are made."

Conclusions

The research reported in this article singled out a set of school organizational practices which transformed a person into a "sightless pupil". As a result of these practices, blindness was associated with events, activities and incapacities which are not inherent to the disability, such as "blind children have little autonomy … they must not run … they must not be left on their own … they must be accompanied by an adult". These commonplace assertions are not specific to blindness[iii]; but because of the particular organizational conditions present in the school, they were wrongly ascribed to sightless children and gave rise to categorizations that still today underpin widespread stereotypes and prejudices.

A phenomenologically-oriented approach helped uncover these organizational procedures, which could thus be described and shown to the headmaster, the teachers, and the non-teaching staff. Once their artificiality had been demonstrated (whereas the participants believed them to be normal, obvious and natural), they could be replaced with other organizational procedures designed to construct (in both the pupils and the adults) other representations of the blind person. The ethnographic observations, combined with a practical vision drawn from ergonomics (and which is often lacking in disability studies, for a review see Davis 1997), were also able to suggest changes in furnishings, in teaching methods, and in the organization of activities in class and other places of the school.

It is necessary to go beyond a simple (though very useful) constructivist perspective and adopt one which reveals the different perspectives (social, ideological, political, cultural, etc.) underlying the dominant or most common social representations. It is necessary, therefore, to move in the direction of operationality, towards the solution of practical problems even when resources are in short supply. This would make sociology into a discipline more socially useful than it is at present.

Endnotes

i Goffman (1961) noted a similar phenomenon in the mental hospital where he carried out his research; the children of the doctors living in the hospital were the only category of non-patients who did not maintain obvious distances of caste from the mental patients.

ii After a lesson at the town museum, the teacher told the class to write compositions about their visit. Jasmine introduced hers as follows: "My composition is perhaps not as good as those by my classmate because I could not see the things in the museum very well because they were enclosed in the showcases". Evident in Jasmine's cognitive system is the equation "see = touch".

iii Similar considerations can be drawn from Oliver Sachs' works on deafness (1989) and colour-blindness (1996).

References

Cicourel, Aaron V. (1973) *Cognitive Sociology.* London: Macmillan.

------. (1996) "Ecological validity and white room effects." *Pragmatics & Cognition*, 4(2): 221-264.

Corsaro, William (1985) *Friendship and Peer Culture in the Early Years*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Davis, Lennard J. (1997) *The Disability Studies Reader*. New York and London: Routledge

Garfinkel, Harold (1967) *Studies of Ethnometodology*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Gilbert, Nigel and Michael Mulkay (1983) "*In search of the action*." Pp. 8 - 34 in *Accounts and Action*, edited by N. Gilbert & P. Abell. Aldershot: Gower.

Goffman, Erving (1956) "Embarrassment and Social Organization." *American Journal of Sociology* 3: 264-274.

------. (1961) *Asylums. Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Others Inmates*. New York: Doubleday.

Goode, David (1994) *A World Without Words: The Social Construction of Children Born Deaf and Blind*. Philadephia: Temple University Press.

------. (1979) "The world of the deaf-blind." in *Qualitative Sociology: A method to the madness*, edited by H. Schwartz and J. Jacobs. New York: Free Press.

Gusfield, John (1982) "Deviance in the welfare state: the alcoholism profession and the entitlements of stigma." in *Research in the Social Problems and Public*

Policy, Vol. 2, edited by M. Lewis. Greenwich, CT: JAI press.

Heritage, John (1984) *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lane, Harlan (1997) "Construction of deafness." Pp. 153 - 171 in *The Disability Studies Reader* , edited by L.J. Davis. New York and London: Routledge.

Lester, Marilyn and Stuart C. Hadden (1980) “Ethnomethodology and Grounded Theory Methodology: An Integration of Perspective and Method.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 9(1): 3-33.

Merleau- Ponty, Maurice (1945) *Phénomenologie de la perception*. Paris: Gallimard.

Olson C. (1981) “Paper barriers.” *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness* 15: 337- 339.

------. (1977) “Blindness can be reduced to an inconvenience.” *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness* 11: 406-411.

Rosch, Eleanor (1978) “Principles of Categorization.” Pp. 28 - 48 in *Cognition and Categorization*, edited by E. Rosch and B.B. Lloyd. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum.

------. (1973) “On the internal structure of perceptual and semantic categories.” Pp. 111 - 144 in *Cognitive development and the Acquisition of Language*, edited by T.E. Moore. New York: Academic Press.

Sacks, Harvey (1972) “On the analysability of stories by children.” Pp. 325 - 345 in *Directions in Sociolinguistics*, edited by J Gumperz and D Hymes. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston

Sacks, Oliver (1996) *The Island of the Colorblind and Cycad Island*. London: Picador.

------. (1989) *Seeing Voices. A Journey Into the World of the Deaf*. London: Picador.

Schatzman, Leonard and Strauss Anselm L. (1973) *Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Printice-Hall.

Scott, Robert A. (1969) *The Making of Blind Men: A Study of Adult Socialization*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Siperstein, Gary N. and John Bak (1980) Improving Children’s Attitudes Toward Blind Peers, in Visual Impair*. Blindness* 74(4): 132-135.

Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research. Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. London: Sage.

Sudnow, David (1967) *Passing On. The Social Organization of Dying*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Vaughan, Edwin C. (1998) *Social and Cultural Perspectives on Blindness: Barriers to Community Integration*. Springfield, ILL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

------. (1993) *The Struggle of Blind People for Self-Determination: The Dependency-*

Rehabilitation Conflict: Empowerment in the Blindness Community. Springfield, ILL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

------. (1991) “The social basis of conflict between blind people and agents of rehabilitation.” *Disability, Handicap and Society* 6: 203-217.

Vaughan, Edwin C. and James H. Omvig (2005) *Education and Rehabilitation for Empowerment. Critical Concerns on Blindness.* Greenwich, Conn.: IAP - Information Age Pub.

Wright, Beatrice (1960) *Physical Disabilities*. New York: Harper.

Citation

Gobo, Giampietro (2008) “Crafting Blindness: Its Organizational Construction in a First Grade School.” *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Lori L. McNeil
Long Island University, CW Post Campus,
USA

Applying Institutional Ethnography to Childcare

Abstract

This research applies institutional ethnography to childcare by employing participant observation, interviews and text examination at two childcare research sites. The initial focus of this work describes the daily happenings in childcare utilizing a grounded theory approach and makes connections between what happens in childcare and the structures and institutions that dictate those experiences. The construction of work was found to be a major contributor to childcare experiences. I conclude with an examination of U.S. childcare policy and suggestions for improving these policies and offerings.

Keywords
Institutional Ethnography; Childcare; Work and Family; Social Policy

Childcare as Experience

Both as a female and single parent, I became enmeshed in the issue of childcare because it readily impacted my daily experiences. It was the continual struggles of physically locating appropriate childcare options as well as performing the emotional work (Hochschild 1979) of bringing myself to the place where I could manage my feelings of guilt, by leaving my son with another person, while I worked. More than that, however, it was coming to terms with the resentment that overwhelmed my daily childcare experiences, connected to simultaneously juggling all these issues, which completely enveloped me. The invisibility of these daily struggles left me wanting to understand, "why do I feel completely unsupported and alone," as I engaged in combining work and parenting. I was left with the conclusion that the romantic ideal of motherhood packaged so pristinely and elegantly did not fully live up to its promise. Based on this personal experience, I wish to understand why there is seemingly no room for promise, and it is this desire that motivates my research in childcare.

Theoretically and methodology, this omission of experience is likely connected to the inadequacy of methodological and analytical frameworks that do not completely examine and validate all societal knowledge (Sprague 2005). Smith (2005) adds to this discourse suggesting that it is the concept of institutional capture, serving as an unyielding hegemonic, that constructs barriers between researchers and experience. Researchers engage in institutional capture (Smith, ibidem) when they allow professionals, experts and other high status groups to dictate that which

constitutes worthy research, research subjects, valid perspectives and solutions to any issue under study.

It should be noted that Smith's (2005) conception of institutional capture is theoretically grounded in and informed by Hartsock (1987) and Harding's (1987) work on standpoint theory. Variations of standpoint perspectives suggest that all knowledge is partial. Traditionally, those in the most powerful social positions have had the privilege of having their perspectives or standpoints become the dominant knowledge sources. While these perspectives have validity, they are incomplete. Thus, in order to understand society in a more complete fashion, standpoints of those who are not typically included in dominant narratives, about how the world works, must be explored in order to get closer to the truth. In this fashion, knowledge emanates from the oppressed.

Institutional capture limits inquiry and data gathering techniques because more powerful groups can only articulate their own experiences, and their experiences are not reflective of other groups. When researchers frame a single group's perspectives and/or experiences as the only knowledge base that exists, they engage in the act of privileging. Much like my own childcare experiences presented above, other experiences are not represented and documented, but nonetheless still serve as potential knowledge sources surrounding childcare. The outcome is that issues are consequently framed and thus defined in a partial and distorted manner. Because of this partiality and distortion, complete understanding of any issue or experience cannot be achieved.

A possible solution, according to Smith (2006), lies in institutional ethnography. It is the work of institutional ethnography that seeks institutional transformation. Institutional transformation centers on people's everyday experiences as an avenue to making visible macro level structures or institutions that create these daily experiences. When connections between daily experiences and institutions can be located, researchers are more able to address an issue thereby transforming that very institution. In sum, the application of institutional ethnography avoids institutional capture, as researchers honor the knowledge of the insider as an avenue to discovering the power of institutions.

According to Smith (2005), institutional ethnography initially examines how things work. By beginning with everyday experiences, subordinate positions in society are made central and valid knowledge bases. Institutional ethnography seeks an interface between experiences and institutional practices that create those experiences. While experience is central, experience in and of itself is NOT truth. The key is documenting everyday practices and linking those experiences to larger macro structures. This translocal process begins in local/everyday experiences as an avenue to discovering what Smith (1987) calls, relations of the ruling.

Ruling relations seek to uncover the ways that institutional power is part of and located in people's everyday activities and experiences (Smith ibidem). The examination of ruling relations ideally begins with experience moving to processes such as government regulations that take form in everyday, doing practices. Smith (2006) explains that the practice of institutional ethnography occurs in two components; one, documenting how things work, and two, identifying the macro level or structural practices which create those daily doing experiences.

Institutional ethnography is neither a distinct method nor theoretical perspective, but instead is conceptualized as a combination of the two. The work of institutional ethnography can be exiguous because examples of its application are not widely developed. This research provides such an example by applying institutional

ethnography to childcare. I do caution the reader that this research should not be considered a complete ethnographic account of childcare but rather as a template of how institutional ethnography can be implemented.

I began the work of exploring childcare and how things work by spending several weeks engaged in participant observation at two childcare settings. One setting, I refer to as, Sunnyside, was a family-style childcare. Family-style childcare is characterized by care giving within the home of the childcare provider, meaning that work and home occupy the same physical space. The second research setting was a daycare center meaning that care is provided in a separate facility that is not a private home. In the pages that follow, I refer to this site as, the Center. Within each research setting, there were ample opportunities for me to collect and analyze various childcare texts such as newsletters, mission statements of each facility, parent handbooks, menus, postings, notes to parents and caregivers, artwork from children and incoming phone calls. The final component of this research involved interviews of three caregivers, three parents, an administrator and group interviews of the children observed in each setting.

Childcare Literature and Structure: Examining the Text

Contemporary literature dealing with parenting and childcare has focused on women, particularly the problems of combining the status of mother with that of provider (Noor 2002; Erdwins et al. 2001; Maume and Houston 2001; Rothbard 2001; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti and Crouter 2000; Galinsky 1999; Kossek, Noe and DeMarr 1999; Rose 1999; White 1999; Brown 1998; Hochschild 1997). A traditional work ethic stipulates complete allegiance to one's job duties whereas mothering responsibilities also makes this same claim (Acker 1990). The outcome is that mothers experience a great deal of stress, conflict and guilt as they attempt to navigate family and work spheres. When these spheres cannot be fused, the effect, defined as structural interference, makes the meeting of either demand nearly impossible (Galinsky 1999). Structural interference, for example, manifests itself in the "three o'clock slump" (Hochschild 1997). The slump refers to the prevalence of phone calls to children originating from the workplace — three o'clock is the time when children typically arrive home from a school day. During the three o'clock slump, work interferes with parenting and parenting with work. The result, defined as, “spillover,” can be construed as a role struggle for parents in the form of competing dual statuses (Erdwins et al. 2001; Maume and Houston 2001; Galinsky 1999; Kossek et al. 1999).

Parenthood is oftentimes portrayed as a struggle—or a gulf between expectations and daily-lived reality (Galinsky 1999). One mother, for example, explains this situation as "[a] conflict between having this idealized vision of what a great job is and having this idealized vision of what being a great parent is. And the higher the bar gets raised on either of those fronts, the more difficult it is to meet those expectations" (Galinsky ibidem: 201). Brown’s (1998) ethnographic research of a daycare center found that women get caught between expectations of motherhood and workforce participation essentially combining need and guilt and thereby making for a potent and potentially explosive mixture.

Work and family conflict research addresses childcare as a family/work conflict and one of two distinct domains. For example, a depletion argument suggests that increased adherence to either a work role or parental role results in less absorption of the second role (Noor 2002; Rothbard 2001). Thus, the assumption is

that…"engagement in family is achieved at the expense of work…" (Rothbard ibidem: 655). In this case, role conflict centers on the allocation of a fixed number of resources devoted to either a work role or a family role. Rothbard (2001) explains this conflict, in part, as one that tends to be gendered and motivated by differing societal expectations for mothers and fathers.

Beyond work and family literature, other research has focused on childcare cost, quality of care and the types of childcare traditionally available (Buchbinder et al. 2005; Huston 2004; Crittenden 2001). This is so because the workforce structure has experienced incredible change with the increase of women entering the workforce, thereby creating the need for viable childcare options. While examining issues of cost, conflict, availability and quality issues, research seeking to understand childcare from the perspective of all stakeholders tends to be missing. For example, research centered on caregivers' or parents' perspectives do not fully capture all aspects of childcare (Buchbinder et al. ibidem; Corsaro 2003). Exploring childcare based on caregivers, parents and children in childcare provides an insider view of childcare that is more comprehensive than provided in past research. Applying institutional ethnography to childcare addresses this research gap.

Since the purpose of institutional ethnography focuses on connecting experience to structure, it is useful to have an understanding of formal childcare structure. Childcare is a commodity that is bought and sold. At its most basic level it is bound by a capitalist economic system. In its purest form, a capitalist economy is characterized by the market-driven activity of profit making and the individual choice of service/product offering and consumption. This orientation posits childcare as a service where profits must be realized in order to be successful which means that childcare offerings in quantity and quality are impacted by a profit motive. Beyond our economic system, an acknowledgement of the structure that regulates its production and consumption is necessary. In essence, childcare is regulated in a layered fashion.

At the macro level, childcare is regulated in part by the federal government. Federal regulation occurs via funding requirements. Funds by the federal government are released to individual states, states then make the decisions on how the funds will be used and distributed. The overwhelming majority of direct federal funding is appropriated to low-income families as part of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (Long and Clark 1997). Indirect childcare funding, which is primarily utilized by middle and upper income families, occurs via tax credits and reimbursements.

Individual states are the primary regulation entities directing childcare. In Michigan, the state in which the research data were drawn, childcare services receiving remuneration must be licensed. Licensing focuses on and is limited to issues such as staff training/education, age of caregivers, criminal record of caregivers, inspection of physical structure, caregiver-to-child ratios, disciplinary procedures, nutritional content of meals served and type and presence of equipment (Long and Clark 1997). For example, educational requirement for daycare center directors is equivalent to a two-year degree, but caregivers in daycare centers can be as young as 18 years old and need no formal training or education. Caregiver-to-child regulations in daycare centers and family childcare facilities include a one-to-six caregiver/child ratio stipulating that only four of the six children can be under 30 months and only two of those can be under 18 months of age.

The final layer of structure relative to childcare delivery stems from the facility itself as directed by the State. Facility regulations can include but are not limited to

pricing schedules, late fees, hours of operation, illness guidelines, care giving philosophies, disciplinary guidelines and food guidelines. In the childcare settings I observed, for example, the philosophies involved modified versions of Montessori styles of learning. In interview and observation, I found that these styles generally refer to children learning at their own pace, child-directed activities and the nurturing of both learning and independence. The modified component of this style refers to a higher level of organization that is normally part of a Montessori style of learning and care giving.

My work in the childcare setting began with the question, "what is happening here," as is the practice of emergent theory. Emergent theoretical frameworks and/or concepts are discoverable within or through an examination of the data itself (Glaser, 1992). Thus, I began without preconceived ideas or hypothesis to be tested but instead immersed myself in the data.

The work of documenting a typical day of childcare transpired via the production of field notes of observations and interviews from each of the two research settings. Based on these data, I began an initial open coding analysis to uncover the patterns within the behavior and verbalization of the stakeholders. The initial open coding led me to the practice of memoing, the goal of which Glaser (1992) identifies as directing the researcher to a higher level of abstraction of data to the extent that saturation occurs. Saturation is realized when researchers find that continued analysis of transcripts or field notes produce no new insights to the memoing process.

My next step involved a review of sociological as well as childcare literature. Through an examination of this literature, I was able to identify several major concepts that I argue both fit and explain the data uncovered in the childcare research settings. It is, after all, the goal of ethnography generally to discover new concepts within the research setting that were not evident or identified in past research (Buchbind et al. 2005). In fact, I found that institutional ethnography specifically lent itself to the application of this inductive style of grounded theory explaining childcare experiences.

Through an examination of the sequence process surrounding people's daily doings in childcare settings, I began to empirically explore how these layers are knitted together to form a social organization based on the relations of the ruling. I identified the major processes occurring throughout the day as, arrivals of the children, meals/snacks, different playtime/activity styles, naptime and departures at day's end. While I do not present all research data discovered, I instead use vignettes of this work to illustrate points of intersection between people's actual activities and those institutions impacting those experiences.

Inside Childcare—How Things Work: Examining Childcare Routines

In examining the actual relations of childcare, immediately evident is the incredible amount of care giving for children that is steeped in routine. Other researchers have also documented the routinous nature of childcare (Brown 1996; Beardsley 1990). The children, caregivers and parents who together produce the organized activity of childcare all have intimate knowledge of the routines of a typical childcare day. In fact, those very routines of childcare, and the stakeholders' knowledge of those routines, are a significant dimension of childcare informing this research.

A usual childcare day tends to include routines characterized by arrivals, breakfast, play and learning time, lunch, napping, snacks, playtime and, finally,

departures. Throughout the childcare day, home and daycare are significantly integrated; childcare workers, parents and children all engage in connecting processes. The childcare routines themselves begin even before the first child arrives in daycare. Caregivers come in early and stay late in order to organize materials, food, activities, and plans for the days and weeks ahead. Thus, as the first parents and children arrive at the childcare setting, often before daylight, they walk into rooms where activities are already going on: favorite morning videos, toys set up, and games set up. These caregiver activities are crucial aspects for understanding how home and work are interdependent and how all work connected to care giving is done.

One of the arguments I make is that commonsense knowledge of the daily routines in childcare is a vital part of how working parents and their children manage to integrate their home, work and daycare roles. For example, parents use knowledge of routines to anticipate, plan and strategize their morning leaving process; they draw on this knowledge as they transition from parent to worker for themselves and as they assist their child's transition from home to daycare. As Schutz (1967) noted, we transition from direct to indirect social experience of another person; that such a change is a gradual progression, a temporal process involving a continuous series of experiences. Rather than seeing the morning drop-off as abrupt, for example, it instead can be perceived as a process of moving from the realm of immediate experience of a person to experiencing that person only in imagination and memory (Schutz ibidem). Of course, this knowledge can only be useful if stability in childcare exists. With attention focused on this issue of stability and routine, I begin by presenting description of the childcare arrival process; a critical albeit understudied component of childcare (Corsaro 2003).

The day begins very early indeed. The late winter morning is brisk with the sun still making its way out to greet the day. It is 6:25 a.m. on a Friday morning. Caregivers, Rich and Leslie Sylar explain to me that when the children begin arriving, it occurs quickly and this statement proves to be quite accurate.

The first child, Molly, arrives at 6:55 a.m. Molly is 18 months old. Her mother informs the Sylers that they had gone to bed late last night and both are a bit grumpy. Molly's mother removes Molly's pink snowsuit and places it in the cubbyhole located in the entranceway. Molly's mother also removes Molly's shoes and they are placed neatly against the wall in the entranceway opposite the cubbyholes. Molly and her mother say a goodbye lasting only about 30 seconds. Molly quickly strolls into the living room and begins to interact with Rich.

While Molly's mother is still there, Timmy and Courtney arrive with their mother. Of the group, Timmy is the youngest at twelve months of age and Courtney is the second oldest. Timmy's mother is explaining that he had received five immunizations yesterday but despite the shots he seems to be feeling fine with no elevated temperature today. Timmy's mother and Leslie discuss the type of food Timmy should eat today. As Timmy and Courtney's mother leaves, another parent enters before the door is shut.

Next, Jessica and her father arrive. Her father helps Jess off with her coat and shoes following the same routine as the other parents and children. At the sight of me, Jess moves closer to her father and grabs his arm. Jess, a three-year-old, holds a book up, showing me what she brought. Jess's father saying, "give me a hug," leaves the house. It is 7:01 a.m. Six minutes have passed and four children have arrived at Sunnyside.

The importance of routines in childcare is central to this research. For example, the seemingly innocuous activity of stowing a child's shoes provides support for this assertion. Both Molly and Jess's parents engaged in this familiar routine of carefully placing their child's shoes against the hallway wall. Garfinkel (1967) explains that in addition to commonsense knowledge of social structures playing an important role in people's production and control of everyday activities, he notes that it also enables people's production and control of social affect. Indeed, Garfinkel argued that we draw on our commonsense knowledge of routine interactions "so as to solicit enthusiasm and friendliness or avoid anxiety, guilt, shame, or boredom" (Garfinkel ibidem: 49). In this case, the affect parents were perhaps seeking was for both their child as well as themselves to feel positive, happy or content about their day ahead—that of either daycare or work. Thus, engagement in this routine was a cuing mechanism for all parties to perform this transition work regardless of Jess's hesitancy of a stranger or Molly's weariness.

Molly, looking up at me, does seem tired, as her mother had explained. I noticed how very early some of the children must arrive at childcare because their parent's work schedule requires them to do so. The children's schedules, which in part determine their daily doings, are not just connected to the rules of the childcare facility but the hours of operation are connected to the demands or rules of the economy. It should be noted that in most cases when referring to the economy, I make the connection of work as being an outcome of and bound to our economic institution. Thus, this example demonstrated the centrality of the economy relative to determining a toddler's schedule. In this way, I begin connecting the actual relations (Smith 1987), or the daily doing of things in people's lives to the ruling relations, those institutions that impact, direct and even predetermine those experiences or actual relations. This initial endeavor started the work of translocal mapping (Turner 2006: 140-1) the purpose of which connects experiences to institutions—that is the very foundation of institutional ethnography.

Returning attention back to the actual relations (Smith 1987), at the Center it is now 7:15 a.m. Tanner, an older three-year-old arrives with his father. His father brings in an extra sweatshirt and puts it in the child's cubbyhole located in the middle of the room. Tanner's father waves goodbye to him but Tanner does not notice because he is busy at play. Darla, an office worker, arrives for work and walks through the main room. Darla is followed by the arrival of Sarah who is accompanied by her mother. "Bye Sarah banana," says her mother. Sarah, an older three-year-old, replies with a, "no, no, no." Sarah whines a little and shuffles her feet but begins to engage in play as her mother leaves.

Linda arrives with her mother and is carrying a ball. Linda shows me the ball saying that the character on the ball is evil. Linda is finished showing her new toy and now wants her mother to read her a story before she leaves. Her mother says that she can't because she must now go to work. Linda, on the other hand, with only a little whining, is able to convince her mother to read a short story. They sit on the small couch under the loft and Tanner soon joins them to hear the story. This mother begins her work before she enters her "actual" work setting. Her work involves the awareness that her daughter needs a slow transition into daycare this morning.

Since the concept of work is a primary focus to institutional ethnography, I offer a definition of work as anything requiring both effort and competence (Smith 1987), involving concerted and coordinated activity (Turner 2006). It is important to note that the concept of work includes not only the activity performed by the caregivers but also the work performed by children and parents connected to the actual relations of

childcare. In these observations, caregivers were performing work as they provided emotional and physical support to children. Children and parents were also employing effort and competence as stakeholders in their own childcare experiences. It is this notion of work and its connection to social affect or emotion that I continue to explore.

Emotion Work As Routine

One example of how work and emotion is characterized by routine is exemplified by the arrival of Timothy, a five-year-old, who is being carried by his father. Timothy does not want to be put down and his father tries to distract him by talking about what Timothy will do today and the fun he will have. Timothy is not comforted by his father's words and is attempting to engage him in conversation hoping to extend his father's stay. His father leaves and Timothy watches him exit from a window overlooking the entranceway. Timothy now quietly goes to the coloring table and begins drawing a picture.

For Timothy and others, emotion work (Hochschild 1979) is performed throughout the day. Emotion work involves managing the feelings of others to produce the right emotion based on a social setting. For example, parents informing children how much fun they will have during the day, children waving through the window as their parent leaves and caregivers dispensing physical affection and "I love you[s]" to children is all work activity. While this work is not usually acknowledged as such, emotion work is a major component of childcare that tends to go unnoticed.

Oftentimes, emotion work is performed as goodbyes or glances cast through what has become known as a "waving window" (Brown 1998). A waving window provides a transitional space for many of the children and has become part of many childcare settings. The window usually overlooks either a walkway or parking lot. The child can stand at the window and wave a final "goodbye" to a parent. Not all children and parents make use of the window, but many do. Timothy was performing emotion work as his father was leaving the daycare. A series of easing Timothy into the childcare day such as his father reading him a story and verbal reassurances from caregivers did not soothe Timothy emotionally. After approximately 45 minutes, Timothy's father was finally able to extract himself from the room. Timothy immediately positioned himself at the waving window and watched his father depart. The window and the wave eased Timothy, and perhaps his father as well, into his daycare/work role and world. The waving window also served the same purpose at the end of the day. Parents, children, and caregivers were observed engaging in a variety of emotion work.

Other such emotion work was performed in childcare settings in various ways. For example, Timmy, an infant, had just received five immunizations the prior day. Although Timmy did not have an elevated temperature, his mother was apprehensive about his welfare that day. Because of this, she spent a longer time than usual in the entranceway watching him and chatting to his caregivers. Timmy's mother spent time talking about the number of bottles Timmy should have today reasoning that perhaps he would need an extra to soothe him. The caregiver listened attentively to Timmy's mother as she begins to stroke the soft hair atop the infant's head. Timmy's mother, still hesitant, paused but made her departure as Timmy crawled away from her, planting himself onto a caregiver's lap. Timmy's mother interpreted the cue provided by her infant and ducked out the door to begin her workday. These

information exchanges tell daycare workers about events before the daycare experience that may effect the daycare day, and perhaps will necessitate extra attention, care and understanding. It serves as a kind of indirect parenting by parents—parents are, in effect, extending their personal caretaking role beyond the moment when they exit for work. This extension also serves as an engagement in emotion work but in this case, work performed by the parent occurs outside of the typical or traditional work setting but is still defined as work based on the definition presented earlier. Insights from a phenomenological framework (Garfinkel 1967) add clarity to the notion of social affect as it is administered through routine activity.

Drawing on Schutz's (1967) phenomenology, Garfinkel (1967) noted that in order to manage their daily affairs, people routinely draw on their commonsense knowledge of the social structures organizing their environment. Knowledge of social structures enables people in everyday life to anticipate other's actions, plan their own actions, and thereby offers a participant some degree of control over his/her situation. Controlling a situation through anticipation presupposes a set of more or less vivid expectancies about typical situations, typical courses of action, typical types of people, and so on. The more intimate the knowledge of a situation, the more vivid the imagined expectations. All the knowledge is based on past experiences in the same or similar situations with the same or similar people. In short, knowing from past experiences what to expect in a current situation, we can plan ahead and anticipate responses, as Timmy's mother does, so as to negotiate and control how a situation will turn out.

Schutz (1967) also argued that when away from others we have a more or less anonymous image of what they are doing, how they are doing, and whom they are with. The more familiar a person is with the actual activities and people in a situation, the more vivid their picture when imagining their actions. Intimate knowledge of the people and routines of daycare, I argue, enables a parent, while at work, to imagine their child in vivid detail. In this case, the imagined pictures of Timmy produce calm and ease, relieving guilt about a child who may not feel well.

Next, Sandy, another full-time caregiver, arrives for her workday. Gloria, who arrived 15 minutes earlier with her parents, begins putting a puzzle together at one of the tables but Gloria seems less interested in the puzzle than are her parents. Sandy makes her way to the table and comments on their work and begins chatting with the parents. Gloria's parents stay for perhaps 15-20 minutes and complete the entire puzzle before departing. Gloria's mother says, "I'll see you at naptime, I have to go, goodbye."

Another five-year-old boy arrives and he is excited to see his buddy, Mark, and quickly goes to him. A father arrives with his son, Garrand. Garrand seems cautious about his surroundings and stays close to his father. Sarah approaches Garrand's father and tells him about what she is doing. Garrand's father nods to her as Garrand tries to persuade his father to stay and put a puzzle together with him. Still another father arrives with his five-year-old son, Adam. Adam holds onto his father's pants pockets as though he is preventing him from leaving. Adam and his father now sit on a bench by themselves and Adam's father is reading a story to him. As Adam's father tries to leave, Adam begins to whine and his father sits down again.

Garrand's father is finally permitted to leave. Angela, a caregiver, walks to Garrand, takes his hand and leads him to the small back room where they will all congregate and talk about their day. Neal and his father arrive through the mudroom and enter the main room. With a quick exit Neal's father says to him, "you are so strong, I love you." Karri, the lead caregiver, and Sandy make their way to the small

room where most of the children are now congregated. A mother enters with her son and Garrand's father returns and enters the small room where his son is. He leaves again saying to Angela, "he just didn't want to let go today, no not today." Angela nods in commiseration with him.

Karri sings, "its time to put the books away so we can talk about our day." Karri and Sandy begin talking about the conference they had attended and all the time providing the children with great detail about things such as the weather. Karri describes how Sandy's hair was blowing in the wind and the children begin to giggle over the description of their caregiver's hair. The children are all sitting on the floor on carpet squares. Karri asks the children to think about something they did yesterday they can share with the group. Karri gently broaches the subject that Sandy is leaving at the end of the week. Sandy has taken another job at a bank and is going to return to college. "She won't be a teacher anymore," Karri explains. "Even though they, [referring to other teachers who have left the Center] are not our teachers anymore, they can still be our friends."

In this short amount of time, parents, children and caregivers where all involved in the work surrounding child caring but they were not just involved in this work, they were effected by the larger structures that literally shape their daily experiences. Perhaps most evident of this impact is the example of Sandy's leaving the daycare center where caring for money becomes more important work than caring for children. These local experiences become translocal when one evaluates the construction of work and how work is valued and remunerated in contemporary society.

Interestingly, one caregiver explained in interview that his work is consistently devalued. For example, others may see him sitting outside on a sunny spring day and interpret his activity as simply watching children. In this way, his work is not defined as real work because he is simply watching children play. These idealized activities of childcare, however, are few and far between he added. In fact, the better childcare work is performed, the more invisible it becomes (Smith 1987). Constant cleaning, children's tantrums and the organization associated to being a childcare provider is seldom acknowledged, making his work of care giving invisible and consequently not valued. Since the care giving of children has not traditionally been regarded as work, value is not usually connected to his work. In this same way, Sandy's work yields wages that reflect the devalued nature of caring for children. These observations provide additional mapping opportunities demonstrating the power matrix embedded within the relations of the ruling—that is, how the economic/work institution profoundly affects individual experience.

Roughly 25 minutes has passed and another wave of children begin arriving at Sunnyside. Tony arrives with his daughter, Christine. Christine is a young three-year-old. Tony begins interacting with Rich as they discuss the weather and then the conversation turns to sports. Tony explains that Christine woke up in a bad mood today. Tony is in the entranceway about one minute and begins to leave which causes Christine to rush to his side, grabbing his arm. Tony, distracting Christine from his leaving, informs Rich and Leslie that Christine brought a doll with her today. Tony leaves as Christine watches him and then she looks around the room to survey what she might now like to do.

Another father enters the house with his son, a toddler named Caleb. Caleb's dad watches him anxiously as he settles in and he also begins a conversation with Rich. Caleb's father wants to leave but seems hesitant about departing. He

mentions to Leslie that Caleb is a bit grumpy today. He laughs, “he’s all yours Leslie, the check’s in the mail,” and he ducks out the door.

The last of the children have now arrived. The Sylers have only nine children today, a light day, as Mona and Larry do not come on Fridays. It is now 7:55 a.m. and only one hour has passed since the first child arrived at Sunnyside. Based on state licensing regulations, the Sylars can have as many as twelve children in their family daycare facility at any one time. Thus, whether the two caregivers can successfully provide care for more or fewer children, the number is predetermined regardless of ability.

During arrivals, children, parents and providers all work through a process of role change. For parents, this change involves relinquishing their direct parenting role and shifting into their roles as workers. For children, this change involves a transition from parent care to childcare, which often involves a shift from mom and/or dad's baby to a mature child in a public setting. For childcare workers, it means taking on the responsibility for "surrogate parenting." In many respects, this shift happens as soon as children and parents open the door. But, upon closer examination, none of this work involves an instantaneous transition – one that commences with the simple but powerful opening of a door as they enter the childcare setting. Those transitions, and the emotion work that eases them, started at home, and many of them started days or weeks before the childcare day begins.

In both childcare settings, the issue of parents leaving was tenuous for children, parents and also for caregivers. A discussion of why work and family operate in a disconnected fashion continues the work of connecting actual and ruling relations. A traditional work ethic suggests that a disjuncture between work and family is mandatory. Acker (1990) explains this phenomenon as workers who are disembodied. This concept describes workers as having a strict allegiance to work such that they are totally devoted to their work settings. Goffman (1961) noted, however, that integration is typical even in situations where people are otherwise expected to keep their personal and work roles segregated. Even in the white, male, middle class world he investigated, Goffman (ibidem) observed that workers routinely engage in multi-situated matters, showing concern for relationships and persons not present. He argued that such externally grounded matters have a relevant claim on a person’s time—a claim that a worker may be able to honor only by diverting some attention from work. Thus, a disembodied worker, while perhaps serving the purpose of the economy, leaves little room for families and maneuvering these venues simultaneously. One way to begin fusing these venues, which of course represents a distinct departure from a business toward a human relations model of work, is to evaluate and produce connective opportunities for children and parents.

One researcher suggests that those connections must start in childcare settings (Bookman, 2004), thereby alleviating barriers between work and family so that the needs of both spheres are equally addressed. She explains that, “the development and sustainability of strong community-based childcare programs is one of the most important building blocks of a healthy civil society” (Bookman, ibidem: 154). Establishing work release time for parents, for example, is one way to promote a healthy civil society by allowing and encouraging parental participation in childcare settings. This type of volunteer release time can be negotiated, especially through unions, as part of employee benefit packages. When parents are continually involved in childcare, as was demonstrated by Gloria and Linda’s parents, they build critical connections to other children, parents, and caregivers that translate into stable childcare settings as well as strong communities generally.

Parents having the opportunity to engage in volunteer release time are more likely to develop the type of relationship with caregivers that facilitates, kid talk. Kid talk is the practice of relaying less obvious information about a child's emotional state. It was observed that sometimes the routines of relaying information on difficult mornings was transmitted in the code phrase, "not having a good day," or some variant thereof. On one morning, Tony, the father of Christine, cued the caregiver immediately upon arrival that his daughter woke up on the wrong side of the bed. This phrase suggested to the caregiver that a child would likely have difficulty settling into daycare. Still another father cued the same caregiver later in the morning that his son, Caleb, was "a bit grumpy."

It should be noted that, based on a narrow version of an appropriate work ethic, many parents do not have the luxury of scheduling extra time either before or after work in their child's daycare. The time famine (Williams 2000) so prevalent in the lives of working families can be addressed in part with work release time in order to volunteer time to one's daycare. The following example provides illustration of the time famine and the need for release time for working families. "Julie, a biologist…leaves her experiments only briefly for family business, like calling the dentist to schedule appointments for the girls. She says triumphantly, 'I got them both in on the same day!' Her thoughts keep drifting back to the field trip her daughter's second-grade class is taking tomorrow. She wishes she could get time off work to accompany them…" (Bookman 2004: 2). At the very least, valuing family life at the same level as work life should be a priority. It is establishing such a work environment—one that doesn't punish parents who are involved with their families, which creates a dual-centric (Galinsky 2003) economy. Dual-centrism represents a viable direction for the United States.

One example of how women have been punished in work settings points to the issue of times when children are ill and cannot attend childcare. This area of childcare need has received scant attention requiring parents, usually mothers, to take days off from work to fill the childcare gap when their child is ill. Crittenden (2001) refers to the practice of women's reduced participation in the paid sector as the, mommy tax. Caring for children during emergencies, illnesses and during atypical work schedules, are gaps in childcare that cause considerable stress in the lives of working families. In many cases, gaps are filled using a patchwork-style of childcare meaning multiple caregivers are employed to fill the entire range of childcare needs. In an interview with a parent, I learned that when her son, Daniel, is ill, Dawn will usually phone the daycare and actually touch base with a caregiver to receive an assessment of her son. The relations of the ruling to which Smith (1987) refers, directs and subordinates Daniel and Dawn's experience instead privileging an economy that demands disembodied workers. Non-punitive alternatives are in dire need of development. Ultimately it is the purpose of institutional ethnography to engage in the work of improving institutions when they do not fully meet the needs of a society.

Boundary Work—Connecting Work and Family

Family and work tend to be conceptualized as completely segmented entities. While involved in this research, I discovered abundant examples integrating family and work domains. The outcome, defined as boundary work, of this integration reduces and often eliminates the separateness of these traditionally distinct spaces. Boundary work refers to the strategies and practices individuals use to engage in role movement or transitions (Nippert-Eng 1996). Boundary work modifies or

renegotiates cultural categories creating what is defined in the literature as third places. While family and work are referred to as first and second places, third places capture activity not neatly falling into either of these cultural constructions. Third places essentially exist as instances of informal public life activities made possible by the renegotiation of role boundaries as reinforced by internal or external cues (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate 2000). Engagement of boundary work was evident on many occasions during childcare observations. I continue to describe how things happen in childcare settings to better understand the significance of boundary work to stakeholders.

At the Center, it is 8:55 a.m. and breakfast is ready. Karri releases the first group of children from the back room and the children begin washing hands and using the restroom. The children will be eating bagels with cream cheese, apple slices and milk. Eighteen children are now at the Center. Three tables are set for breakfast and a caregiver is present at each table directing discussion and manners.

At 9:00 a.m. the bell on the door rings and many of the children look up to see who is coming through the door. It is Diane, the Center director, with her two children, Aaron and Katie. Aaron does not want to enter the room and scowls. Diane picks him up and all three of them head toward the office. Although Diane is the Center's director, she often must do double and even triple duty as an administrator, parent and caregiver, performing all roles simultaneously. Diane's triple duty is part of a larger social structure that dictates women's work in an overlapping, continuous and invisible nature. Essentially, because the caring of children is not typically defined as work in a traditional sense, Diane's involvement in several work situations is not likely to be acknowledged or identified as such.

Back at Sunnyside, the plan is to play downstairs now that breakfast is finished. After the children use the bathroom, they begin their organized descent. Several of the older children approach the basement window peering outward toward a toad house located there. The toads burrow under the gravel for the winter but sometimes come up during nice days. The toads, however, do not show themselves today and the preschoolers move on to another activity. Leslie and the preschoolers begin a structured exercise of matching colors and shapes on laminated folders. This activity is organized in such a way that the children perform the matching of shapes and colors and wait—expecting that Leslie or Rich will check their work. After about an hour of play, the playroom cleanup begins signaling an end to that play activity.

Rich facilitates the next activity engaging the children in circle time with the children discussing what item they brought for show-and-tell. The children, however, seem unable to settle into this activity. Leslie responds by calling out, "okay, everyone on the floor on their backs." The group scurries to find their places in the living room giggling as they do so. The giggles and excitement indicate that the children know exactly what is up-coming and it is an activity they enjoy. Upon finding spots they claim as there own, Leslie instructs them to "peddle your bikes." The children, with legs in the air, begin peddling furiously. "Where will we go," Leslie asks. "We are going to McDonalds," yells one of the preschoolers without hesitation. As Leslie takes on different roles at varying locations to which they peddle, the children also must adopt different roles such as order taker or hamburger maker.

At the Center, Karri is cleaning up breakfast and organizing the next activity. By 11:00 a.m., the children are now busily involved with circle time activity. One child has brought cardboard tubes from home and the caregivers are using them as part of this activity. Many times, children bring different items from home to be used at the Center. The children now divide into three groups and use the cardboard tubes as

telescopes. Each child then peers through the tube and spots something they did that day and describes the activity. This activity not only reflects the Center's high scope philosophy referred to earlier but also represents a layer of the structure directing the children's play. By 11:25 a.m., the children are again transitioned to another activity signaled by dismissal from the tables.

The activity of circle time or show-and-tell offers a powerful example of how work and family do not exist as separate spheres. The cubbyholes described on many occasions are labeled with each child's name and are large enough to also stow items such as those brought for "show-and-tell," as well as a favorite security blanket, shoes, coats, or a changing of clothes. These items, especially those for show-and-tell as well as security items, provide a link from home to childcare. Oftentimes special care in storing these items was observed by parents as they began the process of relinquishing their direct care giving duties in order to don their work role. The actual items brought to childcare from home as well as the routines surrounding the stowing of items, revealed a transitional and connective purpose. Indeed, bringing private belongings into public spaces begins the process of boundary blurring (Shapira and Navon 1991). These routines served as an opportunity to fuse work and family spheres creating an arena where these domains co-exist resulting in the creation of a third place. The sharing of food, followed by naptime, continues the connective process defined as boundary work.

At 12:00 p.m., all the children are eating lunch. Lunch consists of fish sticks, bread and butter, corn, milk and orange slices for dessert. Lunch is organized in a family-style manner with children requesting seconds if they wish. The family-style structure again reflects the philosophy of the Center, stressing independence and learning to care for one's own needs. One child does not want any corn and Angela says he must at least have a "no thank you" bite before refusing it. As the children finish eating, they scrap their plates, use the restrooms if necessary and wash their hands. After this is completed, they ready themselves for still another activity.

Back at Sunnyside, Rich asks, "what time is it?" The children answer, "night time" signaling their consent to lie down for their naps. Leslie is working on sending the children to the bathroom. "All the little ones are done," Leslie informs Rich. Christine keeps repeating that she needs to go potty. Rich ignores her knowing that this is often part of Christine's naptime routine. Christine sleeps in a crib at home and has a difficult time adjusting to mat sleeping. Based on this knowledge, the Sylers have designated her sleep area near the door of the living room because many times Rich or Leslie must pull Christine and her mat into another room before she will settle into sleep. Christine will not settle down today so before long, Leslie pulls Christine to another room. Leslie returns to cover the children with blankets and distributes kisses, telling each child, "I love you." Courtney teases her suggesting that she was forgotten as Leslie goes back and gives her another kiss, saying, "night, night, sweet dreams." The children, now close to sleep, clearly enjoy the affection displayed by Leslie. The emotion work sooths the children into sleep. By 1:30 p.m., all the children are sleeping and the Sylars have a short break from the children but must now clean up and organize for the rest of the day.

Sleeping is essentially defined as an intimate activity but for children in childcare, this activity occurs in a very public setting. Naptime usually occurs early to mid afternoon and lasts for up to two hours. Although naptime tends to be the children's least favorite time, they know it is imminent and they settle down fairly quickly. Each child has a place and a mat and they know where their place is

located. Naps, too, require transition. A series of stories, kisses, hugs, music or gentle "I love you[s]" are dispensed to ease children into this unpopular activity.

As the children are settling down for their naps, I readily acknowledge that daycare settings offer a curious and helpful illustration of how alternative venues are created that belie separateness of family and work (Corsaro 2003). The concepts of integration and segmentation become important to the discussion of third places and daycare settings (Nippert-Eng 1996). Total integration of these venues suggests that home and work are one in the same while segmentation suggests that they are entirely distinct. Segmentation essentially draws lines around what is regarded as home and that which is work in the same fashion as a disembodied worker. It should be noted that integration and segmentation occurs as though on a continuum where total integration or segmentation is extreme. Most activity falls between these extremes. This continuum provides a useful tool for exploring ways in which childcare stakeholders construct this space.

Engagement in intimate activity such as napping integrates these venues but other examples throughout the day also serve as indicators of boundary work. Caregivers provide mailboxes and bulletin boards for parents where they post vital daycare information such as changes in holiday plans for upcoming events such as birthdays and holiday celebrations, and routine information about daily activities, lunch menus, and so on. For example, parents from one site were instructed to bring plastic, fill-able eggs for an upcoming Easter egg hunt. Parents were also instructed to bring stickers to be used for noting successes in their child's potty training books. Such activities require parents to prepare at home; they also educate parents about ongoing and upcoming events at daycare thereby serving as points of considerable connectedness between home and daycare.

In this same way, toys and other items from home, as well as talk about their lives outside of daycare, offer children a sense of familiarity and connectedness between home and daycare. Similar to the talk between daycare workers and parents, it enables daycare workers to learn intimate knowledge about the children's lives. Toys and talk also serve as sound markers of the children's biographical connectedness as they move from home to childcare. These observations also reveal that mornings are not just "drop-offs;" they are transition processes in which all the stakeholders participate thereby building important new spaces beyond work and home that cannot easily be segmented.

Ending the Day: Routines, Emotions and Boundaries

In the balance of this descriptive work, I focus on the day's end in childcare settings as I continue to document and present childcare routines as integrative processes in which parents, children and caretakers draw on their knowledge of routines to produce, negotiate and manage these transitional processes.

It is 2:55 p.m. on another Monday afternoon at the Center. The day is cold and rainy and some of the children are just shaking off sleep as they awaken from their naps. Others are awake and ready to get up off their sleep mats. Twenty children, all with differing needs, are at the Center today. One caregiver is preparing the afternoon snack. They are short a caregiver today, so Diane, the director, is filling in for the caregiver. Snack time is the only time that the children eat in a less formal manner at the Center.

Today is Daniel's fifth birthday and his mother, engaging in boundary work, brought a large cake for the children to enjoy. A conversation quickly ensues between the children focusing on how old they are and when they were or will be

five. Diane is kneeling down over Linda who tells Diane that, "I dream about flowers." Meanwhile, Angela is helping Daniel serve the cake reminding him not to lick the frosting off his fingers as he serves. All three caregivers are serving, organizing and directing during this treat time.

After the snack at Sunnyside, the Sylers take the children outside in two "waves" to play. Today, it is a very pleasant 70 degrees. The children are excited about the prospect of playing outside which is a rare treat for March in Michigan. A flurry of activity precipitates the waves of children departing the dining room as they use the bathroom and then locate and don their shoes. Two preschoolers collide at the corner of the kitchen and bathroom and fall. At first they look as though they might cry but they begin to giggle instead.

Molly's father arrives commencing the pickup routines and I hear her squeal in delight as she runs into his arms. Her father kneels down and they talk about the beautiful weather. Rich stands back and to the side of the reunion seeming to offer both physical and emotional space for Molly and her father. The work of understanding when and how to create this space appears often in childcare literature describing the boundaries caregivers create to employ a sense of "attached detachment" (Corsaro 2003: 5).

Jessica acknowledges her dad's arrival by approaching him and they talk for a moment. Courtney is dancing around the yard with the star bubble wand over her head proclaiming that she is a "Christmas tree." Curtis' mother arrives and he gives her a quick hug and resumes play. Caleb's mother also arrives at about the same time. It is 3:45 in the afternoon and most of the children will be picked up by 4:00 p.m. This pickup time is one of the Sylers' childcare rules they have prearranged with the parents, and like clockwork parents begin to appear.

Rich organizes a foot race with the toddlers and the parents stand back to watch the show. Another mother arrives and her toddler runs to greet her, delivering a big hug. Now parents are attempting to collect their children's belongings and trying to make an exit. Unlike arrival time, work demands are less pressing and family issues take priority, the hurried morning pace is replaced with more gentle reunions.

At the Center, the pickup routines have also begun. A mother enters the room to collect her daughter. Her daughter spots her and says softly, "my mommy." Her mother kneels down and gently begins rubbing her back, playing with her hair and talking softly to her daughter as she finishes her cake. The mother is thoroughly enjoying the feel of her daughter's still sleep-matted curls as rolls the hair between her fingers as though she had forgotten how it felt and smelled. This parent is engaging in the emotional work surrounding the reclaiming process of parent and child at days' end.

Normally, at this time in the schedule, the children would go outside to play but can't today because it is raining. Diane plops down on the floor and puts Tanner on her lap. Aaron, her son, is annoyed with this and tries to also get onto her lap. She sits him next to her on the floor and puts her arm around him. Diane is now involved in and demonstrating her multiple roles as mother, caregiver and center director. The children are getting restless because of the closeness of the small room. They look through the window to see if the main-room play centers are ready for them yet. "Rainy days are difficult," Diane comments. Since virtually no public money is directed to the physical facilities that children occupy while involved in childcare, oftentimes the children make do in very small areas. This is particularly challenging when the children cannot go outside to release their endless energy.

The second wave of collections begins around 5:10 p.m. and this wave moves very rapidly. Sarah's mother now enters the room and Sarah heads toward her in a full run, jumping into her mother's arms. Another mother comes in for her son followed by Colin's mother. Colin is sitting very quietly at a small table cutting pictures out of a catalog. He tells the caregiver he is cutting them out for his sister. The caregiver seems baffled. At this point, parent, child and caregiver are deeply involved in emotion and boundary work as Colin's mother approaches. Kneeling down on the floor, Colin's mother explains that his best friend has just gotten a new baby sister. Now Colin wants a new sister. Colin's mother waits several minutes until he is finished cutting and leads him out the door with his pictures firmly but carefully grasped in his small hand.

It is 5:30 p.m. and the Center is eerily quiet. Diane is ushering her own children out the front door and the part-time caregiver is getting ready to lock up for the evening. The Center is closed until tomorrow morning at which time another round of care giving will begin.

Summary and Conclusions

This research presents an application of institutional ethnography by providing entry into the world of childcare. I did so by employing participant observation at two childcare settings, conducting interviews of various childcare stakeholders and examining texts relating to childcare. These are traditional methods for this type of research even though institutional ethnography is not predetermined by an established method or theoretical framework. I made these choices because they produced an avenue to understanding the actual practices of people that become routine and reproducible over time, thereby making the institutions observable analytical categories. This is a goal of institutional ethnography—to move from the actual relations toward the relations of the ruling, so that the power of the institutions can be discovered (Smith 1987).

Childcare settings provide not only an insider view of childcare but also produce a microcosm of those same power and control apparatuses that are played out in society including political and economic structures (Cosaro 2003). Institutional ethnography achieves its goal by making visible the power embedded in social organizations from the standpoint of those who are being ruled (Campbell 2006). In this way, the focus is based on the query, "what social organization coordinate experience," (Campbell ibidem: 98); thereby essentially moving all stakeholders from passive research objects to social actors demonstrating human agency (Cosaro ibidem).

In childcare while several layers of structure or organization were evident, the most dominant was the economy. The connection of the economic institution to work was tantamount. Through the employment of an inductive approach to grounded theory several concepts were discovered, I argue, that explain childcare experiences. Examples linking childcare experiences to social structures include my earlier discussions regarding the importance of routines to childcare (Garfinkel 1967; Schutz, 1967; Goffman 1961), the disembodied worker (Acker 1990) emotion work (Hochschild 1979) and boundary work (Ashforth et al. 2000; Nippert-Eng 1996; Shapira and Navon 1991). While I do present a partial translocal mapping of childcare, it should be noted that this research does not identify all connections to the ruling relations surrounding childcare. For example, an institutional ethnography

connecting family structure and childcare is not examined here and should be conducted to supplement this initial mapping process.

Beyond what actually happens in childcare, my second task involved understanding the relations of the ruling (Smith 1987). In doing so, I examine childcare policy structure. Childcare policy is first regulated at the federal level. Examples include the Child Care Development Block Grant, the Social Services Block Grant, Head Start, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and the Dependent Care Tax Credit (Friedman 2005). These are primarily programs and policies developed to deal with the securing of childcare for low-income families and tend to be directed toward individuals rather than an examination of the larger institutions that govern them. This narrow focus posits childcare as problematic only for low-income families and has tended to ignore other issues in childcare, for instance childcare provider turnover rates.

Far-reaching policy efforts are necessary to address such rates in childcare. High childcare provider turnover is inextricably tied to wage and benefit issues (U.S. Department of Labor 2004; House Ways and Means 2000). This may be because the United States has relied on business models to dispense social services. A business model stipulating that open competition provides consumers with the least expensive and highest quality product/service can be useful in a production capacity but this commoditization of childcare has been unsuccessful. An indicator of this failure is the national turnover rate of childcare providers reported to be well above 40% (House ways and Means ibidem; Brown 1998).

It was not a coincidence, but an everyday reality in the childcare field, that during this research one childcare worker was leaving the daycare center because of her poverty-level wages. A business model applied to this scenario would dictate that because childcare services continue to be in high demand, pay would be commensurate with demand—but pay remains low (House Ways and Means 2000). Childcare provider pay scales are among the lowest paid of professions with rates ranging as low as $4.69 per hour to the median rate of 7.06 per hour (House Ways and Means ibidem). In the state of Michigan from which my research data were drawn, the average childcare provider salary is approximately 25% below the poverty rate for a family of four (National Women's Law Center 2001). Funding programs and supporting policies designed to address low wages would likely significantly reduce high turnover rates for childcare workers.

Beyond attention to provider wages, the issue of universal childcare cannot be ignored. Such a program could be linked to our current educational system in two ways. First, children three years of age and above could be part of the public school system and those under three years of age could receive care in licensed private homes with the provision of care occurring under contract as with educators (Zigler and Gilman 1996). The immediate benefit is that caregivers would receive the same pay scales and benefits as public school teachers. Moreover, this practice would promote the receiving of care from one source rather than multiple care giving sources. The use of multiple caregivers is a practice employed by more than 22% of all working families made necessary by the lack of care giving arrangements (Presser 2003).

While shifting the control of care giving to families and away from work and the economy may seem inconceivable, the benefits of such a shift are noteworthy and important to explore. Regardless of the benefits noted above, of course an initial query about a universal daycare system centers on the cost of such a provision. One estimate on funding such a venture is $122.5 billion per year (Helburn and Bergmann

2002). This figure is roughly six times the amount currently spent on childcare. The cost is undoubtedly exponentially higher than our current budget, but savings may be realized through increased literacy and other academic as well as social skills that children would likely benefit from where they available (Huston 2004). Interestingly, it is economists who are now suggesting that more public resources for childcare, "can be quite productive, socially and culturally as well as cognitively…" (Crittenden 2001: 215). In fact, childcare was the only area, economists suggest, where the increasing of public funding was critical. But since childcare is work that still remains invisible and thus value-less, such an offering is not likely to be considered necessary by the ruling relations. An invaluable contribution to extant childcare literature, however, would be a thorough investigation of benefits resulting from a universal childcare system.

Further examination of childcare, especially relative to traditional interpretations of work, as well as, the centrality of childcare routines is necessary. For example, while I tended to interpret childcare routines in a positive fashion, other interpretations of these functions need exploration. Research focusing on children's perception of routine does not readily exist. Much of the routines I observed tended to be somewhat militant as children marched from one activity to another, their bodies becoming docile entities directed by a clock as opposed to choice or desire (Corsaro 2003). Goffman (1961) refers to this action as, collective regimentation. This was especially evident during naptime where institutional power is applied to many children who were required to lie on their mats, regardless whether they were interested in or needed sleep. Conversely, a thorough examination of how children, like their parents, also require a sense of predictability would be useful.

Institutional ethnography allows for inquiry based on people's everyday doings as an avenue to understanding how ruling relations effect our actual relations in everyday society. The struggles motivating this research and those presented in this paper stem from the invisibility of experience and thus this research employing institutional ethnography provides a space for these experiences to be discovered by examining those very social structures that obscure them.

References

Acker, Joan (1990) "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender & Society* 40 (2): 139-158.

Ashforth, Blake E, Glen E. Kreiner and Mel Fugate (2000). "All in a Day's Work: Boundaries and Micro Role Transitions." *Academy of Management Review* 25 (3): 472-491.

Beardsley, Lyda (1990) G*ood Day/Bad Day: The Child's Experience of Child Care.* NewYork: Teachers College Press.

Bookman, Ann (2004) *Starting in Our Own Backyards: How Working Families Can Build Community and Survive the New Economy.* New York: Routledge.

Brown, Harriet N. (1996) *The Goodbye Window: A Year in the Life of a Day-Care Center.*Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Buchbinder, Mara, Jeffrey Longhofer, Thomas Barrett, Peter Lawson and Jerry Floersch (2005) "Ethnography and Childcare Practice." *Hanna Perkins Center for Child Development.*

Campbell, Marie L. (2006) "Institutional Ethnography and Experience as Data." Pp. 91-107 in *Institutional Ethnography as Practice*, edited by D. Smith. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Corsaro, William A. (2003). *We're Friends Right? Inside Kids' Culture.* Washington, D.C.:Joseph Henry Press.

Crittenden, Ann (2001) *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World is Still the Least Valued.* New York: Metropolitan Books.

Eastwood, Lauren E. (2006) "Making the Institution Ethnographically Accessible." Pp. 181-197 in *Institutional Ethnography as Practice*, edited by D. Smith. Lanham, MD:Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Erdwins, Carol J., Louise C. Buffardi, Wendy J. Casper and Alison O'Brien (2001) "The Relationship of Women's Role Strain to Social Support, Role Satisfaction, and Self-Efficacy." *Family Relations* 50 (3): 230-238.

Friedman, Michele (2005) "Child care," Coalition on Human Needs." *Almanac of Policy Issues.* Retrieved March, 2005 (http://www.policyalmanac.org).

Galinsky, Ellen (2003) "Dual-Centric–A New Concept of Work-Life." *Families and Work Institute.* Retrieved June, 2007 (http://www.familiesandwork.org).

------. (1999) *Ask the Children: What America's Children Really Think About Working Parents*. New York: William Morrow and Company.

Garfinkel, Harold (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Glaser, Barney G. (1992) *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence vs. Forcing.* Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Goffman, Erving (1961) *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

Harding, Sandra (1987) "Epistemological Questions." Pp. 181-190 in *Feminism and Methodology*, edited by S. Harding. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Hartsock, Nancy (1987) "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism." Pp. 157-180 in *Feminism and Methodology*, edited by S. Harding. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Helburn, Suzanne W. and Barbara R. Bergmann (2002) *America's Childcare Problems: The Way Out.* New York: Palgrave.

Hochschild, Arlie R. (1997) *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

------. (1979) "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure." *American Journal of Sociology* 85: 551-575.

House Ways and Means Green Book. (2000) "Child care." *Almanac of Policy Issues*. Retrieved March, 2007 (http://www.policyalmanac.org).

Huston, Aletha C. (2004) "Childcare for Low-Income Families: Problems and Promises." Pp. 139-164 in *Work-Family Challenges for Low-Income Parents and Their Children*, edited by A. Crouter and A Booth. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Kossek, Ellen Ernst, Raymond A. Noe and Beverly J. DeMarr (1999) "Work-Family Role Synthesis: Individual and Organizational Determinants." *International Journal of Conflict Management* 10 (2): 102-127.

Long Sharon K. and Sandra J. Clark. (1997) "The New Child Care Block Grant: State Funding Choices and Their Implications." In series, *New Federalism: Issues and Options for the States*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute. Retrieved March, 2007 (http://www.urban.org).

Maume, David and Paula Houston (2001) "Job Segregation and Gender Differences in Work- Family Spillover Among White-Collar Workers." *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 22 (2): 171-189.

National Women's Law Center (2001) "Child Care Teachers Wages." Washington, D.C. Retrieved June, 2007 (http://www.nwlc.org).

Nippert-Eng, Christina (1996) "Calendars and Keys: The Classifications of 'Home' and 'Work.' *Sociological Forum* 2 (3): 563-582.

Noor, Noreini M. (2002) "Work-Family Conflict, Locus of Control and Women's Well-Being: Tests of Alternative Pathways." *The Journal of Social Psychology* 142 (5): 645-662.

Perry-Jenkins, Maureen, Rena L. Repetti and Ann C. Crouter (2000) "Work and Family in the 1990s." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62 (4): 981-998.

Presser, Harriet B. (2003) *Working in a 24/7 Economy: Challenges for American Families.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Rose, Elizabeth (1999) *A Mother's Job: A History of Day Care 1890-1960.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Rothbard, Nancy P. (2001) "Enriching or Depleting? The Dynamics of Engagement in Work and Family Roles." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 46 (4): 655-684.

Schutz, Alfred (1967) *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press.

Shapira, Rina and Dan Navon (1991) "Alone Together: Public and Private Dimensions of a Tel-Aviv Café." *Qualitative Sociology* 14 (2): 107-125.

Smith, Dorothy E. (2006) " Introduction." Pp. 1-11 in *Institutional Ethnography as Practice,* edited by D. Smith. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

------. (2005) *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

------. (1987) *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Sprague, Joey (2005) *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers Bridging Differences.* Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Turner, Susan Marie (2006) "Mapping Institutions as Work and Text." Pp. 139-161 in *Institutional Ethnography as Practice,* edited by D. Smith. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

United States Department of Labor (February 27, 2004) "Childcare workers." *Almanac of Policy Issues.* Retrieved March, 2007

(http://www.policyalmanac.org).

White, James M. (1999) “Work-Family Stage and Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance.” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 30 (2): 163-175.

Williams, Joan (2000) *Unbending Gender: Why Family and Work Conflict and What to Do About It.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zigler, Edward and Elizabeth Gilman (1996) “Not Just Any Care: Shaping a Coherent Childcare Policy.” Pp. 94-116 in *Children, Families, and Government: Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by E. Zigler, S. Kagan and N Hall. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Citation

McNeil, Lori L. (2008) “Applying Institutional Ethnography to Childcare.” *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Caroline Pearce
University of Manchester, UK

World Interrupted: An Autoethnographic Exploration into the Rupture of Self and Family Narratives Following the Onset of Chronic Illness and the Death of a Mother

Abstract

Informed by the developments in autoethnography, narrative analysis and biographical sociology this paper seeks to affirm that understanding our narrative enables self-understanding and more importantly enables the understanding of others. Using an autoethnographic approach this paper explores the rupture in self and family identity following two traumatic events: the onset of a chronic illness (Multiple Sclerosis) and the death of a mother. It is the story of the life of my mother, who suffered with MS for 9 years and the story of my sister and myself, who cared for her throughout our childhood up to her death in 2000. The rupture in identity that we suffered interrupted the world in which we lived and exposed the contents of our individual and collective world(s). The themes that emerged from the narratives in this study suggest rupture is experienced as a movement of transgression that leads to movements of regression and progression.

Keywords

Autoethnography; Rupture; Narrative; Identity; Story; Transgression; Regression; Progression

The use of biography, narrative, stories and autoethnography in current sociology notably in the analysis of periods of disruption (Becker 1997) such as illness (Frank 2000; Riessman 1990, 2003; Smith and Sparkes 2005) and grief (Arnason 2000; Gersie 1991; Gilbert 2002; Handsley 2001; Herrmann 2005; Neimayer 2005) has highlighted the importance of understanding disruption by looking at the stories individuals tell about their experiences. By basing their theorising *from* the participant as opposed to *of* the participant, the lean towards a more embodied sociology (Williams and Bendlelow 1998) has given voice to chaotic, non-linear experiences that are primarily *felt* - to suffering that cannot be easily assimilated into a seamless narrative or category (Charmaz 1999, 2004; Frank 2000, 2001).

Narrative analysis reveals how people use metaphors, characterization and emplottment in telling their stories to convey more effectively the essence of people, places, character and emotions (Arnason 2000; Denzin 1989; Riessmann 1990, 1993; Smith and Sparkes 2005; Squire 2005). People connect to personal stories (Ellis and Bochner 1996) by evoking feelings and emotions (Ellis 1999) and thus can

©2005-2008 Qualitative Sociology Review

be therapeutic (Gersie 1991) and healing (Rosenthal 2003). They also help the narrator to understand and face trauma (Borawski 2007) and the process of narration can be an emancipatory experience (Wolgemuth and Donohue 2006).

The term "narrative" however refers to many different types of texts. For instance a biography is a form of narrative but is not a narrative in the same way as an autoethnographic account. In the first instance a writer is creating the history of the life of another, and in autobiography, autoethnography and self-narration the writer is creating and inscribing *their own life*. Narrative research does not aim to define the way in which to tell a story or what story to tell. It appears more as a pragmatic politics (Squire 2005). Everyone has a story. This story tells us something about the person and about the society in which they live. It is in this *something* (in this claim to an individual and shared reality) that lies the significance for the social researcher.

Talk of 'biography' in social research moreover does not always correspond to the use of biographical methods (Boeije et. al 2001; Richardson, Ong and Sim 2006; Walter 1995). Biography here is the history of a life and the details of an individual's life are treated as facts. In contrast, autoethnography as a 'creative non-fiction' (Ellis and Bochner 1996), sees the author actively moves back and forth between the personal and social using their memory as a resource to allow the reader to enter the experience (Ellis 1999). Autoethnographers are aware that in the act of autobiographical writing it is possible to create different "truths" - versions - of self and experiences (Kehily 1995). The creative aspect of writing is thus embraced and devices from fictional writing and poetry are employed to better capture lived experiences. The truth that is being sought in such research is quite different, as Borawski (2007) recognizes in writing her autoethnographic piece about a traumatic experience:

> The memory may limit the details an individual can remember, but trauma is not in the details, it is in the emotion still felt from the event (p. 109)

Narrative research and autoethnography therefore shares commonalities with feminist ethnography in agreeing that there are *alternative* ways of knowing, with rational, quantifiable research methods as only one claim to "truth" (Stanley 1990, Ramazanoglu 1992). If we look at narratives as "factions" (Bury 2001) instead, as simultaneously incorporating both fact and fiction and being transcendent of both terms, we can see that narratives and personal stories are not escapist, but like life itself *social texts* (Denzin 1989:9). As Riessman (2003) identifies, narratives contain both elements of structure and freedom. A narrative is essentially a performance that reveals how we interact and *react* to the structures with we live. The social and historical context frames the narrative.

This paper uses an autoethnographic approach to explore the rupture in self and family identity following two traumatic events: the onset of a chronic illness (Multiple Sclerosis) and the death of a mother. It is the story of the life of my mother Brenda, who suffered with MS for 9 years and the story of my sister Eleanor and myself, who cared for her throughout our childhood. The story continues through to our mother's death in 2000 at the age of 44. This story seeks to continue my mother's tale of suffering not only fleshing out the same story with the perspectives of the two other individuals who shared her experiences, but completing it by writing those unwritten chapters, effectively writing an "interpretative biography" (Denzin 1989) of Brenda and Eleanor. The end of one story leads to another as the "audience" becomes "storyteller" (Charmaz 1999). Using data from one family, I seek

to uncover how three individuals experienced a rupture in identity in separate and overlapping ways. By analyzing the transformation – the "interruption" - in the personal and social narrative when experiencing identity loss, this paper explores how a rupture is faced and the consequences - both destructive and affirmative - that result.

World Interrupted

Individual narratives make identity a self-conscious construction; it is not just given but something that is routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual (Giddens 1991:52). The way in which a person tells a story can affect the way in which they understand their life and the decisions and actions they make in their life are taken based on this understanding. Understanding our life narrative – our story – helps us to understand ourselves; it brings the past in line with the present and establishes continuity (Charmaz 1999). The importance of maintaining a coherent narrative is highlighted when our self-identity faces disruption. Threats to the continuity of the narrative, most notably death and illness, are sequestrated from culture as they remind us of the fragility of the control we have over our lives (Mellor and Shilling 1993). The onset of a chronic illness and the death of a close relative can rupture the secure continuity of our biography and destabilize our constructed self-identity (Frank 2000).

The "rupture" in the title of this paper refers to the rupture in an individual and familial reality. That is, rupture of a perceived sense of normality, a *collectively constructed* normality, not an objective standard of normality. As Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" (1990 [1980]) describes; we internalise the external world in a selective manner informed by the experiences we have had; the place we grew up, the hobbies we enjoy, the job we do. Each individual possesses an individual habitus that provides "tools" to inform the decisions we make as well as being a resource we continually add to.

A "mythic surround" encloses incurable diseases such as MS that pose an epistemic challenge to the rational order of a society accustomed to a medicine that can cure and explain all (Levin 1987:106,107). Death in itself is not incomprehensible or a "taboo", the problem lies in the non-existence of accessible languages in which the individual can describe and make sense of their experience (Walter 1994). A plethora of discourses arise to endow meaning and disguise this flaw in modern medicine. Models of a good death circulate, (McNamara 1998) and dying roles (Lawton 2000) and heroic scripts (Seale 1995) are formulated to help the suffering individual objectify and understand themselves, as well as helping others rationalise the "unspeakable" fear the suffering individual embodies. These discourses and scripts of how to act can be greatly influential in informing the way in which individuals tell (or believe they should tell) their narratives (Becker 1997; Smith and Sparkes 2005).

All attempts to express suffering will in a sense fall short because of the lack in language to convey the meaning of suffering (Struhkamp 2005). The narrative written here too is lacking. Giving space to suffering means we have encountered our limits. But letting go of suffering should not be a viable option. To ignore all that which doesn't fit or resists narrative is to indirectly censor suffering and push it further into silence. Narratives of suffering don't assume to produce reality "as it was", but can provide a *viewpoint* on the *experience* of suffering. This narrative viewpoint – "idiom of distress" (Becker 1997: 65) - can illuminate far more to both narrator and audience than silence.

Methods

The central source for this paper is an undergraduate university assignment written by my mother, Brenda Pearce, in 1993 entitled “A life changing event. Coping with disability and the reconstruction of identity following the onset of a chronic illness”. The assignment was an autobiographical account in which she detailed the process of reconciliation between her disabled self with her former non-disabled self after the onset of Multiple Sclerosis. To build upon my mothers account I conducted “interviews” - firstly being interviewed myself, then interviewing my sister. I informed Eleanor of the aims of the research and she consented to taking part and allowing this story to be told. She had no objections to the use of her real name.

My preference is to use the term “themed conversation” rather than interview as in each case the interview took the form of a conversation - a mutual sharing of memories and feelings between two intimately related individuals. However by calling them “themed” the constructed nature of the “conversation” is identified. The conversations were arranged with a particular agenda and a number of themes and topics were planned for discussion. The interviews did not strictly adhere to the suggested narrative or biographical interview model (Rosenthal 2003; Riessman 1993) but shared the common principle of narrative and biographical interviews and that is to respect the flow of the individual’s narrative.

Before the interview I noted aspects of our lives that I believed acted as a guide. This took the form of a list of themes ordered chronologically. It also acted as a prompt to the friend who interviewed me. The conversations digressed from the loose categories I had noted for discussion but this was expected and encouraged. Eleanor often reacted to remarks and questions in ways I hadn't anticipated, allowing for previously undisclosed emotions to be uncovered. A qualitative interview in whatever form is in many respects an intervention – a situation is enforced that may not have otherwise, or naturally, occurred. Yet intervention can be used as an effective strategy. The narrative interview provides a space for the telling of a concealed story, one that is often long overdue. As Wolgemuth and Donohue (2006) argue, intervention in the form of an “inquiry of discomfort” can be emancipatory and transformative for the participant. An ‘inquiry of discomfort’ entails creating ambiguity in the identity of the participant in order for them to see themselves differently. An interactive interview aids the participant in dislodging themselves from their comfort zone to explore and tackle traumatic issues. Ensuring that both participant and researcher alike are aware of the transformative and discomforting effects of the narrative interview and the risks involved, the narrative interview should be allowed a certain flexibility to be conducted on the terms appropriate to its aims. It has been acknowledged specifically by feminist researchers that in interviews the influences of factors such as gender are of assistance when actively acknowledged rather than ignored (Ramazangolu 1992; Stanley 1990; Stanley and Wise 1983).

I found initially that Eleanor held preconceptions of an “interview” and of what constitutes a life story which acted to inhibit and regulate her response to something she felt was appropriate. She felt nervous about the interview and about transgressing the boundaries of time and space that are commonly associated with an interview. I realized that I would have to accept these structures and use them in order to deconstruct the issues most significant to her. As Eleanor moved away from relying on these familiar structures she began to speak quicker and without restraint.

In this stream of talk the most salient and emotionally significant experiences were revealed.

In both incidences I tape-recorded the interviews. I listened to the recording the day after to immediately gain a sense of the narrative that was beginning to emerge. My own interview provoked forgotten memories in me, highlighting areas of ambiguity and questions, which I felt I should include when I interviewed Eleanor. I transcribed both interviews which helped to connect further with the emerging themes, as well as noticing those comments that in conversation I ignored, but through transcription drew my attention. I read the transcripts and with my mother's essay through multiple times, and I started to make connections and identity common themes. I compared the loss of grief with the loss of illness. I began to identify individual narratives and a collective family narrative. I wrote down themes and began to group them into "thoughts" or "feelings" "states" or "processes" in order to unpack their meanings. I continued this process using diagrams to represent what the words were trying to say to me.

Throughout this exploration I was informed by the method Plummer (2001) advocates in using 'documents of life' to provide deeper understanding of lived experiences. I looked through photo albums and put the words of my mother behind her face in photos. I looked at how our family transformed, how certain people stopped appearing, how birthdays weren't photo worthy after I reached the age of twelve. I saw places and events I had forgotten, I saw the reality of my past distilled and contrasted it with the past I actively remember. Inspiration came from many different sources. The scent of a perfume, a TV programme we used to watch, birthday cards, birthday gifts, a notebook of my mother's, where we used to live, places we used to go, the antique doll Eleanor has in her bedroom. An important additional source was the journals I have kept over the years since adolescence which acted as "fieldnotes" and a powerful and effective means to 'emotionally recall' on my past experiences (Ellis 1999).

I began writing the story by copying and pasting segments of text from my mother's essay and from the interview transcripts and placing them together to see the three different voices and how they merged and diverged from one another. The order was loosely chronological but events also took place aside one another and some events had impacts that lasted on through to the final stages of the story. Using these voices as a base I began to write in and around to fill the gaps and tie them together. Starting the writing process in this way helped me to respect the order of the narrative as it was shaped by the three individuals in the story. I also gave Eleanor a copy of the finished story and analysis to gather her thoughts and reaffirm the accuracy of the way I retold events.

My proximity to the text forced me labour every sentence I wrote and constantly question myself. Had I actually experienced the feelings in the way I described them or was I just performing an identity I thought appropriate and that fulfilled my preconceived notions of what others expected from me? I felt an incredible responsibility to live by the words I wrote else I would be guilty of creating a false biography and of giving false hope. It was then I directly felt the authority words hold and my obligation to act responsibly. I was left to ponder - does one really become the stories one tells? (Denzin 1989:81) These questions are questions for which I have not yet the answers. These gaps in my knowledge are the freedom within the more concrete words that keep the text open to interpretation. Though I have 'authored' this narrative, it is now beyond me, beyond the individuals in the story. It is

text, it is structure but it is also emotion, suffering and pain. This suffering was never really mine to own and it transcends and resonates far beyond the words on this page.

Communicating the Story

I have not titled this section as the "findings" as this label implies that this data was "found" and subsequently that it is the possession of the one who found it – the researcher. This research was not found nor can it ever be found. It is not the aim to tell the entire story or to relay an accurate tale of events. It is communicated here as it was and is, experienced – whether that is through conversation, interaction or the silent moments in between. This story belongs to no one but exists only because it is shared through memories and felt through suffering.

By the time of my own birth on 13th March 1985, my parents were informally separated. In 1979 at the age of 23 my mother Brenda got married in Australia, where she grew up after the emigration of her family in her early adolescence. After my birth my father returned to his native Australia whilst Brenda filed for divorce. Neither Eleanor nor I have any memories of our father. Brenda received custody and ownership of the house that would become our family home for the next 15 years. By the end of the divorce proceedings that were hindered by my father's absence in court and the necessary international transactions, he had remarried and Brenda had been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.

In 1988 Brenda began to experience difficulty in walking, a stumbling that was noticeable for someone as fit and agile as herself. Brenda was looking to return to her job as a librarian once I started school. When I did actually start school, my mother was free to work but by this time, she was unable to walk. For four years Brenda was in a limbo of no diagnosis, fighting to remain "normal" yet suffering from continual falls and imbalance. Brenda remained active in the face of her diagnosis and deteriorating health; she worked voluntarily with people with learning disabilities, she got involved with the local church, creating great flower arrangements and seasonal banners. We went on days out all around the country and had a holiday every year. Eleanor and I both attended ballet and tap classes from the age of five. Every year we both had great birthday parties and always the crowning feature – an immaculate homemade birthday cake. Brenda furnished the house with antique wooden furniture and endless ornaments that she bought cheaply and restored. She decorated the house with numerous hand stitched embroideries and cushions and framed pictures. She made a magnificent patchwork quilt for Eleanor's bed and a wall hanging in my bedroom. The house always had certain grandeur about it, a sophistication that exemplified my mothers taste.

Childhood was a peaceful and contented time for both Eleanor and myself. For either of us to detail the time when things changed or worsened is impossible. It happened so *gradually*. If you look at it plainly it was only 9 years – in which a perfectly able sociable being disintegrated, lost control of all bodily functions, became wheelchair bound, house bound, dependent, socially dead – but this would be to extricate any semblance of the actuality of the experience. I suppose you could look at the number of mechanical equipment and how they increased as Brenda's ability decreased. A stair lift gave way to a through floor lift, the fourth bedroom converted into a bathroom with wheel-in accessible shower and wheel-over bidet toilet. From Eleanor and I physically lifting our mum out of bed, to lifting her out with a hoist and various straps. Perhaps if we look at how the routine lengthened and deepened, how

it seemed we had we had always woken up at 5.45am to get our mum out of bed. How life at home began to encroach on our outside world. How home became a world of structure and routine. Brenda had always been a house-proud person but as her ability to complete even simple tasks diminished she took control by regulating a very particular household regime. Basic tasks took such a long time. We had carers at morning and night but our mum would specify Eleanor to do certain tasks. These ranged for the small to the strenuous. We took care of all the cleaning in the home. Everything was allocated a specific name "windows and pictures" "dusting the sideboards" and everything was done in order, always on the allocated day and time.

We could trace the illness trajectory through the structure of education. Examining the dramatic difference that occurred over Eleanor's five years at secondary school. At the start, in 1993, our mother had just enrolled at university studying Psychology and Sociology part time. Studying brought a great deal of independence to Brenda as she travelled to and from the campus several times a week, widening her social contacts and learning of ideas that helped her understand her situation. By the time Eleanor had finished her GCSEs, Brenda's capacity to keep up with the workload and attend lectures had however, greatly weakened, and the studies that had given her so much autonomy and broadening of perspective she had to leave incomplete.

Or perhaps the change happened when I realized it had changed. How I had to pretend - simulate a normality - when I had to write "My Day" in a year 7 German class, in comparison to my ignorance when writing my year 5 'weekend diary' in which I wrote "On Saturday I helped my mum go to the toilet…" Or perhaps it was when we *all* noticed how *other people* recognized change in us. We attended the Sunday service at our local church every week but one particular morning reminded us of our change. We hadn't been in church long, that morning, when Brenda started to have problems keeping her head raised. We used a form of neck brace ever since she could no longer hold her head up, but it was an unsightly uncomfortable thing that we only used when we went out. I found myself having to hold her head with my hands even with the neck brace, which began to elicit a few stares. A hymn started and she seemed as though she was trying to say something, but because her voice was weak I couldn't hear over the hymn. I wasn't sure if she was just crying as she started to get more upset. I was getting frustrated. We were already making a scene, sat at the front of the church as we always did, my hand on top of my mothers head, listening in, asking her "What is it? What is it?" my mother crying, distraught now, tears falling, saliva seeping, anguish on her face. I hear it this time; her broken cry tells me "I want to go home". And so we had to leave. Down the aisle that had never seemed so long. Eleanor pushing the chair, my mother's head stooped and limp, me shuffling alongside. The three of us just wanting to get out; out, away from the humiliation, the false sympathy, the stares, the looks that just stand there and say "what a pity", "what a shame", "what a shame on a day like today", "what a shame on Christmas day."

We could compare how people stopped coming round, how my mother stopped being invited, how having guests was too much strain. How social activities reduced. When Brenda left her role as Sunday school teacher, how Eleanor dropped out of college. We could compare how we were referred to; my mother increasingly as a baby with no opinion, Eleanor and I as 'poor girls' or told 'You're so brave!'. We could compare before and after we found out our father died. How Brenda coped with truly being a single mother, with the naïve hope of her husband returning completely destroyed. How to keep faith in her religion, how to maintain a brave face. Compare

her independence with the need for someone's presence 24 hours a day, how a couple of hours became unbearable, compare the sociable with the isolation, compare distances travelled, growing up in Australia, holidays abroad, to a trip to the local supermarket bare metres away.

Change is interweaved into all these aspects but there are always the anomalies. Comparison doesn't convey how Brenda was a Derby County season ticket holder, how she attended all the matches, how she was involved in the disabled supporters group. How she frequented the cinema and to the theatre, how we always went to the Christmas Pantomime. How Brenda always retained her elegance and ladylike vanity. How she was remembered for her appearance even at her funeral. Whether or not we were going anywhere her whole ensemble - clothes, jewellery and make-up - would be orchestrated down to the choice of perfume.

Comparisons neglect her sense of humour. How we enjoyed our holidays, how we could still laugh, and how we did laugh, how that laughter equaled the tears. They forget the achievements, how Brenda was awarded her degree in 2000.

Final comparisons: comparing hospital experiences. Compare how she went in came out during the majority of our childhood. Compare how she went in January 2000 and came back home after three weeks. Compare how she was admitted in November of the same year with Crohn's related bowel problems and in four weeks she was dead. But it doesn't compare. The pattern is broken.

……..

Our mother's death was entirely unforeseen. Neither Eleanor nor myself knew anything about her condition nor did we expect anything other than her return at Christmas. Opening our mother's presents we had bought ourselves on Christmas day was a rather depressing procedure that no one expects or would wish to do. Looking back, the day appears as a badly acted stage performance. Eleanor was called from work; I got called out of class, taken to the hospital, both told we should be there. The other characters appeared to have been informed of their motivations but Eleanor and I were thrown in, told to play along but with no knowledge of the plot – *why* we had to go to the hospital, *why* now? When I see my mother she is as she had been many times before. Eyes closed, oblivious to the world, oxygen mask on. We are told to sit down, one each side, curtain is pulled round. Still clueless about the plot we're off one stage and on to another. We make up our own script, one we think is appropriate. We hold our mother's motionless hands. We have no lines, no directions; we wait for a prompt. When she stopped breathing I remember the shock on Eleanor's face. I remember how the silence broke with the sound of our cries. I remembered all the things I didn't say.

The rest of the cast returned on stage before I could understand the hideous plot that had unraveled before me. Nurses ushered us out. The stages switched, outside the curtain felt like a circus as the other patients stared at us. Even they knew. The nurses finished straightening our mother in the bed. A gap in the curtain betrayed what lay beyond, 'I don't think you should go in girls…' But I had already seen, I had already seen the awkward lifeless body of my mother, her head raised back and her mouth hanging obscurely. The corpse of my mother – the image spun in my head and haunted me continuously in dreams.

We were ushered along to a friend's house but the morose formal mood was too much. We just wanted to be home. Yet when we did go home we were not left in peace as people came around in floods offering their sympathies. Eleanor and I

feigned the appropriate niceties. It occurred to me that my mother wouldn't be at my 16th birthday. I thought of all the things that would never happen anymore.
Eleanor and I allowed ourselves to be guided through all the funeral details. The funeral I remember standing and not crying. The same church aisle that we had been stared at for so many years, we were stared at for the final time.

After a two-week period and a charade of a Christmas we were exposed to the world that demanded obligations from us. For the past year Eleanor had dedicated her life to being a carer. She had dropped out of college, she had no A-Levels, no university plans. She wanted to escape and try to find a new life. Eleanor moved away about four months later under the persuasion of her first relationship and the allure of something resembling a life. She started to work, which began to reduce her feeling of isolation. The new life she entered felt foreign but it opened her eyes to the bubble in which we had lived all of our lives.

I returned back to school to receive initial welcoming from teachers and the silent treatment from peers. It wasn't long until I started to skip lessons, tactically making my way unnoticed through the school gates simply to go home.

I lived alone in the house that held the memories of my lifetime and of my mother. Her room I left untouched entering only to smell the musty unchanged air and cry for my loss. The house became the container for my grief, my memories, my eating disorder. Two years later when I moved out and we sold the house all my anxieties, panic and fear spilled out unto the world.

Discussion

The discussion that follows aims to open the narrative and make wider connections to sociological research as a whole. A distinction should be made between making sense of a narrative, which retains a proximity to the subjective understanding of the experience and of categorising experiences, where individual understanding is often lost or subdued. Three general themes – *transgression*, *regression* and *progression* – are introduced to help illustrate that transition is not simply individuals moving from one place to another but that it is crucially affected by the *significant others* around them, the *space* they inhabit and *meanings* they embody in them. The themes are not simply a way to theorize the description but reflect the movements of the three narrative accounts. The themes are not fixed but possess a certain flexibility that conveys how the three narratives interweave with one another.

Transgression

> I had now acquired another label, that of disabled, which I had imagined would make me feel and act differently; instead I felt the same…*Brenda*

Transgression is the name given to the process when an individual conducts some error; they lapse or fault in their performance. In effect to "transgress" is to be accorded a "spoiled identity" (Goffman 1968). The extent to which we transgress into the role of "other" depends on the role given to us by others and how we react to that role. Those who experience loss and disability were once "normal" and now become the "other" they are ill equipped to deal with. This initially brings a great deal of ambivalence. The other is realised within ourselves and we are no longer able to

demarcate the other as an external entity. We instead demarcate our own biography in terms of "before" and "after". The past requires reinterpretation in order to make a plausible and coherent biography and to make sense of our transgression (Berger and Luckmann 1971:178). This process of reinterpretation is all the more profound in the case of grief and chronic illness due to their irreversible nature and the fact that we comprehend our reality in opposition to the uncontrollable chaos that the two incidences pose. Grief and illness not only force the individual to transgress unwilling into the role of other but they do so by undermining everything that the individual assumed as reality.

My mother found her self assigned the role of disabled but could not understand why she felt the same. She already had preconceptions of what 'disabled' meant.

From being what I perceived as a useful member of society, I became an unwilling member of a disabled culture, of which I knew nothing and whose members I had always viewed with sympathy and saw as a burden to society

Able-bodied = useful, *disabled* = figures of sympathy, a burden. These preconceptions had to be altered now that she was herself on the other side of the margin, now that she had *transgressed*. Chronic illness reorganised action in Brenda's world and how she experience time and space (Leder 1990:73). The landscape of her world was transformed from a field of opportunities into a field of difficulties to negotiate (1990:81). Brenda was confronted with her own body and with her own deficiencies. Her body "dys-appeared" (Leder 1990). That is to say, the "dys", ill or bad, features were made prominent. The biological dysfunction of the disabled body led to social dys-appearance. The challenge of disability was not simply a physical but a social rupture. Its *irrevocable* nature meant she had to re-interpret the "other", which she had distinguished herself from. Brenda found she had no idea how to act as a disabled person and so she foraged for an identity, searching for her lost self, refusing the stereotype of disabled. There were no adequate scripts to follow that depicted how she *felt*. This process of emulating a new lifestyle or maintaining the one she knew was stimulated by the fact others reacted to her differently.

> I realised others perceived me in a different way and their treatment of me began to influence my actions

Maintaining our expressions is vital as a "minor mishap" can lead to the image that we foster being "discredited" by the significant others around us (Goffman 1969). A failed performance on the front stage exposes the discrepancy between the front and back regions of our lives. Brenda would alter her behaviour patterns depending on the social setting – the region – she found herself. She could create the idealised version of herself, the one "strong and in control" or act dependent and expect assistance and regard for her disability. Brenda would thus oscillate between embracing the role; becoming a performer on the front stage, a hero in her own life; and shying away, uncomfortable with the role, preferring the role of audience, retreating to the backstage (Yoshida 1993). Having a social meaning was not reliant on merely "being" but on how she would *act* and *appear*. The fact that my mother felt the same - *she was the same person* - presents how no one is inherently "other" or "socially excluded" or indeed "normal".

Applying for a place at university granted Brenda with a sense of normality. This normality was however only a "phantom normality" gained through a "phantom acceptance" (Goffman 1968) that was given by others as she attempted to play down

her abnormal attributes and play at being normal. This normality and acceptance was far more fragile and prone to being *discredited*. Her identity was no longer credible – for herself and others – as she had unearthed the meaninglessness that lied beneath its masking veneer. As beliefs crumble, as the world is "derealized", that part of the self that believed in the essence of things dissolves (Parkes 1998:98). When my mother died I lost the life I had but also the life I would have had, and without either past or future to contextualise myself the present stood in to substitute my whole narrative. "I am the person whose mum died" is the label that undermined and obliterated all previous labels of who I was – "I am the girl who looks after her mum".

The new label was however difficult to negotiate. Our mother's death also meant the death of my and Eleanor's purpose in life. The cocoon we lived in was emptied of our old routine; time had no referent; everything appeared non-sensical.

> I just really didn't know what to do … cos like for a year or so my main role in life had just been like caring for my mum, its not like I was at school or uni or anything like that… I hadn't really got any A-Levels to speak of so…I just didn't know what to do with myself. (*Eleanor)*

The negotiating and organising processes of family life provided the main source of "ontological security" (Giddens 1991) by establishing a sense of normality that was the "pivot" upon which we comprehended our world (Gregory 2005). Through "family meaning making" (Nadeau 1998) meaning belonged not to one individual but was held within the space of the family. When our mother died that intricate fabric of meaning was torn. Like our mother 9 years earlier, we were between two worlds, not knowing how to act, knowing we had to go forward but not knowing how. Ahead of us was the unknown – the feared chaos - behind us was the familiar that had given us stability.

Regression

The role we perform has to appear favourable to us; it has to correspond with how we feel and it has to cohere with our biography. The ill effects of an unwanted and *forced* role that *spoils* our identity can initially produce ambivalence but the new label can start to *overwhelm*. In the case of my mother her ambivalent reaction to her disability at first propelled her to take action and get on with life. Yet as her disease progressed and increased her liability for failed performances, she was continually confronted her with her inabilities. As she dropped out of university, as she reduced her social activities, she regressed from the front stage, to the back region that would provide security and familiarity. Our home became the spatial boundary within which Brenda could exert agency and establish regularity, in controlling the cleaning and appearance of her home. She could maintain the appearance of her body, keeping it contained when it consistently transgressed. The house, and the wheelchair she sat in, acted by confining her increasingly "unbounded" body (Lawton 2000).

As a family we worked as a "team" (Goffman 1969 [1959]) to continually contain the transgressive behaviours of our mother and maintain the impressions we gave. The incident at church on Christmas day presents how I tried to limit the ill effects of my mother's unboundedness by acting as an extension to her body. Our mother could only function with my and Eleanor's assistance. As Gregory (2005) and Richardson and Ong (2007) discovered in their studies of chronic illness within a family setting; the complications of family life are illuminated by the existence of a

chronic illness, just as the family context exaggerates the complexities of pain. When our performance failed we "dys-appeared" and retreated back to the house that contained the stigma we couldn't hide. Our "corporeal unit" (Lawton 2000) enabled my mother to continue a social role. In order to complete her university assignments Brenda would record her essays by dictaphone, and Eleanor and I would act as the hands that wrote, typed and perfected her voice. Our agency was situated not within any individual but held collectively; our social activities were *team* efforts.

Working as a unit required a very inward perspective. Eleanor and I looked towards our mother, as others outside looked in on us. As we were pushed out from the spaces outside our safe boundaries, the space between ourselves reduced. Within our false boundaries was similarly a false sense of time. The encompassing nature of the routine distracted us from realizing that its purpose was to merely grasp at control, to provide desperately needed *ontological security*. When our mum died and the integral piece of our team was lost, the unreality of our world was compounded to us.

> I felt really empty and numb for ages, I didn't – so like empty, so like not even there. (*Eleanor)*

This unreality Brenda had already been facing. As she became increasingly confined to the house, a couple of hours would leave her distressed. The absence of company, the absence of purpose, mirrored her own deficiencies, her own absence. This unreality overwhelmed like an abyss. An abyss never ends, there is no concept of time, it removes you from what you know, it erases your past. The label was the only meaning Brenda possessed and it became all that she was.

After my mother died the unreality of my world was brutally revealed to me and yet I could not align myself with the normality of the outside world I had craved so long. Living alone perpetuated the sense of living in a faceless abyss. School gave a little sense of routine but I soon rejected the rules and roles they offered. The evasiveness of pain that is felt in grief summons the individual to a continual present where a future cannot be envisioned and the "painless past" seems impossible to recollect (Leder 1990: 75,76). This places the individual in a form of "temporal inertia" (Lawton 2000). Loss of meaningful time and restricted space work together in producing a gradual disintegration of the self (Lawton 2000). I retreated back to my cocoon; to the house that no longer contained the unit I belonged to, but contained my floundering piece. When the unit broke, Eleanor and I both became missing pieces. Without our mum we didn't really fit together.

A critical moment, such as maternal loss, can cause far more rupture to the protective cocoon in this unstable state, where the identity is still under construction, than at other stages in the life narrative as it easily destroys the assumptive world (Thomson et. al 2002; Hurd 1999). The past becomes harder to reconcile with the present, as both are equally undefined. The before and after division in the narrative thus becomes far more profound (Schultz 2007). Nonetheless, the critical moment can provide an opportunity for the young person to radically change their identity and exchange the life they knew for another.

Progression

> Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience (Benjamin 1973 [1936]: 91)

Progression entails forward movement, advancement, but often is used interchangeably with an emphatic optimism; implying progression only happens if it is perceived as positive. As Benjamin observes, boredom – the threat of meaninglessness (Barbalet 1999) – is necessary in "hatching" new experiences. Progression occurs when the individual realises life is about *more*. My mother managed to progress by accepting her label so that she was not only the person with MS but also the university student, active Christian, voluntary worker etc. As life expanded, the future and past opened up and began to cohere.

> I came to realise that in order to gain control over my life, I needed to combine aspects of an able-bodied identity with those of a disabled self to create a new identity. (*Brenda)*

The connection with the label of "other" becomes part but not the total of the self. The *foreign* is integrated into the *familiar*.

By losing her mother at 18 Eleanor found progression was forced upon her, she had to mature rapidly in order to adapt to the situation she was now faced. Because of her age she was in a crucial phase where she had the opportunity to create a new life and to build upon and test her relatively established sense of identity. Her identity as carer was redundant with no one to care for and so she spent a period of time working different jobs. Earning a wage for a day's work gave her a sense of pride and achievement. As she regressed from the front stage that was her life and the community where she had grown up she became part of a group that didn't know her past - her *stigma* - and she could create a new version of herself. To truly progress however she had to *confront* her loss and *reinterpret* it as the inspiration for her future. By starting a nursing course in 2003 she managed to maintain her identity as carer by redirecting its focus. The memory of her mother became the impetus for her motivation. As Stroebe and Schut (2005) identified, it is necessary to relinquish certain bonds (role of carer for example) whilst continuing others. The continued bonds however often require relocating or transforming to make sense within a changed reality. The role of daughter could be continued by reinterpreting the daughter role and relocating the mother to a different place in ones life, but nonetheless a place where it is still possible to continue the bond through remembrance and conversation, as in the terms Walter (1995) describes.

The connection with the "other" within us remains ambivalent. Its face hides or reveals itself depending on the situation. After a university lecture on MS Eleanor found herself going back home later in the day to cry and release her emotions. Talk of death and situations that confront us with the memory of loss – Mothers day, anniversary of her death, other people with MS – temporarily overwhelm but the newer aspects of our identity fight back. That area of ourselves - the memories of a past life - have to be relocated. This allows us to select the appropriate memory to suit our mood and situation. Some memories are necessary to remember as they spur us on to progress, Eleanor's experience of hospitals motivated her to improve practice by becoming a nurse. The memories I have retained are my motivation for writing this study. Memories diffuse and weave into all action, choices, and have built our character.

Eleanor keeps the appearance of her dressing table and places importance on presenting herself just as her mother did. Our habits become an homage to her memory by keeping her spirit alive but also by literally becoming a part of our self.

During regressive stages that bond is lost, we have no linkage to anything. The loss of our mother in our adult life and the loss of having an adult relationship with our mother has meant that we have embodied our mother's identity with our own. She lives on through us, remaining a significance influence on our life choices. The loss is emphasised when thinking of milestone life events such as weddings and graduations or when having a baby but as we grow and become women our bond continues, as we understand her more as a woman. In some ways the bond we have now is stronger because it relies on more than merely being a team that physically supports. Eleanor and I have formed a strong bond that we never had when our mother was alive. By both of us "conversationally remembering" we have recreated, in a new form, the corporeal unit in which we had always existed. Our progression has only occurred because it is deeply entrenched in our past.

Conclusion

> I think that life is – like all of the universe – a question of equilibrium (Sampedro 1996:216)

Through life it is inevitable to some extent that our view on things will gather more dimensions, as we learn new bits of information, take up new skills and add more facets to our personality. Some ideas are swiftly dispelled, but more fundamental principles such as how we react to and interact with others and our environment remain consistent. Our externality is variable, our character constant. *Habitus* helps to explain this by highlighting the tools that are already in our make-up. Their availability to us and our ability to construct a reflexive narrative depends on the experiences of our lives. No one singular incident can be highlighted as the cause of one reaction, because this simply throws up more anomalies and questions - why do some people adapt? Why do some people succumb? These are the wrong questions.

Reconciliation can be a misleading concept when viewed as an ends rather than a means to progression. Reconciliation is a temporary state experienced when there is *equilibrium* between the front and back regions, the past and present phases of our lives. The past does not overwhelm the present and our assumptions are reaffirmed and feel secure. We feel natural and can just 'be ourselves'. This equilibrium is unbalanced when situations face us with our deficiencies (our mortality) and we *dys-appear*. This confrontation gives us the opportunity to either dys-appear or retreat from the role or to remain resilient and challenge it. The extent to which we can remain resilient in the face of our weakness depends on our habitus - how often we have experienced such confrontation, what grief work we have undertaken in confronting our loss.

This process can be viewed in a linear trajectory but we experience it as we experience our lives, in a cyclical fashion. Yet we are still *moving* though it does not always feel like progression often it is a movement of regression. We are constantly growing and this growth is interspersed with feelings of equilibrium (reconciliation) and limbo (disorientation). The two require constant readdressing in order to avoid transgression. A sense of security can help anchor us to a social structure. This anchor for Eleanor has come in the form of studying nursing and giving herself direction, creating a new home and having a committed relationship. For me I have

been welcomed into a new family that have given me a place in the world, and by learning that has provided me with a sense of worth. It is apparent that it is how we view time and the future ahead that affects how we will act within it. Whether a year or half an hour they can appear unsettling or comforting, but finding equilibrium in our life and our biography reduces the threat of transgression.

Constructing a narrative of my life and of my family's life enabled me to claim my life, for better or for worse. I had to tackle with certain problematic narratives and integrate them into my ongoing life and the constant process of renegotiating my self-identity. 'Problematic' is a general description but 'problematic' glosses critical questions at the heart of my narrative; some are questions: *why did I not overcome my eating problems?* Others are regrets: *I never really knew my mother* or doubts: *I am not competent enough to write this story*. These narratives are more subtle than the clear "rupturing" of a biography, they are more ambiguous, irrational and resistant to assimilation. When we feel in a state of equilibrium these narratives are less dominant and so the narrative we tell is one of acceptance, one of hope (Smith and Sparkes 2005). When in a state of disorientation the regressive narratives overwhelm and we tell a narrative of chaos, instability and incomprehension. These temporary narratives are physical and mental feelings that have been represented in tangible form in the narrative of "rupture" I have shared. These narratives live side by side on another, at times crashing against one another, at others subsiding to an equilibrium.

One final aspect I have neglected to mention explicitly, though I feel it underlies all the ideas considered, and that is the importance of *freedom* in identity. Freedom is a questionable concept – freedom according to whom, how to measure it – but it is clear that by speaking of that which obstructs identity (others, sequestrated ideals, meaninglessness, categorising) the heart of what constructs identity is the freedom to be whatever one chooses and the freedom one feels in that identity. Rupture can reveal the *reflexive* nature of identity and how it is possible to live two completely different lives within one. By being reflexive in our approach we can open ourselves up to new narratives – narratives of hope and progression – by posing the question in a different way. The question is not "What have I become?" it is finding "Who do take myself to be?" (Rose 2007).

The rupture in identity experienced by the three individuals in this study allowed a sense of autonomy to be found by attending to self-identity and actively searching for a "voice". As my mother did 12 years ago, I am voicing my narrative – a narrative that is inextricably interweaved with the narrative of my sister and mother – and through *finding a voice*, I am one step closer to bringing coherence and equilibrium to my biography. Though my identity ruptured, *I* did not. Though my world was interrupted *it did not end*. Freedom will always be obstructed by others, threatened by ambiguity and the unknown; the key is to realise that freedom is only given by the self. It is the knowledge that even when you have lost everything, you have not lost yourself.

References

Arnason, Arnar (2000) "Biography, bereavement, story." *Mortality* 5(2): 189-204.

Barbalet, Jack M. (1999) "Boredom and social meaning." *British Journal of Sociology* 50(4): 631-646.

Becker, Gaylene (1997) *Disrupted Lives: How People Create Meaning in a Chaotic World*. California: University of California Press.

Benjamin, Walter (1973 [1936]) *Illuminations*. London: Fontana.

Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann (1971) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.

Boeije, Hennie R., Mia S. H. Duijnstee, Mieke H. F. Grypdonck and Aart Pool (2002) "Encountering the downward phase: biographical work in people with multiple sclerosis at home." *Social Science and Medicine* 55(6): 881-893.

Borawski, Beverly McClay (2007) "Reflecting on Adversial Growth and Trauma through Autoethnography." *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 12: 101-110.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1990[1980]) *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bury, Mike (2001) "Illness narratives: fact or fiction?" *Sociology of Health and Illness* 23(3): 263-285.

Charmaz, Kathy (2004) "Premises, Principles and Practices in Qualitative Research: Revisiting the Foundations." *Qualitative Health Research* 14(7): 976-993.

------. (1999) "Stories of Suffering: Subjective Tales and Research Narratives." *Qualitative Health Research* 9(3): 362-382.

Denzin, Norman K. (1989) *Interpretative Biography*. California: Sage.

Ellis, Carolyn and Arthur P. Bochner, editors (1996) *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing*. California: AltaMira Press.

Ellis, Carolyn (1999) "Heartful Autoethnography." *Qualitative Health Research* 9(5): 669-683.

Frank, Arthur W. (2001) "Can we research suffering?." *Qualitative Health Research* 11(3): 353-362.

------. (2000) "Illness and Autobiographical work: Dialogue as Narrative Destabilization." *Qualitative Sociology* 23(1): 135-156.

Fraser, Heather (2004) "Doing Narrative Research: Analysing Personal Stories Line by Line." *Qualitative Social Work* 3(2): 179-201.

Gersie, Alida (1991) *Storymaking in Bereavement: Dragons Fight in the Meadow*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Giddens, Anthony (1991) *Modernity and self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gilbert, Kathleen R. (2002) "Taking a Narrative Approach to Grief Research: Finding Meaning in Stories." *Death Studies* 26: 223-239

Goffman, Erving (1968) *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.

------. (1969[1959]) *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.

Gregory, Susan (2005) "Living with chronic illness in the family setting." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 27(3): 372-392.

Handsley, Stephen (2001) ""But what about us?" The residual effects of sudden death on self-identity and family relationships." *Mortality* 6(1): 9-29.

Hurd, Russell C. (1999) "Adults view their childhood bereavement experiences." *Death Studies* 23: 17-41.

Kehily, Mary Jane (1995) "Self-narration, Autobiography and Identity Construction." *Gender and Education* 7(1): 23-31.

Lawton, Julia (2000) *The Dying Process: Patient's experiences of palliative care*. Routledge: London.

Leder, Drew (1990) *The Absent Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Levin, Roger (1987) "Cancer and the Self: How illness constellates meaning." Pp. 105-132 in *Health Studies: A Critical and Cross-Cultural Reader* (1999) edited by C. Samson. Blackwell: Oxford.

McNamara, Barbara (1998) "A good enough death?" Pp. 272-286 in *Health Matters: A Sociology of Illness, Prevention and Care* edited by A. Peterson and C. Waddell. OUP: London.

Mellor, Peter and Chris Shilling (1993) "Modernity, Self-Identity and the Sequestration of Death." *Sociology* 27(3): 411-431.

Nadeau, Janice Winchester (1998) *Families Making Sense of Death*. London: Sage.

Neimayer, Robert A. (2005) "Grief, loss and the quest for meaning: Narrative contributions to bereavement care." *Bereavement Care* 24(2): 27-30.

Parkes, Colin Murray (1998[1972]) *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*. London: Penguin.

Plummer, Ken (2001) *Documents of Life 2: An Invitation to Critical Humanism*. London: Sage.

Ramazanoglu, Caroline (1992) "On Feminist Methodology: Male Reason Versus Female Empowerment." *Sociology* 26(2): 207-212.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler (2003) "Performing identities in illness narrative: masculinity and multiple sclerosis." *Qualitative Research* 3(1): 5-33

------. (1993) *Narrative Analysis*. California: Sage.

------. (1990) "Strategic uses of narrative in the presentation of self and illness: a research note." *Social Science and Medicine* 30(11): 1195-1200.

Richardson, Jane C. and Bie Nio Ong (2007) "Experiencing chronic widespread pain in a family context; giving and receiving practical and emotional support." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 29(3): 347-365.

Richardson, Jane C., Bie Nio Ong and Julius Sim (2006) "Is chronic widespread pain biographically disruptive?" *Social Science and Medicine* 63(6): 1573-1585.

Rose, Nikolas (2007) "Narratives of the Self in the Neurobiological Age: Persons, Genes, Brains, Drugs." ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change Annual Lecture, University of Manchester, 1st November 2007.

Rosenthal, Gabriele (2003) "The Healing Effects of Storytelling: On the Conditions of Curative Storytelling in the Context of Research an Counselling." *Qualitative Inquiry* 9(6): 915-933.

Rustin, Michael (2000) “Reflections on the biographical turn in social science.” Pp. 33-52 in *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative issues and examples*, edited by P. Chamberlayne, J. Bornat and T. Wengraf. London: Routledge.

Sampedro, Ramon (1996) *Cartes desde el infierno.* Barcelona: Planeta.

Schultz, Lara E. (2007) “The Influence of Maternal Loss on Young Women’s Experience of Identity Development in Emerging Childhood.” *Death Studies* 31: 17-43.

Seale, Clive (1995) “Heroic Death.” *Sociology* 29(4): 597-613.

Smith, Brett and Andrew C. Sparkes (2005) “Men, sport, spinal cord injury, and narratives of hope.” *Social Science and Medicine* 61: 1095-1105.

Squire, Corrine (2005) “Reading Narratives.” *Group Analysis* 38(1): 91-107.

Stanley, Liz (1990) “Doing Ethnography, Writing Ethnography: A comment on Hammersley.” *Sociology* 24(4): 617-627.

Stanley, Liz and Sue Wise (1983) *Breaking out: Feminist consciousness and feminist research*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Stroebe, Margaret and Henk Schut (2005) “To continue or relinquish bonds: A review of consequences for the bereaved.” *Death studies* 29: 477-494.

Struhkamp, Rita (2005) “Wordless Pain: Dealing with suffering in physical rehabilitation.” *Cultural Studies* 19(6): 701-718.

Thomson, Rachel, Robert Bell, Janet Holland, Sheila Henderson, Sheena McGrellis, and Sue Sharpe (2002) “Critical Moments: Choice, Chance and Opportunity in Young People’s Narratives of Transition.” *Sociology* 36(2): 335-354.

Walter, Tony (1995) “A new model of grief: bereavement and biography.” *Mortality* 1(1): 7-25.

------. (1994) *The Revival of Death*. Routledge: London.

Williams, Simon J. (2000) “Chronic illness as biographical disruption or biographical disruption as chronic illness? Reflections on a core concept.” *Sociology of Health and Illness* 22(1): 40-67.

Williams, Simon J. and Gillian Bendelow (1998) *The Lived Body: Sociological themes, Embodied Issues*. London: Routledge.

Wolgemuth, Jennifer R. and Richard Donohue (2006) “Toward an Inquiry of Discomfort: Guiding Transformation in “Emancipatory” Narrative Research.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 12(5):1022-1039.

Yoshida, Karen K. (1993) “Reshaping of Self: a pendular reconstruction of self and identity among adults with traumatic spinal cord injury.” *Sociology of Health and Illness* 15(2): 217-245.

Citation

Pearce, Caroline (2006) "World Interrupted: An Autoethnographic Exploration into the Rupture of Self and Family Narratives Following the Onset of Chronic Illness and the Death of a Mother." *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Sang-hui Nam
German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Germany

The Construction of Self-Identity in the Chronically Mentally Ill: A Focus on Autobiographic Narratives of Mentally Ill Patients in South Korea

Abstract

. A systematic policy for treatment and management of chronic psychiatric patients in South Korea was begun with the passage of the Mental Health Act in 1995. The mentally ill patients who were previously separated from the society now have opportunities to live in local communities under medication with the help of rehabilitation facilities. This study aims to understand how mentally ill patients deal with their new medical environment. An autobiographic narrative analysis is methodically applied in order to link the social and the individual levels. Autobiographic narratives of illness show how the patient's self-identity is formed and further developed according to the chronic conditions of his illness and the continual learning from experiences. In regard to the construction of self-identity, two aspects should be taken into consideration: First, medication is absolutely necessary before patients can leave the hospital and participate in rehabilitation programs. Secondly, social integration is usually evaluated by the return of the patient into a normal biographical stage. It turns out that medication deprives the patients of control over their emotions, their bodies. Furthermore, their social environments – including family, friends and the labor market – work against them. Under these circumstances, mentally ill patients are liable to adhere to their own interpretation of mental illness, and what they experience is far different from the expectations of experts in the field. The new mental health environment also contributes to the formation of patient communities. As a result, chronic psychiatric patients are able to build their own subculture and to see themselves through their own eyes. Further studies are needed to explore whether and to what extent the ongoing improvement of social conditions for mentally ill patients has an impact on autobiographic narratives and self-identity construction.

Keywords
Psychiatry; Chronic mental illness; Autobiographic narratives; Biographical methods

Over the last ten years the medical environment of South Korea has considerably changed, especially for chronic psychiatric patients (Kern and Nam 2005a). A systematic policy for the treatment and management of mental illness was introduced with the Mental Health Act in 1995 and was followed by further health and welfare measures (OECD 2002). In the past, mentally ill patients belonged to a group whose existence was concealed and largely ignored under the banner of economic growth. The Korean government took no responsibility for mentally ill patients, and patients' families had to shoulder the burden of their care alone. Due to the increase of nuclear families and rapid urbanization, most families could not afford to look after and provide sufficient care for their mentally ill family members. As a consequence, mentally ill patients were often abandoned and confined in asylums for many years, and in many cases, they were not clearly distinguished from other groups of deviant people.[i] These asylums were generally called welfare facilities and managed by profit-oriented, private entities that covered their expenses by billing patients' families, taking government subsidies for unidentified homeless people, and receiving donations from religious institutions. These so-called welfare facilities were usually located in the suburbs, separated from the cities, and there was little oversight by local authorities. Although in some institutions there were recurring cases of human rights violations, embezzlement, and corruption, such affairs were handled as individual crimes. Although responsible parties were punished, nothing changed on the institutional level (National Human Rights Commission of Korea 2003).

With the introduction of the Mental Health Act, a new concept of community-based rehabilitation was put into practice. Now mentally ill patients have opportunities to live in local communities under medication. In order to support the social integration of chronically mentally ill people, rehabilitation facilities such as mental hospitals, nursing homes, and group homes were established. Social workers have been trained and recruited to work in these facilities. However, the community-based rehabilitation concept turned out to be very difficult to establish. As there is not enough financial and social support to improve on the old practice of separation, "locking away" mentally ill people from the society is still widespread, and human rights violations are often reported in mental institutions. Against this background, it seems that psychiatric patients are faced with a serious dilemma. On the one hand, they are urged to confess their mental illness in order to get the chance to be rehabilitated and reintegrated in the community. On the other hand, the mistreatment in medical and welfare institutions is still going on.

The aim of this study is to explore how mentally ill patients react to a new situation. In order to connect subjectivity and social structure, the analysis of autobiographic narratives is a very useful tool (Bury 2001). Autobiographic narrative analysis is one of the biographic methods that are helpful in exploring the subjective dimension of mental illness (Strauss et al. 1963; Strauss and Glaser 1975). A researcher using biographic methods examines a variety of materials related to an individual's experiences, for example, letters, diaries, oral histories, and interviews. The researcher doing autobiographic narrative analysis shares with the researcher using biographic methods the assumption that patients are negotiating actors who create a new kind of social order. In this respect, the autobiographical narrative analysis is different from structural functionalism and labeling theory (Williams 2003).

In the structural functionalistic tradition (Parsons 1951, 1957) chronic psychiatric patients are regarded as actors who comply with the instructions of medical professionals, while the labeling theory (Goffman 1961) considers them to be objects of re-socialization in mental hospitals. In particular, the autobiographic narrative analysis is based on oral renditions about the life history of the narrator. Autobiographic narratives can, therefore, offer a first interpretation of the situation as interpreted by the subject.

Bury (1982, 1991) elaborated on and expanded the biographic method of Strauss and Glaser to develop the autobiographic analysis. In discussing the autobiographic narratives of chronic illness, Bury (2001) distinguishes three forms of narratives that he labels contingent, moral, and core. Contingent narratives show how the patients reconstruct the causes of their illness on the basis of their own experiences, without exactly following biomedical explanations provided by modern medicine. Contingent narratives help the patients to understand and accept their present situation by allowing them to reconstruct the past on the basis of subjective experiences (Nam 2001). Moral narratives help the patients to construct their identity by evaluating their social environment. The society that they have to deal with after the onset of the illness is not the same as before. In moral narratives they interact with a new societal situation, keep social distance, and evaluate the society. Finally, core narratives raise the issue of intervention on the societal level. Core narratives refer to the cultural level, delving into the deep meanings behind pain and illness. The patients reveal their critical view about the society beyond the personal experiences of their illness. These three forms provide a useful framework in order to understand the patients' subjective perception and definition of their situation.

Method

In this study, the autobiographic narratives of patients who are suffering from chronic mental illness will be analyzed. The fieldwork mainly focused on rehabilitation facilities established in order to support the social integration of the patients. The aim was to explore how chronically mentally ill people are dealing with the new mental health environment. In order to deepen my understanding of their spheres of action, I also visited other institutions like asylums, mental hospitals, and marriage counseling agencies for the disabled. The chronic psychiatric patients I met have been strongly integrated into the new mental health system. In other words, they were staying in a group home or with their family at the time I saw them, utilizing the rehabilitation facilities in order to take the prescribed medication. Most of them were schizophrenic, their ages ranged from the 20s to the 40s, and they belonged to the middle or lower classes (beneficiaries of Medical Aid and Livelihood or other social aid) (Korea Association of Community Mental Rehabilitation Centers 2002).[ii]

The field study was carried out in the city of Seoul from March to May 2003. By using snowball sampling techniques, I called rehabilitation facilities located near my neighborhood in the city quarter of *Seodaemun-gu* until one of them gave me permission to visit. While the telephone conversation about the rehabilitation programs with the experts went well, my visits to the facilities with the aim of conducting participatory observation was complicated by cautious administrators. When I visited the institutions, I was usually allowed to see the patients in rooms assigned for specific activities. In this way, I visited a classroom where patients were being taught, a workroom where they were doing a wrapping job, a canteen where they were eating their lunch, and a leisure room where they were playing ping-pong.

It was very helpful for me to see how patients act under medication, how the patients socialize, and how they communicate with the staff members, mostly social workers.

During the fieldwork, I was usually in the presence of staff members. This means that my meetings with the patients were almost always in a supervised setting. Therefore, my rapport with the patients was not satisfactory. Nevertheless, I had to accept that the duration and extent of the contacts largely depended on the cooperation and openness of the staff members. When I finished with fieldwork in one facility, I asked the social workers there to recommend another facility for my research. They usually suggested one or two facilities. These institutions had close ties because they exchanged clients (patients who visited them), organized regular athletic events, conducted similar projects, or exchanged information. Accordingly, I was convinced that accepting their recommendations was a good way to follow the action space of psychiatric patients. I successively visited the Welfare Center for Disabled people, the Mental Health Center, and the training Facility for the Disabled, all located in *Seodaemun-gu.* I also went to the *Taiwha* Fountain House, the *Sekwang* Mental Sanatorium, and the Seoul National Hospital.

My fieldwork was primarily conducted in the *Taiwha* Fountain House, one of the rehabilitation facilities. This was the only place that was willing to give me an opportunity to establish a rapport with the patients. The staff members (social workers) and patient members (chronic patients) in the house allowed me to attend the house activities for one month as a volunteer and researcher.[iii] The facility has three floors, each with a relatively open structure. On the first floor, the entrance is under surveillance and the office for social workers is located, while the remaining floors each have one huge open place where the members are allowed to walk, stand, sit down, or talk with each other. At the edge of the open place, there are small rooms such as guest-rooms, computer rooms, a library, and a billiard hall. I was able to talk to everyone on the spot. The architectural structure helped me to establish a rapport and come into contact with the members without making prior arrangements and appointments, which would restrain the spontaneity of clients.

During my fieldwork, the *Taiwha* Fountain House had about 113 registered clients, while the average number of daily visitors was about 78. In April 2003 I paid a visit to the facility every other day and participated in the regular activities. These activities were divided into three sections: education and information on the first floor; office work and administration on the second floor; and shopping and cooking on the third floor. The program of every section consisted of meetings, tasks, and leisure activities. Every Monday, the clients were asked where they wanted to participate that week. A meeting was held on every floor in the morning. One or two social workers who were assigned to the section helped the patient members decide who would be chief for the week, who would take the minutes for every meeting, and who would perform other tasks. The sections were intended to help members to reintegrate into normal everyday life by experiencing various activities. Clients were already used to the routine, and many of them participated in their favorite section for weeks. Unlike them, I changed the section every week in order to get an impression of the atmosphere on different days. On average, about 20 people participated in one section. Every day, I communicated with approximately 30 people, including several members whom I met by chance in the dining hall or the leisure rooms.

As mentioned earlier, the priority of the research was to have a rapport with the members on the basis of spontaneous involvement. In light of the fact that most patients lived in fear of being identified as mentally ill by the others, I did not record my conversations with patients. It seemed to be inappropriate and disturbing to take

out a technical instrument during informal and improvised situations. Therefore, I carried out the fieldwork without auxiliary equipment for recording (i.e. recording machine, photo camera, or video camera). Instead, I kept a diary during the course of the fieldwork and documented observations or conversations as soon as possible after they occurred. I tried to understand and interpret the findings, and repeated this process. Owing to the cooperative staff and patient members in the *Taiwha* Fountain House, I proceeded with my research until I came to the conclusion that the fieldwork had reached a state of theoretical saturation (Strauss and Glaser 1967).

By participating in the activities of the different sections (e.g. cleaning a room, selling secondhand clothing, taking minutes, cooking, serving dinner, selling in the snack bar, folding letters, etc.), I slowly established a rapport with the patient members of the house. Starting with the people who had been favorably disposed toward me and told their stories spontaneously, the fieldwork entered the stage of narrative interviews. The attributes of those respondents who are cited in the following narrative analysis are listed in the table below.

Table: Basic information about cited respondents (2003)

Name[a]	Sex	Age	Diagnosis	Years[b]	Situation
Bae	F	late-20s	Schizophrenia	4	Started with temporary job
Cha	M	mid-40s	Schizophrenia	25	Participated in an education program
Cho	F	mid-20s	Schizophrenia	7	Participated actively in the section's assignments
Han	M	late-30s	Schizophrenia	22	Well-rounded human relationship
Jung	F	early-30s	Depression[c]	23	Participated actively in department assignments
Ko	M	mid-30s	Schizophrenia	16	Desire for other's attention and social recognition
Kwon	M	early-40s	Schizophrenia	11	Need for counselor's role, good writer
Lee	F	early-50s	Schizophrenia	34	Worked independently, active character
Min	M	late-30s	Schizophrenia	18	Played a leading role in a small group
Mun	M	mid-20s	Schizophrenia	9	Head of a section, vigorous activity
Park	M	late-30s	Schizophrenia	19	Relationship with only a few people
Roh	M	mid-30s	Schizophrenia	11	Laborer, active character
Seo	M	early-40s	Schizophrenia	28	Independent dwelling, need for support
Sin	M	mid-40s	Schizophrenia	21	Worked independently, steady religious life
Son	F	early-40s	Schizophrenia	12	Daily presence in the facility, strong self-expression
Song	M	mid-20s	Internet addiction	1	Focused on personal relationships, active character
Sung[d]	M	mid-50s	Schizophrenia	25	Tried to get a job many times, steady religious life
Yang[d]	F	late-30s	Schizophrenia	7	Jobless, bad economic situation, active character
Yeo[d]	F	late-20s	Depression	2	Cohabitation with a lone parent, looked for a job

[a] All of the names are fictitious to allow maintenance of anonymity.
[b] Years since the first diagnosis.
[c] She is also diagnosed as mentally retarded.
[d] A registered member of the Mental Health Center. The staff of the Mental Health Center disapproved individual interviews with the members. Therefore, the dialogues took place outside the institution (e.g. in a dining room for members, etc.).

As expected, it was not easy to make contact with the patients spontaneously. Most of them were unwilling to talk with a researcher unknown to them. Besides, some people were not capable of talking with me due to heavy medication. Despite difficulties, I succeeded in making small talk with some members. The conversation with the psychiatric patients usually started with mutually exchanging information like the following: Who are you? What are you doing here? How old are you? Are you married? Do you have any children? But small talk did not ensure that they would tell me their own medical stories. As soon as I began to talk about their medical history, the patients tended to show a resolute attitude towards me, either cooperative or rejecting.[iv] Some people showed an indifferent attitude and avoided talking with me; others willingly answered my questions about the history of their mental illness. According to my principle of spontaneity, the patient's reaction was respected.

The construction of self-identity

Contingent narratives

It should be assumed that nowadays chronic psychiatric patients are well informed about their disease from a biomedical point of view. Since the start of the mental health reform process in South Korea, professional knowledge is incessantly conveyed to the patients. First, whenever mentally ill patients are hospitalized or pay a visit to a hospital for their medication, they get the advice of experts. Secondly, if they come to stay in a nursing home or utilize rehabilitation facilities, some information is provided by the professionals who are in charge of them. A third source is other psychiatric patients who come together again and again in mental institutions. What is important in reference to contingent narratives is how patients take the information into consideration when they tell about the causes of their illness.

Chronic psychiatric patients tend to begin their stories by introducing a failure at school or a character flaw. *Roh* (in his mid 30s) had been going to a day hospital for 11 years due to schizophrenia. He talks about how he went there for the first time in the following words:

> When taking an examination in high school, I felt confused, and I could think of nothing. I had learned my whole stuff before. But whenever I took a look at an exam paper, I could not remember the answers to the questions. It made me quite crazy. So I began to go to the mental hospital regularly.

In many cases, a bad record in examinations was subjectively perceived by the patient as a symptom of mental disorder. *Cha* (in his mid 40s) says also that he had trouble concentrating on learning since the 3rd class of high school and gradually lost his memory. After he failed in a college-entrance exam, he went to a mental hospital, holding a consultation with a psychiatrist. *Cho* (in her mid 20s) says that she went to hospital due to excessive clinging to her school achievement in high school. In light of the so-called "education fever" (Seth 2002) in South Korea, it is no surprise that those who were diagnosed prior to the Mental Health Act (*Roh* and *Cha*) as well as after the reform (*Cho*) have suffered following a bad performance at school.

At the beginning of the illness, the subjective story about the disease seems not to be in conflict with the biomedical explanation. On the contrary, the latter helps the patients to believe that their symptom is just a functional disorder from a hormonal disturbance, not from madness. With the help of medical measures, they accept the promise that they will be able to improve their competence and get back to a normal life. However, their belief in modern medicine does not last long. Against all expectations, most patients found they were chronically ill, not temporarily ill. They slowly become aware that the drugs that they had taken with the onset of their mental disorder would probably accompany them all their lives. The effects of medication seem to be foremost in their minds instead of a functional or mental disorder. *Cha* was suffering from schizophrenia for 25 years.

> By the year 1978, I took medicine for the first time. On the following day, I felt sick at the stomach, twisted in my body, and so on⋯ In the meantime, drugs have been changed little by little. There are also drugs that help with the side effects. I got used to being put into a mental hospital because the side effects were too serious. In the past, drugs were very painful for me. These days, however, good drugs have been developed.

Cha's physical state is dependant on a medication, and he has no influence on its development or side effects. In other words, his body is helplessly subject to an uncertain state, and he has no self-control. His illness narratives give the impression that the initial pain he suffered from a bad school record had now been supplanted by a necessary evil, namely drugs. According to *Park* (in his late 30s), a schizophrenic patient for 19 years, the medicine has not affected him any more than sleeping tablets. However, he takes one of the pills every day. Though taking medicine could bring on a painful or uncomfortable state, most of the patients accept it as a necessary part of being a patient. They understand that a relapse caused by a lack of medication could bring on a worse situation than they are experiencing in the present. A relapse means that they have to take more drugs that put them in a zombie-like state. They have to leave their home, and they are confined in mental hospitals or nursing homes for a long time. The skepticism about medical treatment extends to therapies that are usually positively considered as modern and humane.

> I had an auditory hallucination⋯ Therefore, I had been at a day hospital for 11 years. There, I received cognitive rehabilitation therapy, music therapy, and art therapy. At the beginning of the therapy, the psychiatrist told me that I would be cured completely. But just now, he asked me if I could accept my hallucination as it is. I was simply aghast at his words. I received therapy for as many as 11 years, and then he told me to live a life like before. (*Roh*)

Considering the fact that he began with his therapy before the reform, it could be assumed that his state was not serious, and his family felt they could get along with him without putting him in an asylum or long-term mental hospital. As his expectations for a complete cure have evaporated, *Roh* does not hesitate to criticize the hollow promises of the doctors. After all, he has landed in the rehabilitation center like other chronic patients who are mainly treated with drugs and hospitalization without therapies. It shows that the new medical measures had no impact on the patients' skeptical attitude towards modern medicine since they are not free from the disease. Chronic psychiatric patients are sticking to the proximate cause of their mental illness and continuously raising questions about the effects of medical treatment and doctors.

The precarious coexistence of two beliefs – that the patients' illnesses were triggered by specific social circumstances, and, at the same time, that their illnesses should be controlled by medicine lifelong – is endured only because they fear that worse things will happen and seem to have no hope that things will get better. From the moment they see themselves as chronic and not temporary despite their obedience in following a painful medication regimen, the patients are likely to rely on their subjective belief about their condition instead of the medical expertise. However, although chronic patients try to emancipate themselves from the patients' role, they perceive themselves with a medical perspective. Their self-awareness becomes quite uncertain and obscure. In other words, the patients are thrown into an unstable coexistence between subjective causes of the illness and professional knowledge. The self-perception is not changed until the chronic patients recognize how their circumstances have altered while they suffer from the mental illness.

Moral narratives

Since the advent of mental health reform, the patients are no longer held in asylums and long-term hospitalization. Now patients can stay in contact with the outside world, including their family, friends and community. However, the following narratives show how the patients in the new medical environment are socially separated. The separation from what they are used to begins in the family. In South Korea, the family is valued as a resting place from the cradle to the grave. This is supported by the Confucian tradition, on the one hand, and reinforced by the lack of a welfare policy by the modern state on the other. Against all expectations, the families are incompetent or reluctant to take responsibility for mentally ill family members. *Song* (in his mid 20s), who received treatment in a mental hospital last year due to Internet game addiction, looks back upon the disappointment with his family's reaction to his illness:

> One day, my parents told me, 'Let's go to hospital!' Without doubting them, I followed them. After arriving at a hospital, my parents told me, 'Wait a moment! We will come back soon!' I waited and waited, but they did not return. Then a nurse came and said that my parents would be there if I would have an injection and take a rest. I believed it. I woke up from a long and deep sleep after the injection. However, I was still alone in the mental hospital. What's that? I was suddenly confined. Immediately, I ran to the locked door and cried out. How could my own parents send me to the mental hospital? When I told my parents, 'I want to leave this place,' they always said, 'We will take you out of here only if you get well.' So I stayed there for six months.

According to his story, *Song*'s parents did not inform him about their intentions, to say nothing of asking for his approval. The behavior of *Song*'s parents indicates that hospitalization might happen without the patient's acceptance both before and after the mental health reform. Thus, it is not surprising that a hospitalization is usually described as a blackout in the patient's memory, mostly with expressions like "by ambulance in a compulsory delivery" after "suddenly falling unconscious." They emphasize their helplessness and complaints about their families. Their family relations are broken.

The bad relations continue after the psychiatric patients are discharged from the mental hospital and sent back to their families. The place they return to is not the same anymore. The family relations are not only emotionally stressed and strained,

but their families are also financially burdened. *Jung* (in her early 30s) came to Seoul two years ago and stays now with her widowed elder sister. She remembered:

> Last year I applied for a welfare card for disabled people. As I belong to the needy class, I receive 100,000 won [about 107 dollars] per month, perhaps a little bit more these days. However, my sister takes all of the money without giving me any. But it's my money, not hers.

A subsidy from the government can cause trouble in the family. If patients had been confined in a welfare facility, the subsidy would most probably go into the account of the facility owner. After the reforms, more and more families started to manage the money. What the family hopes for is to minimize the damage and burden caused by the ill family member, if possible. Many times the family tells no one about sending the ill person to the institution. Sometimes, the mental history of the patient is known only by the parents. Since hospitalization at a mental hospital is limited to three months, there are also families who transfer the patient to another mental hospital shortly after the release from the first. This happened in the case of *Park*. If the patients are fortunate enough to stay at home, they are not socially integrated. They are increasingly distant from family and friends and bored to death.

As soon as they recognize how their social environment deals with them, the patients are prone to feeling great anxiety about the outside world. *Han* (in his late 30s) has suffered schizophrenia for 22 years. After the mental health reform, he decided to register himself as disabled. Then one day he received an official notice from the Driver's License Agency. It said that he must retake an aptitude test for the driver's license due to his disease. His registration must have been sent to the agency. Since then, he is afraid of further disadvantages caused by his registration as disabled.

> If I go out of the doors, I am afraid that other people could recognize me. Therefore, I tend to avoid trouble with other people in advance, if possible.

In response to doing his best to follow the new mental health policy, *Han* has encountered further disadvantages. His reaction illustrates well how anticipated stigmatization changes individual behavior (Angermeyer et al. 2004). Psychiatric patients who lose their self-confidence and self-control over their bodies become susceptible to another's opinions (Kleinman 1988). Although the social circumstances are unfavorable or hostile to them, the patients try to close the distance by conforming to given social norms.

What keeps them from despair seems to be an increasing control over their medication. As stated earlier, the issue of medication gradually moves to the center of their attention after the onset of the mental illness. As time goes on, the chronic patients learn how to deal with the drugs. As they get used to various side effects of the medicine dispensed by a psychiatrist, the patients are capable of requesting that dosages of drugs be changed in compliance with their wishes. Therefore, they can add or avoid specific effects of the medicine. By allegedly having the control of their own bodies – in other words, the control over the side effects of drugs – they become more self-confident and think that they might be able to enter a more normal life as student, employee, or married person, for example. Their self-confidence is sometimes so strong that they insist on leaving the treatment program and do not accept being constrained. *Park*, who has suffered from schizophrenia for 19 years, says:

> I had no time to keep company with a woman while shuttling back and forth between the mental hospital and society for many years. Anyway, if I would

> like to marry, I had to get a job, first of all… There are a lot of people who marry without responsibility, but, they are wrong. A man may marry only if he has a job and takes full responsibility for a married life.

Park says that he is single because of his unemployment, which is due to his illness. In light of his long state of illness, it is presumed that he will remain unemployed and single all his life. Instead of complaining about his future, he sets high moral standards for himself and follows social norms. He turns his forced inferior social position as an unmarried and unemployed young man into a socially accepted state from an ethical point of view. In this sense, he ironically acts as a supporter of a value system that is hostile to his needs (Yoshida 1993).

In addition to wanting marriage, psychiatric patients are keen on earning a livelihood, if possible. However, the labor market is almost closed to the mentally disabled. After the mental health reform, every company with over 300 employees is forced to hire 2% who are disabled. The reality is that the companies often prefer to pay a penalty. Meanwhile, some jobs are temporarily and irregularly arranged by rehabilitation facilities on a part-time basis. The jobs consist of low-wage work such as wrapping, making shopping bags, setting gems, inserting strings, and distributing leaflets. There are not enough jobs for all applicants (i.e. patient members in facilities who want a job). Accordingly, the patients have to wait for their turn to get even a small job. Besides, the work is mostly conducted in the rehabilitation facilities or at a sheltered workshop, where they are kept apart from regular workers. This means that in terms of wages or work experience, it's not worthwhile getting a job. The search for a job means that patients want to show they are willing to adapt to the working society.

If patients really try to become economically independent by starting their own businesses, they are confronted with institutional barriers. *Sung* (in his mid 50s) became a sailor in his early 20s in order to earn a large sum of money in a short time. But one day he collapsed on board and was delivered from the ship to a mental hospital by a helicopter. After a while, he left the mental hospital and wandered from place to place. Finally, he was found as a homeless man on the street and once again delivered to a mental hospital as a schizophrenic. He could not get out of the mental hospital because he had no known relatives. After 14 years, he fortunately succeeded in finding the address of his younger brother. With his brother's help, *Sung* could leave the mental hospital. After being discharged, he tried to found his own business many times.

> I am a beneficiary of the Livelihood Protection who gets 246,000 won [about 263 dollars] monthly from the government, in addition to being the recipient of the first category of the medical aid… Putting both benefits together helps pay for medicine; it seems that I spend about 1,000,000 won [about 1070 dollars] monthly for this. I make an effort to get a job, but it doesn't work out. If I had an income, I could get no money from the government.

Despite his 25-year medical history, he does not give up on getting his social life back. His hope for economic independence conforms to social norms and expectations. The patients are incessantly prodded to make an effort to return to a normal life in public. However, their willingness to work is not enough to help them attain the goal. Patients are hardly able to gain social recognition by their achievements: One of them tried every job, but always on a part-time basis (*Cha*). Thus, it was impossible to make a plan for his future. Another one graduated from the "Open University" and received a teaching certificate, but he has no teaching practice

so far (*Seo,* in his early 40s). Another one took the *College Scholastic Ability Test* three times during her illness, but she did not go to a university (*Cho*). She is now aiming at rising to the challenge once again.

Experiencing these frustrations, psychiatric patients increasingly move away from being seen as a temporary patient towards being looked at as a "loser" who deviates from social norms. In South Korea, the characteristics of a loser's biography usually consists of being suspended from school, being forced to live as a single person, childlessness, homelessness, dependence on parents, incompetence, long-term unemployment, exemption from military service, and so on. In addition, they are often excluded from getting a driver's license, having a cell phone, or getting life insurance. Such signs of deviation are not only reflected in their social economic status (SES) but also in their lifestyle (irregular everyday life, laziness, obesity, avoidance of personal relations, etc.).

In the new environment, the patients are allowed to expand their sphere of action without restrictions, as long as they take their medicine. In reality, the ability to act is limited in many respects for chronic psychiatric patients. They can go to a mental hospital in order to take medicine weekly or monthly or utilize social rehabilitation facilities. *Bae* (in her late 20s) shows how patients deal with repeated changes while going to different institutions. Four years ago she was delivered to a mental hospital by her family after losing consciousness. Before that, she had been kept at home all day long for six years after graduating from high school. Since her first hospitalization, she has been going in and out of mental hospitals and rehabilitation facilities.

> So I continued going to the mental hospital and then leaving there, again and again. Is it called 'the revolving-door syndrome'? Something like that? One day, they gave me permission to leave a mental hospital, but I didn't like to go out. At that moment, sunlight flooded into the ward. It looked very peaceful. I said, 'I won't go out.' In the end, I went out, saying to myself, 'Sunlight is not only here, but also elsewhere.'
>
> In order not to come here (to the rehabilitation facility), I tore up my application and documents. However, I had to come here against my own will. Here is a sort of narcotic. If I come here, I don't need to work. If I am at home alone, I am really bored. Here, I can at least talk with other people, so I feel comfortable.

Her narrative demonstrates that *Bae* does not act as a passive object that is delivered and placed in a ward. She tries to put herself at the center of the story as the decision-maker. She knows that the release from the hospital does not mean that she will be free from being a patient. Furthermore, the outside world might not always be better than the hospital. She is under the pressure of decision-making and becoming aware of her own motives in order to make a decision.

Cho with a seven-year medical history also shows a strong tendency towards self-observation and self-reflection. These days, she tries to find a job through a rehabilitation facility in order to earn her own money. With the money, she is going to enroll at an educational institute or university. She talks about her own spiritual world very calmly:

> It seems that it is also advantageous to be caught by a disease. Since I became mentally ill, I think about my relationship to other people and reflect on it. The worse the disease becomes, the more I reflect on myself. Normal people do not do so, do they? I didn't think so much about it until I was sick.

Spending time wandering and loafing around all day, chronic psychiatric patients have ample time to review and consider their everyday lives. From this reflection, she comes to the conclusion that her spiritual world might be superior to that of the others. This means that she accepts her illness as it is and starts to build up her identity as a patient.

One of the greatest effects of the mental health reform is to make possible a sort of patient community. Chronically mentally ill people have a similar space of action as well as similar interests (Strauss et al. 1963). This enables them to form their subculture. In their subculture they share their own rules and stories. First, they develop their rank order. Following the Korean manners, they call each other elder/younger or sister/brother. Also, there are extraordinarily respected persons among them. The reasons for respect are different from those in the outside world. What is important is the courageous action against authorities and prescribed rules. One respected patient once used violence in a mental hospital and was punished by having his hands tied. Another one swallowed as many as 30 pills. There are also conventional reasons for respect such as fluent speaking and a university degree. Some people acquire new self-confidence in the process of being recognized. It might happen that one's competence in leisure activities like table tennis, basketball, billiards, or writing is valued inside mental hospitals and rehabilitation facilities.

Secondly, there are some in-groups in the patient community. Informal members of an in-group are used to inviting each other to smoke cigarettes or drink coffee, go out drinking, or come to a birthday party. Members in a group can share their stories about the pain and suffering from their disease. Furthermore, they often diagnose each other on the basis of their own experiences, saying things like "you are getting better" or "you are getting worse." In their subculture, insider information about mental institutions (e.g. characteristics of the mental hospital and social rehabilitation facility, hospital charges, conditions and treatments) are steadily exchanged and transmitted to others. The collected information helps them to choose a suitable facility or to adapt to a new environment. *Mun* (in his mid 20s) started going to a mental hospital due to his anthrophobia. He got his disease after being hit by an elder student who stayed with him in a self-boarding room during his schooldays. Now he is with his father, while his mother is remarried and lives elsewhere. In the meantime, he has also been in other rehabilitation facilities.

> When I was in a mental hospital, I said that I would go to this facility after my release. Someone there told me not to come into contact with a specific person in this facility if I would like to avoid his/her bad influence on me. When I came here, I deliberately avoided the person. So he/she doesn't talk to me either. It's very comfortable.

This scenario implies that the so-called revolving-door syndrome triggered by the new medical reform has had an unintended effect. By repeated visits to institutions and contacts with the other patients, psychiatric patients are learning how to behave in order to cope with their lives. In other words, the revolving-door phenomenon offered a favorable condition under which they could build a patient community.

Even though the patient community is comfortable and relaxed, self-satisfaction is not welcomed. The patient members are continuously reminded of the naked truth – that they are not allowed to be happy in the rehabilitation facilities because they are supposed to be in just a transitional space, and they must once again enter into society. Their ultimate goal is to return to society. *Lee* (in her early 50s), one of those considered to be a model patient, had once been in the facility. After a while, she got

a job and presently works on her own. Once she visited the facility and had a pleasant chat with old friends. Despite a good atmosphere, she never misses reprimanding some patients about their attitudes and habits. She tells them:

> You have to leave this place as soon as possible. This is also expected by the facility. The first time I came here, I found myself in a paradise where everyone speaks fluently and listens considerately and where teachers (i.e. social workers) treat me well. So I walked around in the crowds, drinking and inviting others… Society is quite different from here. You would be immediately expelled from society if you behave like you do here. Do you know? After getting a job, many people lose it and come back to the facility… How difficult is it to continue working…? Assignments given from here are not exactly worth mentioning as a job. If you go outside, you must be clever and cunning. Nobody wants those who are as stupid and dull as you here.

The rehabilitation facility must have been a kind of paradise for *Lee,* who spent more than 20 years under the old mental health environment. She enjoyed the patient's community until she recognized that the comfortable state would not lead to the normal life that she was pursuing. *Lee*'s critique of her old acceptance of life in rehabilitation is so severe that she discourages the patient members from enjoying their life in the rehabilitation facility and causes them anxiety. She makes clear that the discrepancy between the patient community and the normal society is considerably broader than she expected. Unlike the rehabilitation facility, she says, the society is hard and intolerant towards backward people.

A warning against naive optimism is offered by *Sin* (in his mid 40s), another model patient. He had been in the rehabilitation facility and used to work in a sewing factory. He is married and works at a parking lot. On a visit to the facility, he gave his companions some advice on the basis of his own vocational experiences:

> While working, there is a moment when I'd like to talk about my mental disease. But you should never talk frankly to your friends even if they are nice. No way! After they hear about your mental illness, they say it's no problem, but that's not true. I have experienced so many times that, if something bad happens, they always put the blame on us.

The fact that these warnings come from insider patients makes them hard to take. Although they have achieved their goals of getting married and having a job, their agony hasn't ended. The society won't be pleased with the patients even after they have adapted to social norms. The anxiety and frustration lead the patients increasingly to stay in the patient community.

Core narratives

In light of the desperate situation of chronic psychiatric patients, the question is whether they can transform their frustration and disappointment into a social problem. The narratives indicate a turn inwards. Instead of criticizing social circumstances, the finger of blame is often pointed at one's self. The autobiographic narratives become pessimistic or tragic. *Min* (in his late 30s) has been suffering from a thought disorder and a sleep disorder since high school. He wants to become a pastor of a church for the disabled. His comments about the members of the facility are quite pessimistic:

> Look at the people here! All of them are at rest. They should forget the past and stand up, but they are still resting. Maybe one of them is capable of

> getting on his feet again··· However, they have no patience, in other words, neither concentration nor consistency. That is their fatal weakness. Once they stand up, they relapse··· and relapse.

In his view, they have no power to start again. *Min* does not attribute the pessimistic situation to the medical treatment or the social discrimination. Instead, he is looking to religion to console the patients. He seems to have found the hope that will not be destroyed by relapse. However, his hope does not lie in this world.

Compared with *Min*, some people find an exit from hopeless desperation in another way, by committing suicide. Most of the patients have already seen some suicides in mental hospitals or facilities. According to *Min*, a few people commit suicide every year in the *Taiwha* Fountain House. Because such tragic incidents are quite usual, psychiatric patients are becoming more and more indifferent to the whereabouts of other patients.

> There are members that disappear for a while. Some of them never come back. But I am not curious about what happened to them. I have no time to worry about others because we are all suffering from sickness… First of all, I am always exhausted. After a few years, we could meet again in a mental hospital or rehabilitation facility. (*Han*)

Han assumes that the other patients are on the same track of life. All of them are suffering from mental illness, are transferred to similar mental institutions, and are concerned about their futures. In this sense, everyone could commit suicide. *Han* seems to be insensible and apathetic to his own feelings in order to avoid self-pity and to distance himself from the tragic incidents.

In contrast to the pessimistic narratives, cynicism and mocking seem to give the chronic psychiatric patients energy in order to manage their lives. There are lots of expressions to show how the patients laugh at themselves. *Yang* (in her late 30s) visited the Mental Health Center for a few years. When I mentioned that she looks very young, she made a cynical comment:

> The reason why we look young is that we are taking 'antiseptic' medicine. Due to the antiseptic effect, we look young without getting rotten. Thanks to medicine, we are always happy and quiet, aren't we? Those who are taking medicine look so young.

Yang confesses that her body and her emotions are under the influence of drugs. From the self-perception that her body doesn't belong to her, she begins to treat her body like an object. In doing so, she can observe herself under the influence of drugs without losing self-consciousness.

Considering that drugs are prescribed and given by psychiatrists, it is understandable that ironic attitudes are going to target medical professionals. It appears often that the patients amuse themselves with their sarcastic remarks about medical doctors. Since the implementation of the mental health reform, social workers are also subject to satire. The patients often make remarks like the following in small talk:

> Hong Kong injection? Do you really mean Hong Kong injection? Oh! The injection is called so because one loses one's consciousness just after a shot.[v] But do you mean that you have got as many as two shots? (*Park*)

> The most comfortable physician among medical doctors is a psychiatrist. They don't even need to get their hands wet or to be strained. If a patient comes, they ask, 'How are you?' If he is getting better, then he is discharged; if he is getting worse, then he is hospitalized; if his condition is

> unchanged, then they give him medication. That's all. How easy it is! (*Son,* in her early 40s)
>
> I said to the psychiatrist that I'm not a psychiatric patient. It's useless. The doctors also have to make money and live a life. The more patients, the more money! Right? (*Yeo,* in her late 20s)
>
> Social workers are authoritarian in a sophisticated way. If one behaves obviously authoritarian, one will be criticized by the other staff members. Therefore, they are discrete in their behavior. (*Ko*, in his mid 30s)
>
> Do you know the difference between a patient and a staff member? The answer is: A patient gives money, a staff member receives it. (*Ko*)

The comments show a somewhat challenging attitude towards the personnel in authority. The patients are laughing about immoral and wrong behavior of doctors and social workers. Medical doctors are portrayed as money grubbers who act in their own best interests. Social workers, who increasingly make up the staff under the new mental health system, are considered to be different from doctors. Patients are very sensitive to how social workers treat them. They are not sure which tasks social workers are doing. It could be concluded that chronically mentally ill people have no trust in medical institutions and the personnel assigned to help them.

Distrust and criticism towards authorized personnel is closely related with the self-confidence of the chronic patients. They begin to consider themselves not necessarily inferior to others, but equal or even superior. In their moral narratives the patients had already implied positive acceptance for their situations by insisting that they could be more responsible (*Park*) and self-reflective (*Bae*, *Cho*) than others. What they argue is that they could be more conforming to social norms than other people in the sense that they internalize and keep social rules and expectations faithfully and thoroughly. They are looking for self-recognition and self-confirmation from those in society outside the mental health system.

Conformity is considerably changed in the core narratives, which are called heroic narratives. *Kwon* (in his early 40s) has suffered from schizophrenia for over 10 years. He argues that he deliberately passed over the borderline from normality to abnormality. While showing me his own poems, *Kwon* told me about his past very proudly:

> At the university, I was a member of a student club, the so-called under-circle[vi]. For six years, I just wrote poems all the time⋯ I believed that I could contribute to the reunification of Korea by means of my poems. I've had no job. I kept staying at home⋯ One day I got drunk, and I was injured by a car accident. Due to brain damage, I was in neurosurgery. Next to the neurosurgery, there was an orthopedic department where a friend of mine worked as an orthopedist. He is a so-called psycho. One day I happened to meet him in the hospital, and he recommended me to a neuropsychiatrist next door. He said that a life inside the psychiatric ward would be more normal than outside. I went over there. The psychiatric ward was very interesting, and I felt comfortable. I stayed there for three months. But then again, I went in and came out, then again in and out⋯ You should make yourself crazy in order not to be driven crazy in the crazy world. Therefore, I made an effort to drive myself crazy deliberately.

Instead of conforming, he interchanges the normal with the crazy. His friend and orthopedist is described as psycho, meaning a not normal person. The society where the friend lives is also depicted as crazy. Meanwhile, the people in the mental

hospital are considered to be normal. In his view, he became mentally ill in order not to live in a crazy world. Comparing what he says with the expressions like “by ambulance in a compulsory delivery” or “suddenly falling unconscious” in the moral narratives, his statement can be seen as rebellious. He describes himself as an active subject who holds his destiny in his own hands. Instead of complaining about the ignorant society, he replaces the normal with the mentally ill. In this way, the heroic narratives help patients to see and evaluate allegedly normal people from their own perspective.

Conclusions

This study attempted to understand how the chronically mentally ill construct their self-identity in the new medical environment. The process of constructing self-identity is explored by analyzing autobiographic narratives. The contingent narratives show how the patients explain the cause of illness. On the one hand, patients refer to proximate causes that are subjectively experienced. On the other hand, the patients are convinced of the biomedical model that they learn in the mental hospital and rehabilitation facility. The subjective explanation and the biomedical model coexist as long as the patient’s condition is regarded as acute and temporary. As the patient discovers that his mental illness will not be completely cured, the biomedical explanation comes into conflict with the patient’s subjective belief. It is at this point that the patients distance themselves from the professional knowledge and move closer to their own experience-based knowledge. As they accept themselves as chronic patients, they tend to deny being a good patient.

The moral narratives show how the patients cope with the outside society. With the progression of their chronic illness, patients learn how to deal with drugs and how to behave in society. The patients adhere more and more to the possibility and belief that they will recover from mental disease and return to a normal life (Williams 2000). However, members of the outside world, such as family and friends, do not help them or allow them to be a normal member of the society. In the beginning of their clinical history, they were called mentally ill and fitted into a medical viewpoint. As they realize the chronic nature of their disease, they differentiate normatively and functionally from normal people and become “losers” from the societal point of view (Manning 2000). Instead of achieving social integration, they come to live a life as a “pendular self,” shuttled back and forth between being an inpatient and an outpatient (Yoshida 1993). Under these circumstances, the patient community emerges as a reaction against the ignorant society.

The core narratives show how the chronic patients construct their self-identity in a desperate situation. What they are able to carry into effect to overcome difficulties is quite restricted. They are not able to transform an attitude into action. In detail, they can deny neither going to a mental hospital nor taking their medicine. Although the patients can’t leave mental disorder and social deviance behind, they no longer consider themselves to be passive. As cynical or heroic narratives illustrate, the patients are now regarded as active, and they are able to raise critical questions about professional advice and social discrimination.

If the community-based rehabilitation concept is to be improved and expanded in the future, there are two points for further discussion. The first one relates to the gap between the patients’ and professionals’ knowledge, and the second has to do

with the patient community. First, psychiatrists offered professional knowledge to normal people and patients in order to fight against the conventional practice of separating the mentally ill from society. Their intention was that scientific knowledge about mental illness should spread throughout society, closing the gap between the layman's and the professional's understandings. As a consequence, informed citizens would cooperate and work (Giddens 1990, 1991) with the experts. The community-based rehabilitation could be realized only if the personnel in authority and the chronic patients pursued a common end. However, things turned out differently than expected.

As the mental illness becomes chronic, the relationship between patients and doctors gets detached and tense. Patients are sometimes so self-confident that they believe only their own experience and oppose the doctor's knowledge (Illich 1976; Szasz 1957). There is a possibility that a patient's knowledge could be developed so that it complements or even challenges a doctor's expertise. Although there are unanswered questions about the extent to which a patient's view could differ from the professional's expertise, the narratives indicate a changing patient-doctor relationship as the rehabilitation concept changes.

The patient community should be closely examined. The key to mental health reform is the integration of chronic patients into the local community. However, neither housing nor working conditions are adequate for their integration. Families are often incompetent or reluctant to support their mentally ill family members. Alternative housing such as group homes is still in its infancy. The labor market for mentally disabled people is practically nonexistent. Meanwhile, the new mental environment makes it possible for patients to gather and spend time together unconstrained and uncontrolled in rehabilitation facilities. It offers opportunities for the patients to exchange information that they have acquired in the course of their illness, make friends, and come to share their beliefs about medications, medical personnel, and society. Capitalizing on this opportunity, a stronger patient community could be built up.

With respect to the aim of this study, much more attention should be paid to the medical history of those in a patient community. Roughly speaking, the patient members in the rehabilitation facility can be divided into two groups following mental health reform. The first group consists of the veteran patients who were diagnosed before the mental health reform and probably experienced asylums and long-term hospitalization. They often confound mental hospitals and asylums, as there was little difference between the two institutional types at that time. The second group consists of the newcomer patients who are diagnosed after the mental health reforms and probably experienced a revolving-door syndrome. The rehabilitation facility is a venue for veterans and newcomers.

The veterans have more experience and knowledge about drugs, which helps them maintain control over their own bodies. The knowledge on medication seems to be transmitted to and widely accepted by the newcomers. Meanwhile, the newcomers are used to the revolving-door phenomenon. This process raises the issue of their cleverness in dealing with the personnel in institutions and making friends in the course of time. This knowledge helps patients to plan where to stay next and how to behave in mental hospitals and rehabilitation facilities. Not only veteran patients but also newcomer patients can benefit from an exchange of information.

However, the newcomers do not always follow the veterans. In terms of the future, the latter is no model for the former. No matter how experienced the veterans

may be, a life without a family and job is no future for the newcomers. The veteran patients have good reason to be satisfied with the present situation. They have left asylums and have found shelter in the new mental environment. Above all, the veteran patients know well what could happen if they are abandoned in conventional asylums and what they risk if they make trouble or have a relapse. Veterans are usually in their 30s and 40s, while the newcomers are usually in their 20s. Most of them are unmarried, staying with their parents, and trying to get a job. They get used to visiting rehabilitation facilities and taking part-time jobs. Although the lifelong medication regimen makes them uneasy, they are able to learn how to deal with drugs. In the swing of the pendulum they have found so-called patient community and gained patients' knowledge in addition to professional knowledge.

The mental health reforms in South Korea make clear that the future of psychiatry should be based on the concept of community-based rehabilitation (Kern and Nam 2005b). Recently, complementary legislative reforms are being demanded by mentally disabled people and civic groups. In order to make a new law and revise an old one, much attention should be paid to the subjective experiences of chronic psychiatric patients who are at the center of the mental health reform process. The opinions and judgments of chronic psychiatric patients have to be taken into consideration with the aim of understanding how the reforms have worked so far and how they are perceived by the patients.

Assuming that the present mental health policy will be continued and improved, it can be expected that conventional asylums will disappear, rehabilitation facilities will increase, and the labor market for the mentally disabled will be extended. However, some questions are left unanswered: It will be interesting to discover whether the patients tell different illness narratives, whether the discrepancy between patient's and expert's knowledge can be closed, whether the distrust of the patients towards the professionals will be reduced, whether their cynical attitude towards society will change, and, finally, how the patients identify themselves within society. These questions should be explored in further studies using autobiographic illness narratives.

Endnotes

i After the Korean War (1950-1953) in South Korea, a variety of asylums were set up for orphans, juveniles, vagabonds, the aged, the mentally retarded, the physically disabled, and the poor (Ministry of Health & Welfare 1954-1999).

ii The characteristics of the research object largely comply with the total statistics. According to clinical results (2002) of the *National Seoul Hospital* (renamed in 2002), the largest hospital specializing in mental illness in South Korea, 25.0% of the patients are between 25 and 34 years old, 31.5% are between 35 and 44, 17.8% are between 45 and 54. In addition, the share of schizophrenic patients is 50.7%; the average number of days of hospitalization for schizophrenic patients is 149 days, which exceeds the average number of days of hospitalization for other illnesses by more than one month (116 days) (National Seoul Hospital 2002). According to the *Epidemiological Study of Mental Disorder* (Ministry of Health & Welfare 2001), more than 70% of schizophrenic patients in South Korea (total 170,000 persons) live in poverty.

iii I am most grateful to social worker Mi-sun Lee who made the first-ever contact with the *Taiwha* Fountain House possible. Also, I am indebted to all social workers who gave me invaluable comments and suggestions during the fieldwork. I want to acknowledge all members of the facility who allowed me to stay there and readily told their stories despite the uncertainty of the research results.

iv The patients' prompt reactions to the inquiry seemed to result from their past experiences. Psychiatric patients get used to the inquiry process when they consult medical doctors and social workers, fill in questionnaires in mental hospitals, talk with student apprentices majoring in social welfare or researchers and volunteers. In other words, they know very well, which questions will follow, and what their dialogue partners expect (Williams 1984). In this respect, several questions are still unanswered: to what extent do inquiry experiences have an impact on illness narratives, and how are illness narratives changed by the routinely repeated interview situations. The questions should be taken into consideration in further studies using autobiographic illness narratives.

v For a long time, South Koreans have regarded Hong Kong as a symbol of a modern city with decadence as well as freedom. Therefore, "Go to Hong Kong" in Korean slang means entering a state of ecstasy caused by sex or dope.

vi "Under-circle" refers to forbidden circles of university students under the dictatorship of the 1980s in South Korea. At that time, the Korean government and university administrations didn't allow students to read books critical of the government or the existing political order. Consequently, students secretly organized so-called under-circles and demonstrated often against the dictatorial regime. From a historical point of view, the members of the under-circles contributed significantly to the process of democratization in Korea, and further to the discussion about the unification of the two Koreas.

References

Angermeyer, Matthias, Michael Beck, Sandra Dietrich and Anita Holzinger (2004) "The Stigma of Mental Illness: Patients' Anticipations and Experiences." *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 50(2): 153-162.

Bury, Michael (1982) "Chronic Illness as Biographical Disruption." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 4(2): 167-182.

------. (1991) "The Sociology of Chronic Illness: A Review of Research and Prospects." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 13(4): 451-468.

------. (2001) "Illness Narratives: Fact or Fiction?" *Sociology of Health & Illness* 23(3): 263-285.

Giddens, Anthony (1990) *The Problems of Modernity*. Cambridge: Policy Press.

------. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Cambridge: Policy Press.

Goffman, Erving (1961) *Asylums*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Illich, Ivan (1976) *Limits to Medicine: Medical Nemesis, the Expropriation of Health*. London: M. Boyars.

Kern, Thomas and Nam Sang-hui (2005a) "Die Entstehung und Entwicklung des Gesundheitswesens in Südkorea." Pp.169-192 in *Jahrbuch Korea 2005. Politik-*

Wirtschaft-Gesellschaft, edited by Patrick Köllner. Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde.

------. (2005b) "Gesundheitspolitik für psychisch Kranke seit den 1990er Jahren in Südkorea: Entstehung des psychiatrischen Feldes und seine gesellschaftliche Einbettung." Pp.193-207 in *Jahrbuch Korea 2005. Politik-Wirtschaft-Gesellschaft*, edited by Patrick Köllner. Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde.

Kleinman, Arthur (1988) *The Illness Narratives*. New York: Basic Books.

Korea Association of Community Mental Rehabilitation Centers (2002) *Seoulsi sahoe boggwisiseol pyeonggadaehoe* [Evaluation Meeting of Community Mental Rehabilitation Centers in Seoul]. Seoul: Taiwha Saemsosneunjib (in Korean).

Manning, Nick (2000) "Psychiatric Diagnosis under Conditions of Uncertainty." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 22(5): 621-639.

Ministry of Health & Welfare (1954-1999) *Yearbook of Health and Welfare Statistics* (in Korean). Seoul.

Ministry of Health & Welfare (2001) *Jeongsinjilhwansiltae yeogsajosa* [The Epidemiological Study of Mental Disorder] (in Korean). Seoul.

Nam, Sang-hui (2001) *Jalyowaui daehwa* [Dialogue with Data] (in Korean). Seoul: Hanul Publishing Company.

National Human Rights Commission of Korea (2003) *Jeongsinjilhwanjaeui ingwonboholeul uihan chilyohwangyeongsangeui munjejeom* [Problems of Treatment Environments for Protecting Human Rights of Psychiatric Patients]. Materials for a Public Inquiry for Protecting Human Rights of Psychiatric Patients (in Korean). Seoul.

National Seoul Hospital (2002) *Guglib-Seoul-byeongwon 2002 nyeon jinlyosiljeog tonggye* [The Statistics of Clinical Results in National Seoul Hospital in 2002] (in Korean). Seoul.

OECD (2002) *Review of the Korean Health Care System*. Paris.

Parsons, Talcott (1951) *The Social System*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

------. (1957) "The Mental Hospital as a Type of Organization." in *The Patient and the Mental Hospital*, edited by Milton Greenblatt, Daniel Levinson and Richard Williams. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Seth, Michael (2002) *Education Fever. Society, Politics, and the Pursuit of Schooling in South Korea*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.

Strauss, Anselm and Barney Glaser (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. San Francisco, CA: University of California Press.

------. (1975) *Chronic Illness and the Quality of Life*. St. Louis, MO: C.V. Mosby.

Strauss, Anselm, Leonard Schatzman, Danuta Ehrlich, Rue Bucher and Melvin Sabshin (1963) "The Hospital and Its Negotiated Order." in *The Hospital in Modern Society*, edited by Eliot Freidson. New York: Free Press.

Szasz, Thomas (1957) *Pain and Pleasure: A Study of Bodily Feelings*. New York: Basic Books.

Williams, Gareth (1984) “The Genesis of Chronic Illness: Narrative Reconstruction.” *Sociology of Health & Illness* 6: 175-200.

------. (2003) “The Determinants of Health: Structure, Context and Agency.” *Sociology of Health & Illness* 25: 131-154.

Williams, Simon (2000) “Chronic illness as Biographical Disruption or Biographical Disruption as Chronic Illness?” *Sociology of Health & Illness* 22(1): 40-67.

Yoshida, Karen (1993) “Reshaping of Self.” *Sociology of Health & Illness* 15(2): 217-245.

Citation

Nam, Sang-hui (2008) “The Construction of Self-Identity in the Chronically Mentally Ill: A Focus on Autobiographic Narratives of Mentally Ill Patients in South Korea.” *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Krzysztof Tomasz Konecki
Lodz University, Poland

Grounded Theory and Serendipity. Natural History of a Research

Abstract

The paper deals with the issue of "serendipity" (which constitutes the context of discovery) in field research and the analysis of data by using the grounded theory methodology. The thesis of the paper is: the methodology of grounded theory is naturally associated with serendipity. We describe two aspects of serendipity in grounded theory: 1. substantive, and 2. theoretical. We present in the paper serendipity phenomenon by using the case of research on the "social world of pet owners". We show how the research is developed by a sequence of decisions being made by researchers. The process of emergence of the main analytical category, subcategories and the whole theoretical construction during the long time of the field research and theoretical group analysis is presented, as well as the procedure of coming to unanticipated theoretical conclusions. It was all possible because of the interactional character of serendipity happening during the research in grounded theory style of investigation.

Keywords

Grounded theory; Serendipity; Qualitative sociology; Field research; Natural history of research; Sociology of interaction; Social world; Human-animals – non-human animals interactions; Anthropomorphization of animals

We want to present a research on human and animals interaction as a case study showing the serendipity issue in field research in which methodology of grounded theory has been used. The research is presented step by step to make us know how the conclusions were achieved and how serendipity was created by the open procedures of grounded theory. At the end of the paper we discuss the conditions of the findings caused by serendipity comparing to the concept of serendipity by Merton (Merton 1968; Merton, Barber 2004) and Fine and Deegan (Fine, Deegan 1996)

In the methodology of grounded theory one assumes that at the beginning of research one ought to avoid detailed conceptualization. The research concept (its main categories and/or hypotheses and the whole theoretical construct consisting of combined hypotheses and their descriptions) should emerge in the process of empirical research and permanent analyses accompanying it. The social reality described and explained gradually comes into the view of an analyst and a

researcher. It is difficult to start research without preconceptualization, though. It is common knowledge that every action has its beginning and in the case of every research project we should know what we are to observe[i] and/or investigate. The primary decision concerns the object of observation and/or the phenomenon and not the assumption of certain concepts pertaining to specific phenomena and hypotheses concerning their occurrence. The category describing the phenomenon of "serendipity" that constitute the context of discovery (Konecki 2000: 27, 101 – 102 and others, see also Fine, Deegan 1996; Merton, Barber 2004; Glaser 2004:7; Reichenbach 1938: 5-7, 231) is crucial here. The aforementioned social scientists write about the issue of serendipity and their orientations to the problem will be discussed in the paper. Merton's structuralist approach situating serendipity in structural conditions of science, and Fine's ethnographic approaches situating serendipity in conditions of everyday life (time, space and people) are quite different from each other. However grounded theory is different from both aforementioned approaches and gives new insight to the problem of serendipity in social science research. It is basically very open methodically and interactionally situated (in research practices and coding of data too) therefore it allows for serendipitous findings.

Serendipity we understand, at this moment, as an event that is an accidental discovery of something, especially when somebody looks for something else entirely (see Hannan 2006; Roberts 1989; Van Andel 1994).

Grounded theory postulating limitation of preconceptualization of research and of assumptions pertaining to the course of investigated phenomena, the methodology of grounded theory allows one to unveil their new dimensions and conditions. Frequently it enables one to reach new conceptualization of phenomena (not analyzed or investigated yet), which emerge in the course of investigation of the phenomena we have chosen to scrutinize. In both a substantive and theoretical sense we can find something we had not been searching for at the beginning of our research (*serendipity*). We deal here with the ability of seeing things difficult to perceive, the unveiling of which (in a theoretical sense) is the strength of scientific observation. The ability of finding valuable things one did not seek concerns, in our case, potential possibilities given by the methodology of grounded theory to researchers and theoreticians using it. The phenomenon of researcher's surprise and amazement at some point of research and analysis is, most frequently, an indicator of the discovery of new phenomena and, as a consequence, social reality is uncovered in the shape of categories, hypotheses, collections of hypotheses and eventually new theoretical constructs built upon those hypotheses. Unplanned discovery and the role of coincidence in discovery do not mean, however, that one can assume the analytical strategy in which 'everything is acceptable and possible. Application of certain analytical procedures is inevitable here, for instance the procedure of theoretical saturation of categories, method of constant comparison, theoretical sampling, open coding, axial coding, drawing situational maps being the preparation for the theoretical constructions of integrative diagrams (see Glaser, Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978; Strauss 1987; Strauss, Corbin 1990; 1997; Konecki 2000; Clarke 2004; Glaser 2004; Charmaz 2006).

Natural history of the research

In the below section of the paper, which is rather a methodological note, we describe the course of research and analysis of data on the topic of the "social world

of pet owners" which have been continuing for about four years, just as they have been developing in the course of time. The section is about how discoveries are made? How it sometimes happens in haphazard and coincidental fashion during the research process, that is conducted according to very open methodical procedures of grounded theory. As a matter of fact it is a presentation of the researcher's sequence of decisions concerning what to observe and analyze in the process of research development. The topic of research (the "social world of pet owners"), was formulated much later than the beginning of research and analysis. At the beginning nothing indicated that the subject of observation would be pet owners and their entanglement in interactions with other subjects (the social world), also institutional, and that the main object of the analysis would be the basic action of this social world i.e taking care of animals and many other actions accompanying and aiding this care, actions defining the boundaries of social world and its legitimization and public debates**.**

The research began during classes with students, ("Qualitative Methods", Sociology, year 3, Lodz University, Poland). Because the aim of those classes was to teach students the use of particular qualitative research techniques and methods of qualitative analysis of data, I was seeking an object of research which would be easily accessible to all participants of my classes. At some point it came to my mind that such easily accessible *objects of observation would be pets and their owners*, as more than fifty percent of Poles own pets and almost everyone has some contact with them.[ii] Students accepted my proposal (some of them enthusiastically, some with reserve) and thus the preliminary choice of an object of research was made, in order to practice applying research and analytical techniques.

Having acquainted themselves with appropriate readings concerning techniques of qualitative research and after discussion and practice during classes, the students began field research. At first, they were given a very general assignment of observing the behavior of pets in their own households. From the first records and reports it turned out that interactions with human members of a household were deciding for animal behavior. One must remember that data analysis was being made during group discussions in which students together with lecturer inspired each other and generated new categories and hypotheses. *The categories of "interactions of pet owners and their pets" and "communication of pet owners with their pets" were generated during group work. The interaction of researchers is a good tool to generate the conceptual ideas.* If we deal with the process of communication between animals and humans, I thought then, we ought to take a closer look at this phenomena and analyze who communicates with whom, in what way and what this communication concerns. After a few observations it turned out that the communication with animals was of a "family character" and that animals are treated similarly to other members of a family. This was indicated by certain actions of pet owners which were identical to their actions towards other family members.

If it is true that animals are treated as family members, and we had doubts about that, when does it happen? Under what circumstances? In what interactional contexts does this phenomenon occur? Which conditions are causal and which intervening? Which decide the occurrence of this phenomena? In order to answer those questions we started detailed observation, free and narrative interviews on the topic: How does it happen that animals appear in our households? What happens to them during the process of their growing up and maturation? Gradual analysis of the materials showed that we were dealing with the *phenomenon of socialization of animals to the conditions of family life*. Next, the concept of "forced socialization" was

formed, for all educational actions involved a verbally attested interpretation of pet owners only. Nonetheless, such an interpretation provided conditions for socialization actions, including ascribing identity to an animal, and even its contextual generation and maintenance in various contexts. These were the statements based on observation of actions of individual members of a family owning a pet/pets, mainly caring actions, closely resembling those of parents looking after their children. The role most frequently ascribed to animals was *the role of a child*. Therefore, we investigated the process of animal socialization, the conditions for initiation of this process, further stages of this process and conditions for successful end i.e. full inclusion of an animal in the family life. An integrative theoretical diagram had been created, showing the dynamics of the socialization process, its multidimensional conditions and contexts of actions (see drawing 1 which is a final version, in the process of our research many concepts were missing, for ex. the social world). It seemed then, that the main topic of research was: *the socialization of pets in Polish family* (see picture 1 at the end of the paper).

However, analysis of different phenomena of so called category of "*anthropomorphization of animals*" were developing simultaneously. In the early stages of research a matrix of perceptions of pets had been created. Initially, it comprised two opposing qualities, namely "anthropomorphization" and "animalization". It turned out that animals are perceived in accordance with two contradictory perspectives. Sometimes they are used alternately by the same person for the same animal and/or to different animals, or for animals owned by different people (see table 1).

Table 1. Matrix of perceptions of pets.

	Typically animal features ("Animality" – Animalistic Perspective)	**Typically human features (Anthropomorphic Perspective)**
Universal features	Animalistic-universal perspective. "All animals, including pets, behave in a certain, standardized way; it is characteristic of them, for they are merely animals, they have no human features."	Universalizing anthropomorphization. "All animals, including pets, feel, suffer, think similarly to humans."
Particular features	Animalistic-particular perspective. "My (our) pet is exceptional, mainly thanks to contact with me (with us); but it is only an animal, it has no human features."	Particular anthropomorphization. "My (our i.e our family's) pet is exceptional, mainly thanks to contact with me (with us) it behaves like a human." Personification of animals, naming them.

Frequently, owners perceived their own pets from the "particular anthropomorphization" perspective and other people's pets from the "animalistic-universal" perspective. However, *to view pets from a perspective of 'particular anthropomorphization' eventually proved to be a necessary condition for ending the process of the socialization of pets to the conditions of family life.* Two categories were therefore merged in this hypothesis: the "perspective of particular anthropomorphization" and the "socialization of pets". The hypothesis ought to be further grounded by checking other conditions of occurrence and relations of phenomena described by it, i.e. by carrying out a *comparative analysis.* It was decided that other research methods would be used as well in order to reconstruct various dimensions of anthropomorphization, for instance the dimension of non-verbal communication (research techniques of visual sociology), or the dimension of

common knowledge accessible to everyone in the form of public opinion (the technique of the interview questionnaire, the survey method). A triangulation of methods allowed full application of the method of constant comparison in the analysis of data in order to extract all "layers of data", saturate categories and ground hypotheses.

However, at some point, the matrix of perceptions of pets proved to be used in a broader, public and not only private (family and socializing) context. It turned out that the matrix and perspectives defined by it set certain positions in various kinds of arguments about pets, and even about treating animals in general. The anthropomorphic perspective is being applied towards wild animals as well. For instance, rangers in the Polish Tatra Mountains do not shoot bears approaching people dangerously close but, as one of the rangers anthropomorphizingly stated, they "undertake educational actions in order to scare the bears away".

The "Matrix of perception" is based on the language of descriptions of the world, and the language provides categories of interpretation of this word. The language builds a certain perspective of viewing the world. This statement, as well as observations of usage of the matrix in various social contexts provided us with an impulse *to use the concept of the "social world" here*.

Let us present this concept, in short, in order to show its utility in the context of our research. The social world includes groups participating in certain kinds of *activities,* sharing resources of many kinds in order to reach their aims and creating common ideologies relating to their activities (Strauss 1993: 212; see also Clarke 1991; Kacperczyk 2004). Social worlds are not distinctly isolated entities or 'social structures'. They are a distinctive form of collective action (Strauss 1993: 223). The boundaries and membership of the social world are not clearly defined as in the case of some social groups, for ex. professional group or a family. One can leave a social world or join it at any time. Individuals may, obviously, live in many different social worlds for, in the modern world; they may participate in many channels of communication. Therefore, they may act simultaneously in the academic world, the world of business, fashion, medicine, the theatre, pet owners, the world of environmental protection and even in more loosely knit worlds of special interest, for ex. in the world of sport, stamp collectors or fans of a certain soap opera. Every social world is therefore a cultural area, which is established neither by its territory nor by formal group participation but by the *boundaries of effective communication.* This system of communication also creates a characteristic language, or jargon. Here is the sample of words and expressions concerning the world we investigated: "an animal is not a thing", "speciesism", animal liberation, "dog-lovers", "cat-lovers", "animal emergency service", "mass murder of animals", sentimental anthropomorphization, breeding nickname, etc. This language also contains many emotive and diminutive forms expressing particular meanings and attitudes of owners towards particular animals: kitty, kitty-kitty, kitten, pussy, pussy-cat or doggy, puppy, pup etc. (see Dlugosz – Kurczabowa 2003: 242, 398). It is a certain universe of discourse that shows what distinguishes a given world from other worlds and which creates a symbolic barrier and the boundary of a social world. This language is also full of moral meanings, i.e. some "interpretative orientations" and frequently full of what we call "neutralization techniques" (Lowe 2002: 107; Sykes, Matza 1979). In every social world there exist certain norms, values, hierarchies of prestige, characteristic ways of carrier and common outlooks upon life - *Weltanschaung* (Strauss 1993: 269 -273).

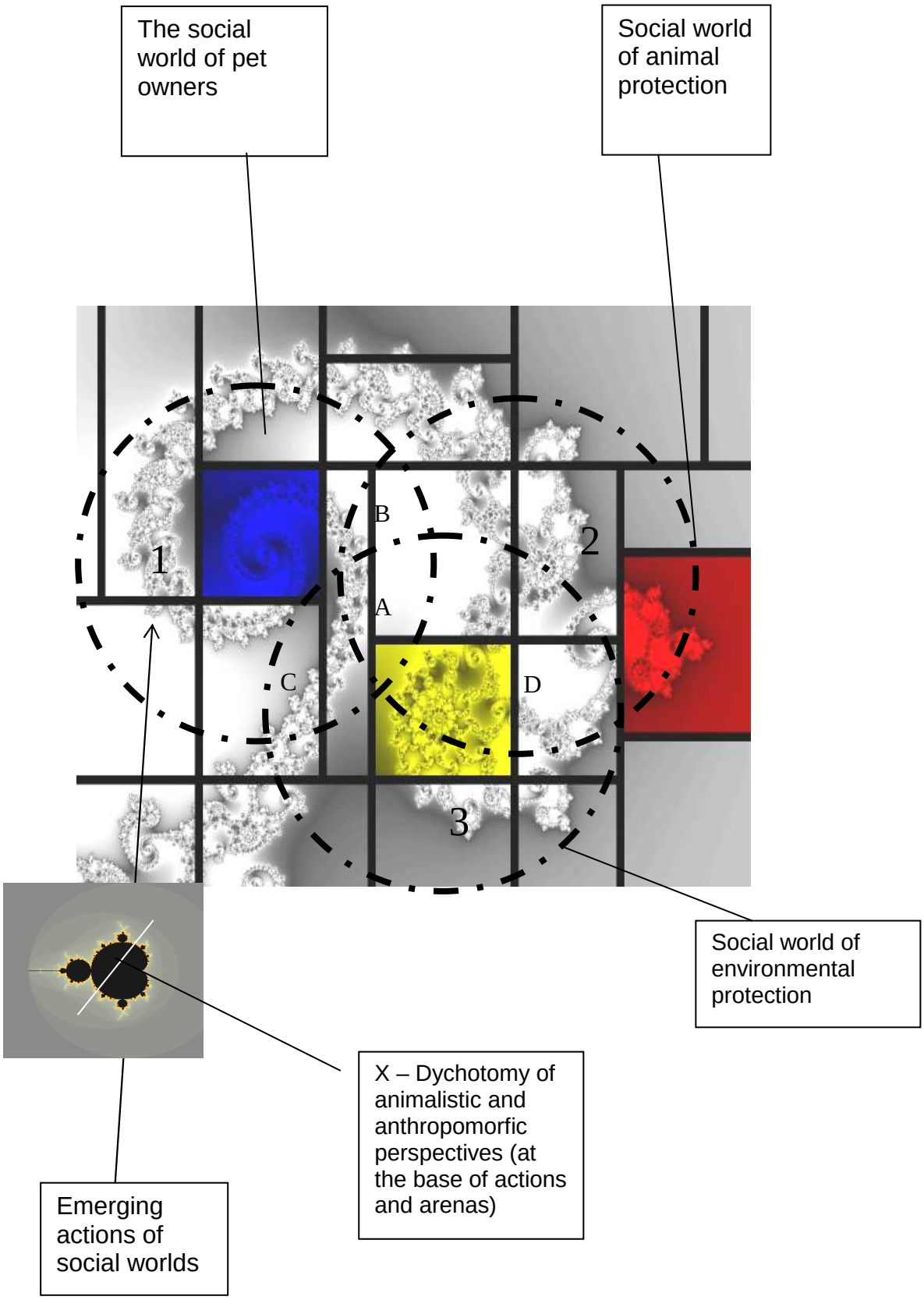
The social world, especially the one recently created, has to justify its existence. *Legitimization* is one of the features of the social world and it is related to: the demand for society's attribution of value to a given social world or its part, distancing from other worlds or their parts, building certain theories to emphasize authenticity of a social world, setting standards of actions and their evaluation, defining boundaries of the social world or changing them (Strauss 1993: 217; see also Strauss 1982).

The social world provides individuals participating in it with a certain cognitive perspective by means of which they define situations. This perspective is an ordered way of perceiving the world which comprises features of various objects, events, or human nature taken for granted. It is a matrix by means of which individuals perceive the world (Shibutani 1994: 269). This scheme provides individuals with a moral and cultural basis for their actions in a given social world as well as in society. Judgments of events or actions of other people derive from these very perspectives just as selectivity of perception is conditioned by the perspective of a social world. The Animal Protection Society's activity will be perceived differently by a professional ethicist or theologian than it would be perceived by a member of this organization.

In every social world there are some divisive issues. They are discussed, negotiated, fought against, forced and manipulated by representatives of emerging sub-worlds (Strauss 1978: 124). The common ground of this discussion is called an "arena". An arena is of a political character, not necessarily referring to actions of strictly political institutions. Not all arenas are made public and we do not always get to know about their inner arguments through the mass media. Arenas exist inside organizations, inside sub-worlds and on the borders of different social worlds and sub-worlds. Some discussions concern issues of boundaries and problems with the legitimization of worlds. Struggles for prominence, influence, power and resources are also common (Strauss 1982:189; see also Clarke 1991; Kacperczyk 2004).

In the social world of pet owners there are also some divisive issues and an arena. The matrix of perceptions of pets is used in those arguments and it generally refers to issues in which the dichotomy "anthropomorphization-animalization" positions the debates. However, on the border of this world (and beyond it) there are similar disputes over the same issues. Those discussions take place in the media, parliament, city councils, between various organizations aiding animals, local governments, etc. (see picture 2 at the end of the paper). The social world of pet owners is covered with a certain "coat", which provides categories of world description, arguments for legitimization of particular views and, at the same time, sub-worlds and other social worlds. This coat is a "social world of animal protection" and "social world of environmental protection". Although there are some ideological and jurisdiction disputes between them, all the above-mentioned social worlds cross each other's paths, for their actions have common elements (among others it is animal protection).

Picture 3. Overlapping of social worlds



Those disputes concern the above-mentioned dichotomy of animalism-anthropomorphism, the matrix of perception of animals as well as the main perspective of this matrix in the social world of pet owners, i.e. particular anthropomorphization (see table 1). It especially concerns the phenomenon of legitimization and one of its forms, i.e. "theorizing". Theorizing allows groups to define the boundaries of the social world in a socially accepted way. Scientific arguments are used here, for ex. ethological, psychological, zoological or ethical. Frequently, some scientists become theoreticians – authorities of particular social worlds.

It was decided that we should see what the problem of dynamics of relations between the perspectives of anthropomorphism and animalism looks like in the works of Konrad Lorenz - an outstanding expert in the fields of zoological science and ethology. He was a pet owner himself and he wrote a very popular diary entitled *Man meets dog* (2002). He was a one of its main figures and an authority legitimizing this *theoretician of the social world of pet owners,* world. His profession as well as his scientific views described in his books and scientistic analyses should predetermine him to perceive animals from an animalistic perspective. However, after thorough analysis of the diary, it turned out that K. Lorenz in his frequent interactions with pets (not only dogs) perceived them from an anthropomorphic perspective, especially from the perspective of "particular anthropomorphization". A peculiar struggle is visible in his diary, between the animalistic perspective, characteristic of the biological sciences, and the anthropomorphic perspective, characteristic of pet owners, especially in private and family contexts. A discourse, an inner conversation as G.H Mead would see it, takes place in this diary. A conversation in which the "I" of a scientist struggles against the "Me" of an ordinary man interacting with pets. *It is an arena at, somehow, an individual level.* An argument typical of the social world of pet owners takes place in the individual's mind. Two opposing perspectives are engaged, reflecting two aspects of personality: that of an expert and that of a pet owner. And this is what turns out to be a *discovery,* namely that the concept of arena pertains to an individual's inner life, that the arena (debates over certain issues) are not only public arguments of groups, experts and mass media, but also arguments at a level of mind and individual justification (legitimization) of one's choices and decisions. Specific perception of animals is closely connected with specific treatment of them, which may frequently be connected with moral choices.

Therefore, the concept of the social world became, at some point, the main category of our research and analyses. It is an umbrella category, integrating but also dynamic, allowing us to grasp many aspects of the perpetually fluctuating reality of interactions between animals and humans (see picture 3). At this point, this category merged the following subcategories (most significant in our research) and their qualities: the matrix of perceptions of pets, "particular anthropomorphization" "forced socialization of pets", communication between pets and humans, the bond between pets and humans.[iii]

***

Eventually it was decided that a methodological triangulation would be done by means of an opinion poll with a research questionnaire, in order to see how common (in a quantitative sense) is the practice of anthropomorphization of animals and with the aid of what means (of which owners are conscious) it is achieved, whether we really have to do with the practices of socialization of animals (educational practices) and eventually whether variables of social class influence the treatment and

perception of animals. The research was carried out in the Lodz area between December 2002 and March 2003 on a sample of 457 people. The questions had been formulated after two years of intense, qualitative field research and they were based on categories generated during it. After carrying out research, it turned out that the perspective of particular anthropomorphization is indeed the most frequent one, almost regardless of social class variables. Communication in the social world is mainly direct, between different owners. It has been proved, that socialization practices are used to introduce an animal to everyday family life. The results of quantitative research have shown that participation in the social world of pet owners is not connected with participation in any formal organizations or in the world of mass communication. One participates in the social world of pet owners by directly taking care of an animal, by introducing it to family life and treating it like a child rather than by social work outside one's home. It is compatible with Polish values and mode of life.

The relation between the age of people questioned and their answers was minimal. City dwellers perceive animals according to anthropomorphic categories (they talk and give presents to them) more often than pet owners living in the country, who more commonly use animalistic perspective. However, the difference is slight. Another variable, slightly influencing the difference in answers was 'participation in religious practices'. Frequent participation in religious practices generally weakens the tendency to anthropomorphize animals (one rarely ascribes emotions or gives presents to them) and diminishes the owner's ties to his/her own animal. The variable of education of respondents and their parents turned out to have a small (although significant) influence on differentiation of opinions and behavior, for, the majority of our respondents had secondary education. Based on the present results one can say that the higher the education of respondents, the lower their tendency towards anthromorphizing animals (feeling emotions). However, not in all aspects. Similarly, education negatively influences opinion on the possibility of creating bonds between a human and an animal, and on the strength of this bond. It can be partly explained by the lower tendency towards owning animals in respondents having higher education and, as a consequence, lack of experience in communication with animals as well as by the influence of their respondents' parents. The higher the parents' education, the lower their children's tendency towards anthropomorphizing pets.

Such were the results of a quantitative research project, which broadened our knowledge about the social world of pet owners, providing us with a quantitative context of certain behavior and opinions and grounding certain hypotheses.

It was ascertained that the bond between family members and pets is formed at owners' homes in "family environment". It was ascertained on the basis of interviews, participant observation and quantitative research. But the question arose: How is this bond exactly formed? How is it constructed on an interactional level? Much data had already been collected on this topic from interviews, but these were usually merely accounts of interactions and were, thus, superficial, imprecise and pertaining mostly to the conscious dimension of interactions and opinions about those interactions. Information was also gathered about the importance of spatial closeness in forming bonds with animals, about touching animals, sleeping with animals in one bed, kissing animals, etc. Comparative groups were also used in order to check the importance of spatial closeness in forming bonds (the situation of a pet owner living in the country was compared to that of an owner living in the city). Although empirical data concerning direct physical contact (by what non-verbal means it is constructed) was missing, accidental observation of everyday life allowed the researchers to intuit.

It was presumed that many aspects of interactions are unconscious, for ex. involuntary, unreflective yet meaningful gestures. Therefore, the researcher decided to use a technique of visual sociology i.e photography in order to scrutinize this problem. For him, it meant a triangulation of data and a triangulation of a method of research (Konecki 2000: 85-86).

Some of the owners were asked, then, to provide the (already made previously) pictures of their pets in various situations. Moreover, they were asked to write (on at least one page) answers to two questions: 1. Why do I take pictures of pets?, 2. What do I do with those pictures after taking them? Then, a formal analysis of the photographs was carried out in order to find what behavioral, material and social means were used in the presentation of pets in photographs intended for private use. It turned out that these photographs present the relations between owners, their families and animals in the frame of particular anthropomorphization. This frame is built with the aid of behavioral means (non-verbal communication) such as embracing, glancing, gazing at each other, kissing, staying in owners' private space, etc. An animal adopts the position and the role of a child. It is being spoilt as a child, it has access to its owner's private places such as bed, kitchen, desk, book collection, etc. In the pictures animals are frequently held in an embrace and cuddled in accordance with the same behavioral pattern that is used towards children. Formal analysis of photographs allowed us to reach the non-verbal dimension on which *the bond with an animal* is formed. This, in turn, drew our attention to the *corporal dimension* in forming social bonds and self, providing a stimulus for strictly theoretical deliberations on the problem of symbolic interaction and constructing self. However, those theoretical deliberations had always been connected with empirical research and its conclusions. Only after analysis of those, were certain generalizations made.

Answers to two questions about taking pictures of animals confirmed our supposition on the existence of a frame of "particular anthropomorphization" in perceptions of pets and their visual representations in photographs. The use of photographs indicated an urge to "stop time" i.e. moments in which a pet looked and behaved in a certain way, its owner being conscious of the fact that it would live shorter than himself. The temporal dimension was the main dimension in which the motives of taking pictures and use of pictures were established (Konecki 2004).

It seems, therefore, that the hypothesis that the anthropomorphization of pets prevails is further grounded. The most crucial assertion here is that *the frame of anthropomorphization is built not only by means of verbal language but also by means of so called "corporality" i.e relations between "bodies", the most frequently observable result of which is non-verbal communication.* As a consequence, the bond here is formed with the aid of the same non-verbal means. The ultimate assertion of this fact was possible due to the methodological triangulation and data triangulation carried out with the aid of research means applied in visual sociology.

The above-mentioned conclusions and hypotheses ought to be merged with our main category, namely the "social world of pet owners" (it is a part of theoretical coding and the point is to build and merge hypotheses). It turns out that the interactional level of conditions for creating this particular social world pertains also (or, perhaps, above all) to non verbal communication and corporality, which in this case is vital to establishing relations between pets and their owners. If the frame of particular anthropomorphization, interactions and bonds between animals and their owners is built with the aid of non-verbal communication then we put forward a hypothesis that *the creation of a social world of pet owners also takes place by means of non-verbal communication and body movement.* The main activity i.e.

animal protection is surrounded by accompanying activities for ex. play, excursions, strolls, living and eating together, sharing one bed, visiting a vet, participation in pet shows, etc. Accompanying activities are full of non-verbal communication (gazing, glancing at something. in order to show the direction and kind of undertaken activities, stroking to give approval, combing as an expression of care, slaps as an expression of disapproval, etc.) for in order to do them, one needs to communicate with an animal in some way. The core of this world i.e. the owners' protective activities and a close relationship with their pets would not be able to exist without non-verbal communication and taking the role of other by body movement observation and body feeling; *thus the existence of the already described social world would be impossible. We consider this conclusion one of the most crucial ones we arrived at in the course of research.*[iv]

Is it some sort of a scientific discovery? The author of the above-mentioned hypotheses is not absolutely positive about that. Still, he is convinced that for the construction and maintenance of some social worlds, the non-verbal dimension as well as corporality is inevitable. It is a discovery of theoretical character. One thing is certain in this natural history of research presented, namely that at the beginning of the analysis of empirical data, the author did not predict the point of theoretical deliberations he has reached now. Analysis of the role of non-verbal communication and corporality in the creation of a social world was certainly not what he aimed at.

Conclusions

What has been surely confirmed in the description of the above-mentioned research is the potential of a context of discovery (serendipity) undoubtedly embedded in the methodology of grounded theory. Serendipity is not really a godsend or an inborn talent. It is a skill we may learn by applying certain research techniques and procedures of analysis. This 'skill' is applicable only in action and is of procedural character. The process of making a discovery takes a certain amount of time during which one has to make various decisions and perform a multitude of actions. The discovery itself may be a one time act, but what precedes it is a process of laborious research carried out in accordance with a certain methodology. As a matter of fact, the phenomenon we describe is a process. Thus we may call it at the end a "context of discovering".

Discussion

Context of discovery is an immanent quality of the methodology of grounded theory and often it is constituted by serendipitous findings. It does not mean that if one uses other methodologies it is not possible in social sciences. *In ethnographic research*, for instance, the potential for discovering new phenomena and hypotheses is also large, although it leads to different results than the methodology of grounded theory. In ethnography, the context of discovery is rather to lead to a deeper and better understanding of phenomena, of which people are usually conscious. Those discoveries are usually of substantive character. In ethnographic research we sometimes observe unpredictable interactional episodes, events which can define the basic way of understanding a given substantive area.

An ethnographic report, then, is a kind of story (one of many stories) supporting conclusions of a research. This story is supposed to lead to a better understanding of a given substantive area and to allow one to see how a researcher concluded on the

basis of the empirical data he had collected (Fine, Deegan 1996). A creative approach to mistakes he makes during a field research is crucial here.

Fine and Deegan differentiate among three kinds of contexts of discovering (in their text called serendipity) in ethnography:

1. temporal serendipity – ability to find new sources of data i.e being in the right place at the right time in order to observe some events, crucial for further observation and analysis. Some of those events become points focusing the attention of a reader of a research report;
2. serendipity relations – finding proper informants (also experts and informants from a given observed area) and being in good relations with them is extremely important for making discoveries. These relations are often established accidentally. They themselves may be worthy of analysis, as a kind of empirical data;
3. analytical serendipity – it is connected with merging qualitative data with already existing theories or forming proposals to modify them. Then a researcher may discover some basic metaphor or narrative strategy, which allows him to conceptualize a problem.

The context of discovery in ethnographic research includes planned insight into the examined area, which is, at the same time, connected with unplanned, accidental occurrences (Fine, Deegan 1996).

Robert Merton asserts that "under certain conditions, a research finding gives rise to social theory" (Merton 1968: 157). He thinks that by means of scrutinizing empirical data, as well as by accident, one can discover new hypotheses, even the ones which we had not assumed. This situation pertains to a research experiment, in which we observe a fact which is:

- **unanticipated** – empirical research aimed at checking one hypothesis creates an accidental by-product - an unexpected observation connected with theories which had not been taken into consideration at the beginning of research (Merton,1982: 171);
- anomalous, i.e. not matching the already existing theories and/or established facts;
- **strategic for research** – has to be crucial, in some way, for the existing theory (Merton ibidem: 158 – 162, see also Merton, Barber 2004).

Merton presents an example of his research on the social organization of a suburban workmen's housing estate. It was noticed that a large number of occupants belonged to different organizations and social associations. It pertained to parents as well as small children and infants. This discovery stood in contrast with common knowledge. Moreover, the questioned parents claimed that in the estate there were lots of adolescents who could be hired as babysitters. The researchers had checked this information and it turned out that in reality only a small number of adolescents resided in the estate (3,7 % aged 15-19). The researchers were trying to explain this discrepancy between perception of reality and reality itself (facts) by existing theories, ex. Marxist theory, which says that living conditions determine consciousness, Durkheim's theory of "collective images" as the one not necessarily reflecting reality and Sheriff's thesis saying that social factors create the framework of selective perception. Eventually the concept of the social unity of a group was used and it turned out that certain perception was a function of confidence people placed in each other when they took hiring a babysitter into consideration (this trust was significant among people living in there). It was a function of a social unity of a group (ibidem: 160-162).

It is clearly visible in Merton's concept, that serendipity, the way he sees it, is merely a by-product of the main aim of his research. In empirical research we verify the already formulated hypotheses. Moreover, referring the unexpected observation of some facts to the already existing theories is very important for Merton. The point here is to use the already existing theories which could explain a given surprising phenomenon or to broaden the already existing theory rather than to discover new theories. In a theoretical sense, nothing new has been discovered here. A certain, unexpected theory has been explained at the most. As regards the surroundings in which discoveries of surprising character are made, according to Merton they are institutionalized (*institutionalized serendipity*), i.e the researchers have contact with each other and inspire each other. Thus we may say that there is a certain *'serendipity pattern'.* According to Merton an 'accident' playing a part in a discovery and the ability to notice this accident's significance have their roots in a social structure rather than in what is commonly considered to be an accident or a stroke of luck (Merton, Barber 2004; see also Merton 1968a: 4,7).

In the methodology of grounded theory the situation is quite different. Two aspects immanent in this methodology, namely 1. *substantive serendipity*, and 2. *theoretical serendipity* indicate it. The first one is of substantive character, which means that as in ethnography, the empirical field research provides observations of accidents, happenings and incidents about which the researcher did not know before and which may become crucial for further analyses and theoretical constructions. The second aspect (*theoretical serendipity*) pertains to the unexpected possibilities of inventing and merging categories and creating new hypotheses and theoretical constructions. Obviously those two kinds of contexts of discovery are frequently connected with each other, for what is being discovered theoretically is very often (not always, though) what has already been discovered in a substantive sense. We have to remember that the "newness" here pertains mainly to the theoretical serendipity, for usually we know about the existence of certain phenomena on account of substantive observations made before. However, only a theoretical analysis allowed us to appreciate those observations, to become surprised and, as a result, to make a theoretical discovery. We make a theoretical analysis on the basis of empirical data. In the course of research and the analysis accompanying it, we try not to include the already existing theories as Merton or ethnographers would do. It might lead to forcing the direction of analysis by the concepts which are not connected with the researched field and which are not derived from empirical data generated in it. When we use the already existing theories (i.e. theories formulated in other research contexts or in a deductive way) to analyze empirical data, we may very easily distort the context of categories and hypotheses we generate *in situ*. It does not mean that the already existing theories are unimportant to the process of analysis. On the contrary, they are vital for it. However, the categories taken from the already existing theories should fit the data we have gathered and explain the phenomena analyzed by us. Usually, it is only at the end of research and theoretical analyses that we fully refer to other theories in order to see how they relate to our main hypothetical construction and to make a final revision or confirmation of our theoretical conclusions.

The surroundings in which the context of discovering takes place do not necessarily have to be of institutional character, as R. Merton claimed. Moreover, it is very difficult to find a uniform serendipity pattern here. If we find the pattern it will be the *context of justification*, not *context of discovery* (Reichenbach 1938: 5 – 7). The context of justification is to show the way of achieving the theorem according to strict

scientific rules, however it does not show factual actions/interactions in the real and complicated situation of discovery. Frequently, it takes place in a social world in which a researcher participates (for ex. social world of photography, art, sociology, ethnography or on the border of those worlds, etc.) or which he currently analyzes. Actions which take place in a certain social world (worlds) may become an inspiration for his discoveries. Contacts and interactions with other participants of this world (worlds) cause the phenomenon of facilitation, mutual inspiration, adding knowledge, perceiving of one's knowledge from different perspectives and eventually making a scientific discovery.

Interaction with data is very dynamic because of coding procedures. The open coding of data could be done in every moment when the researcher decides. The open coding could be very inspirational concerning inventing new categories and putting new questions and new theoretical sampling. Interacting all the time with data during the course of research gives the possibility to find something new, it is not like in the thoroughly planned and conceptualized research.

Moreover, research and analyses by means of methodology of grounded theory are usually of group character, i.e. many researchers analyze the previously gathered empirical data together, coding the data, exchanging theoretical and methodological notes, discussing them, often arguing, etc. Group dynamics is a natural context for analysts' work. It seems that the "context of discovery" is produced more in an interactional dimension than in an institutional one. That is why we think that the term which would describe the above-mentioned phenomenon (pertaining to the so-called surroundings in which a discovery takes place) in a more appropriate way, should be the category of "interactional serendipity", which, after we have taken the temporal (procedural) dimension of research and analysis into consideration, is the *"interactional context of discovering".*

Endnotes

i In this paper every action aimed at describing the examined phenomenon is called observation. Therefore, various research techniques may be used in order to observe, for ex. free interview, narrative interview, group interview, participant observation, etc.

ii The loose subject of a research and analysis is a common practice in grounded theory approach at the beginning of a research (see McCallin 2004: 26; Nathaniel 2004: 43).

iii Similar decision happen often in grounded theory approach to analyze empirical data: "The core variable is identified when it emerged as the one to which all others related." (Nathaniel ibidem: 45).

iv One ought to assert that the hypothesis about creation of some social worlds by means of non-verbal communication raises a question: in what other social worlds is non-verbal communication so important for their construction and maintenance? In what social worlds is basic activity full of non-verbal communication, which constitutes its essence? These are the questions which may give rise to further research and creating formal theory.

References

Charmaz, Kathy (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. London: Sage.

Clarke, Adele (2003) "Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory Mapping After the Postmodern Turn." *Symbolic Interaction* 2(4): 553 – 576

------. (1991) "Social Worlds/Arenas Theory as Organizational Theory." Pp. 119 – 158 in *Social Organization and social Process. Essays in Honor of Anselm Strauss*, edited by D. Maines. Aldine de Gruyter, New York

Dlugosz – Kurczabowa, Krystyna (2003) *The New Polish Etymological Dictionary*. Warsaw: PWN (in Polish)

Fine, Gary Allan and James Deegan (1996) "Three Principles Of Serendipity: Insight, Chance, And Discovery In Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Studies in Education* 9(4): 434 – 447.

Glaser, Barney (1978) *Theoretical Sensitivity*. San Francisco: The Sociology Press.

Glaser, Barney and Judith Holton (2004) Remodeling Grounded Theory [80 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research 5*(2). Retrieved January 2005 (http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqstexte/2-04/2-04glaser-e.htm)

Glaser, Barney and Anselm L. Strauss (1967) *Discovery of Grounded Theory : Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Hannan, Patrick J. (2006) *Serendipity, Luck and Wisdom in Research*. Lincoln: iUniverse.

Kacperczyk, Anna (2005) "Application of the concept of social worlds in empirical research." Pp. 167 – 189 in *The Construction of Self and Society. European Variants of Symbolic Interactionism*, edited by K. Konecki and E. Halas. Warszawa: Scholar (in Polish)

Konecki, Krzysztof (2004) A private presentation of interactional contexts. Analysis of photographs of pets. A paper presented at the XII Sociological Convention in Poznań, 15 –18 September, 2004
(available at http://www.krzysztofkonecki.prv.pl/ , in Polish)

------. (2000) *A study of the qualitative research methodology. Grounded theory.* Warsaw: PWN (in Polish)

Lorenz, Konrad (2002 [1949]) *Man meets Dog* (*So kam der Mensch auf dem Hund*), London-New York: Routledge.

Lowe, Brian M. (2002) "Hearts and Minds and Morality: Analyzing Moral Vocabularies in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Sociology* 25(1): 105 – 123.

McCallin, Antoinette (2004) "Pluralistic dialoguing: A theory of interdisciplinary teamworking." *The Grounded Theory Review* 4(1): 25 – 42.

Merton, Robert (1968) *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York, London: The Free Press, Collier – Macmillan Ltd.

------. (1968a) "The Mathew Effect in Science." *Science* 159(3810): 56 – 63.

Merton, Robert K. and Elinor Barber (2004) *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity*. Princenton: Princeton University Press.

Nathaniel, Alvita K. (2004) “A Grounded Theory of Moral Reckoning in Nursing.” *The Grounded Theory Review* 4(1): 43 – 58.

Reichenbach, Hans (1938) *Experience and Prediction: An Analysis of the Foundations and the Structure of Knowledge.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Roberts, Royston M. (1989) *Serendipity: Accidental Discoveries in Science*. Toronto: Wiley.

Shapin, Steven (2004) “The Accidental Scientist.” *American Scientist Online* 93 (July– August). Retrieved 03.2008. (http://www.americanscientist.org/template/BookReviewTypeDetail/assetid/34011)

Shibutani, Tamotsu (1994) “Reference Group as Perspectives.” Pp. 128 – 145, in *Symbolic Interaction. An Introduction to Social Psychology*, edited by N. Herman, L. Reynolds. Dix Hills, New York: General Hall Inc.

Strauss, Anselm (1993) *Continual Permutations of Action*, New York: Aldine.

------. (1987) *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

------. (1982) “Social World and Legitimization Processes.” Pp. 171 - 190 in *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, edited by Norman Denzin. Greenwich, CT, JAI Press, volume 4.

------. (1978) “A social world perspective.” Pp. 119 - 128 in *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, edited by N. Denzin. Greenwich, CT, JAI Press, volume 1: 119 – 128.

Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin editors (1997) *Grounded Theory in Practice*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

------., (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

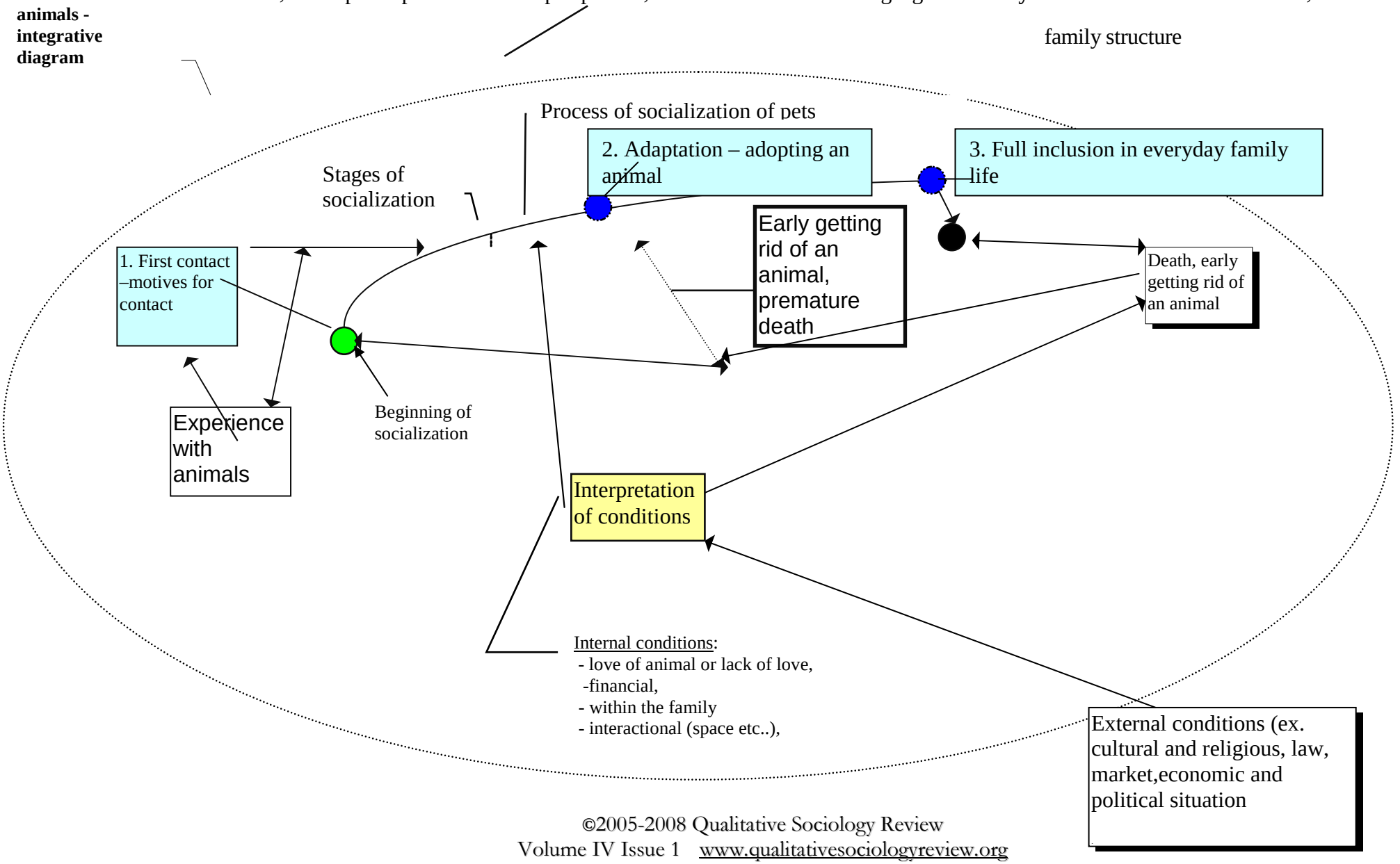
Sykes, G., Matza David (1979) “Techniques of Neutralization: A theory of Delinquency.” Pp. 497 – 504 in *Social Interaction. Introductory Readings in Sociology*, edited by H. Robboy, S. Greenblatt and C. Clark. New York: St. Martin Press

Van Andel, Pek (1994) "Anatomy of the unsought finding: serendipity: origin, history, domains, traditions, appearances, patterns and programmability." *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 45(2): 631-648.

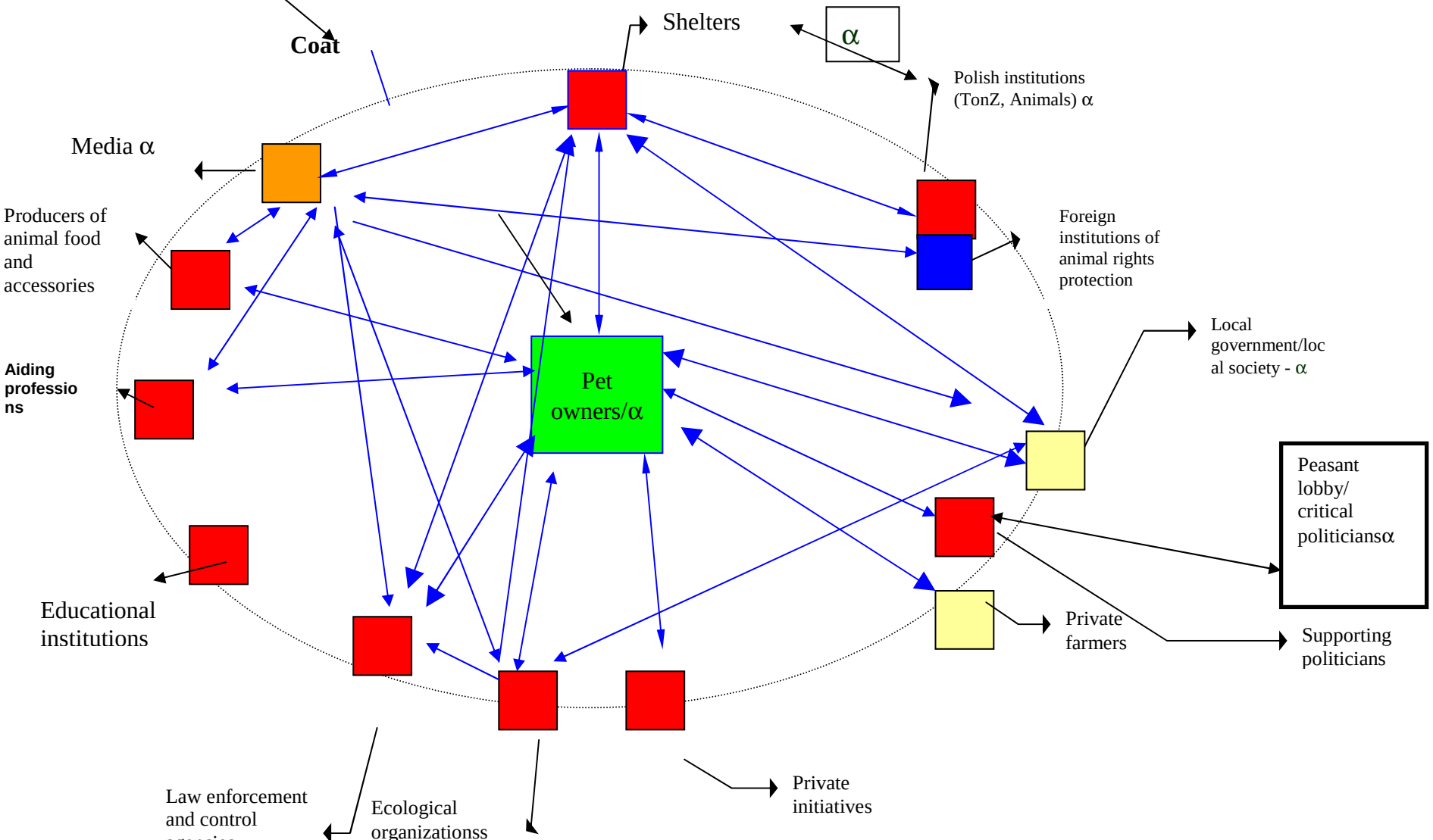
Citation

Konecki, Krzysztof T. (2008) “Grounded Theory and Serendipity. Natural History of a Research.” *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Picture 1. Socialization of animals - integrative diagram



Picture 2. **The Social World of Animal Protection – relations and arguments- (Arena - α).**
Legitimization SW (passing law, opinion polls- CBOS, introduction of the new language of perception of animals, education).



Qualitative Sociology Review
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Peter Nugus
University of New South Wales. Australia

The Interactionist Self and Grounded Research: Reflexivity in a Study of Emergency Department Clinicians

Abstract

This paper shows how the theory of symbolic interactionism shaped a grounded investigation of the organizational labor of Australian Emergency Department (ED) clinicians. Further, it shows how symbolic interactionism supports reflexive criteria for validating grounded research. Using ethnographic methods across two metropolitan EDs, interactionism's emphasis on roles applied equally to the relationship between researcher and participants as to the relationships among participants. Specifically, the researcher generated data by positioning interactionism as the mediator of the emergent relationship between researcher and participants. The results of this positioning were: a traceable path from understanding to interpretation and the search for consequentiality rather than truth. Interactionism facilitated the co-production by the researcher and participants of limits on the generalizability of the data. The paper is an argument for symbolic interactionism as a means not merely to generate sociological findings, but to conceptualize the impact of the researcher on the grounded research process.

Keywords

Symbolic interactionism; Reflexivity; Self; Emergency Department; Grounded theory

This paper is an exercise in reflexivity. The central argument of the paper is that the reflexive capacity of symbolic interactionism (hereafter referred to as interactionism) can be engaged to validate qualitative, grounded research. The paper shows how, in a study of Australian emergency clinicians[i], the interactionist self of the researcher constructed the data. The objective of the broader project was to understand the way nurses and doctors in the EDs of two tertiary referral hospitals in Sydney, Australia, carve out a unique domain for their work in their interaction and negotiation with doctors and nurses from other departments within the hospital. This empirical objective is realized by recognizing that the communication of these clinicians sustains shared and often unspoken understandings of their roles within their interactive environments. Furthermore, these interactions create social structures. These are core tenets of interactionism. The present paper is concerned not so much with the project's substantive findings, but with the role played in delivering the substantive findings by the interactionist focus on the way the work

worlds of Emergency clinicians are produced in interaction. The paper shows that interactionism is capable of accounting for differential relationships between researcher and individual participants, even though such differences might appear to show the primacy of differences between people rather than commonalities among people, which is a distinguishing feature of the theory of interactionism. The paper extends literature by showing how interactionism supports the validation of the data-generating process, and conceptualizes those data generated in the emergent and cyclical grounded process. I will outline the central tenets of interactionism and argue that the interactionist perspective on the self was implicated in my relationship with my research participants and show how it shaped the production of the substantive findings.

The paper focuses, then, on the contribution of interactionism to the empirical research. Although the substantive findings of the research have been described elsewhere (Nugus 2007a; 2007b), I will summarize them and some of the literature on which they draw as an orientation to the framing of the research. Emergency nurses and doctors undertake knowledge work and post-bureaucratic work to challenge the bureaucracy of the hospital (Nugus 2007a). "Knowledge" work is work based on communication and organization rather than physical labour, and is a feature of post-industrial society since the late twentieth century (Drucker 1989). It overlaps with "post-bureaucratic" work which means that organizational knowledge, flexible worker identities, creative solutions to problems, informal relationships, social networks and team synergies are more important in solving problems in real time than focusing on the formal, compartmentalized structure of the organization (Heckscher 1994; Heckscher and Donnellon 1994). Specifically, the work of emergency clinicians involves responding to the organizational misfit of having to coordinate the journey through the hospital of the "whole bodies" of patients who are increasingly presenting with multi-organ problems. However, the hospital, as a product of modernity's emphasis on control, is a specialized, compartmentalized bureaucracy corresponding to biomedicine's reduction of the human body into fragmented parts (Nugus 2007b).

Despite claims of the conceptual impoverishment of interactionism (e.g. Lofland 1970), these results show the power of interactionism to engage "testable" explanatory models to illuminate data. Indeed its descriptive, abstract nature enables interactionism to generate such models. The project is unique in applying an interactionist perspective on ED work and also in contributing to the sociology of the organization by focusing explicitly on the formal organizational boundary of the relationship between departments. Beyond the substantive findings of the organizational labor of emergency clinicians, interactionism also enabled the study to generate knowledge about general contingencies of communication, interaction and collective identity of workers in bureaucratic organizations.

The methods that delivered the findings of the broader study and were shaped by interactionism were as follows. Field work consisted of unstructured and structured participant-observation and semi-structured interviews. The ethnographic observation was conducted in two metropolitan Australian EDs over 10 months, during which time 130 semi-structured interviews were also conducted. Field interviews were also conducted following observational shifts. My participants included doctors, nurses and allied health professionals from the EDs and nurses and doctors from other departments of the hospital who interacted with emergency clinicians.

I drew on an emergent, cyclical grounded methodology to collect my data and discourse analysis to analyze them. A "grounded" approach to data collection and

analysis involves deriving explanations from the data itself rather than starting off with a pre-conceived hypothesis, or prior codes and categories of analysis which are then tested (Punch 1998: 60). The research process is therefore emergent. In other words, grounded "theory"[ii] prescribes that the research questions and strategy emerge through the research process rather than commencing with an overarching theory to guide the research and it is an inductive rather than deductive process. However, the cyclical nature of the process means that theories are verified throughout the process as well (Punch ibidem: 166-7). As a theory-building enterprise, a grounded researcher seeks to provide new knowledge about generic social processes (Neitz 1999: 101) and not merely provide new information (Thomas 2003: 478). Thus interactionism is an appropriate frame for a grounded research project.

Typically, the grounded researcher needs to observe in order to know what to look for and to talk to people to know what to ask them. Coding and analysis move backwards and forwards in a series of cycles rather than in a necessarily linear, sequential and predictable manner. The objective is that the findings will be anchored in detailed, systematic and transparent analyses of the data (Glaser 1992; Glaser and Strauss 1967). The contribution of the paper to grounded research is that it exemplifies Hall and Callery's (2001) rigour-enhancing notions of "reflexivity" and "relationality" that "grounded theory" has overlooked. Reflexivity is the researcher's critique of their influence on the research process, and which I take to include relationality, which is recognition of and accounting for power and trust relationships between researcher and participants (Hall and Callery ibidem: 258). Hall and Callery (ibidem) argue that these notions have been overlooked because of "grounded theory's" assumptions that procedures for verifying data are inherent and thus unproblematic in the grounded process, and that data unproblematically reproduces participants' realities. They attribute these assumptions to the overly mechanistic prescriptions of Strauss and Corbin (1998) for the conduct of grounded research, despite their claims that it is an inductive process. Yet, ethnography is an intersubjective process and the researcher's meanings influence choices and judgements (Hall and Callery ibidem: 258, 260). The remainder of the paper shows how interactionism enables the grounded research process to sidestep this contradiction by mediating the data-generating capacity of relationships between researchers and participants.

Symbolic interactionism

I argue that an interactionist perspective on the relationship between the researcher and participants accounts for the researcher's journey from information gathering to interpretation, the sociological, that is transferable, significance of findings, and a project's validity or generalizability. Qualitative research must confront traditional questions of reliability and validity. "Reliability" has been cast in the qualitative context as "dependability" and concerns the internal stability of data over time and across different observers and coders of the same data (Lincoln and Guba 1985). "Generalizability" or "external validity" (often called "transferability" in an ethnographic context) depends on theoretical diversity, "thick description" of the context to allow the reader to determine wider applicability, and a sufficiently high level of abstraction to allow applicability to other social settings (Punch ibidem: 261).

Interactionism has established its empirical credentials as a framework for analyzing the patient experience of illness and in non-hospital healthcare settings.

However, interactionism has had a limited presence in hospital research, and virtually absent from hospital organizational research. Through interactionism, social theory can reach deeply through theory and practice and across disciplinary boundaries by striving to locate "intelligible common objects", the meanings of which are shared by diverse people (Forte 2002). The centrality of the production of findings in the present case study lies in the fact that the philosophical indissolubility of mind, self and society connects the individual self with social worlds. Symbolic interactionism holds that selves are at the same time products and creators of social structure (Vryan, Adler and Adler 2003: 378). Individuals exercise agency by choosing from a range of sayable or doable items in particular situations. Such purposive action generates social structure. However, individuals are also constrained by the limits of what they perceive their community considers to be sayable or doable in particular situations. We enter a world of pre-existing symbols formed by those whose communities we enter. We exercise agency within and to expand those sets of symbolizations.

The interactionist "self" is realized through assuming the roles of others with whom one takes on shared activities (Blumer 1969: 21). Mead (1934) argued that, through playing games, a child learns to see oneself as an object to oneself and to a generalized "Other". They come to see themselves as a potential "Other" to another person. Language and gesture mediate the self and society by facilitating role-play which allows the child to learn the significance of roles in society (Mead ibidem: 7, 34-6). As such the discovery of the "self" is the same moment as the discovery of society (Mead ibidem). Specifically, "it is impossible to conceive of a self outside of social experience" (Mead ibidem: 26). Mead summarized the role of the individual in society by suggesting that social interaction can only occur when the individual uses as a reference point the attitude of the rest of the society. In the words of Joas (2001):

> (Interactionism is) about understanding and anticipating the meaning of others' words and actions within a shared definition of the situation. The individual makes his own behaviour (like his partner's behaviour) the object of perception. One sees oneself from another point of view … The 'me' refers to the internalisation of what I perceive others to expect of me. (pp. 91-2)

For interactionism, the "social" is located in the concept of the *self* as a "cognitive object generated in acts of reflexive knowing" that joins in a single act the self that is the knower (the "I") and the self that is known (the "me"; Weigert and Gecas 2003: 267). Interactionism shows us that researchers do not need a "macro" perspective on social life to engage social structures. Interactionism emphasizes the universal tendency of human and possibly non-human beings to classify (Konecki 2005). They use this symbolic ability to learn from their community "vocabularies of motive" (Burke 1935) from which to choose in exercising agency, or free will. To this extent, interactionism aligns with Snow, Morrill and Anderson's (2003) elaboration of Lofland's (1995) concept of "analytical ethnography". Specifically, interactionism eschews positivism's assumption of the existence of a real world that can be represented objectively (Halfpenny 2001: 372-5). Neither does it assume the validity of subjective experience. Instead it focuses on illuminating generic social processes, that is "formal" theory, rather than the "substantive" theory of specific spatio-temporal settings (Snow et al. ibidem: 185-6). Identities are both structurally imposed through interaction and also collectively created. Gibson, Gregory and Robinson (2005)

applied Luhmann's systems theory to conceptualize grounded research and thus to render the grounded research process sociological, that is "for" the social world. In a hierarchy of concepts, interactionism assigns grounded "theory" as a research strategy rather than a theory because interactionism's theoretical umbrella focuses on the way selves engage in social action rather the social action that is generated. This dynamism renders interactionism an inherently descriptive, empirically practical sociological theory because it makes the most sociologically minimalist assumption that human beings are interdependent.

Aligning definitions of the situation

Not surprisingly, in the current case study, I spent the majority of the observational phase of the project observing my participants interacting with each other. They were usually not interacting with me. In interactionist terms, they were "fitting together lines of action" (Katovich and Maines 2003: 202-3) to "shore up fractured sociation" (Scott and Lyman 1968: 46) or "aligning" meanings with other clinicians and with patients (Albas and Albas 2003: 364), rather than engaging with me. However, I came into the shared symbolic world of my respective participants when either I or they interrupted an event to create a new interaction. On these occasions the same interactional processes that were observable by me also applied to my relationships with my participants.

My interaction to derive observational data depended on my participant/s and I sharing a common "definition of the situation", as for all interaction (Goffman 1959: 231-2). As human beings my participants and I had the "categorical attitude" in common which meant that we were able and yielded to the social pressure to align meanings within a shared definition of the situation (Hewitt 2003: 313-4). I was initially concerned that I was not clinically trained and this appeared to be the prevailing feature which distinguished me as an outsider in the field. I initially conceptualized the "insider-outsider" dualism, known in anthropology as the "emic-etic" distinction (Tedlock 2000), as defined by my participants' clinical knowledge and my lack of clinical knowledge in not being clinically trained. However, my ability to interpret the events I observed went beyond emic-etic, as we will see, because my lack of clinical training did not impede my ability to generate sociological information. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, as a human being I had more in common with my participants than I had different.

Dramaturgy defining the researcher as an instrument

As a member of a shared symbolic community I understood when my respective participants whom I was observing in the field were happy, unhappy, surprised, shocked, distressed, anxious, embarrassed, amused or elated. Agency, or "will" is clear in "abnormal" or "deviant" conduct (Herman-Kinney and Verschaeve, 2003: 213-4). As an observer, then, I was particularly attuned therefore to less common events such as anger. For instance, I attended a ward round during which an administrator from the hospital visited and informed the emergency doctors present about a new protocol and form for drug ordering. A staff specialist[iii] appeared furious, demanding to know why emergency doctors had to do the task and not the medical or surgical team who would admit the patient as an inpatient in the hospital. The emergency doctor asked the administrator to leave the ward round. This gave me the opportunity subsequently to approach the emergency doctor to ask about the interaction and also to approach the hospital administrator to tell me how

they perceived the interaction and for me to learn what underlying organizational issues they thought underpinned the interaction (Fieldnote B4: 9). My ability to derive data from this event stemmed from the fact that, from an interactionist perspective, meaning does not reside in the intention or in the announcement but in the way the receiver responds to it (Mead ibidem: 75-82). The fact that I understood the responses of participants to each other's interactions showed that our common symbolic character was more prevalent than my outsider status as a non-clinician or social scientist.

Sometimes I did not understand the context of a conversation but recognizing the function of the response, I knew what to follow up in "field interviews". I relied on field interviews that I conducted with my participants following observational shifts and in addition to formal semi-structured interviews. Prior to conducting the structured observations, comprising the observation of 12 individual clinicians over 24 shifts, my respective participants generously agreed to answer any questions I had after the shift. Not including other opportunistic field interviews, I spent, on average, 26 minutes and on four occasions between one and two hours. During observations I wrote a vertical line down the left hand side of my note pad to indicate points that I wanted to follow up after the shift. After the shift, I started at the beginning of the notes and addressed these issues. My research focus was the relationships between emergency clinicians and clinicians from other departments as an indicator of their organizational labor within the hospital. The relative clarity of this focus meant that the field interviews, combing the "best" of observation and interviews, yielded more data than unstructured observations because I had concrete events, stories and interactions on which to explore their organizing roles. For instance, one emergency staff specialist asked the emergency staff specialist I was observing: "Are you the gatekeeper of hell tonight?" In my field interview after the shift I asked him what the phrase meant. He told me the other emergency doctor was implicitly asking whether they were responsible that night for determining which patients were to be placed in the overnight "emergency medical unit (EMU)" – otherwise known as the "observation ward" or "short-stay unit" (Counselman, Schafermeyer and Garcia, et al. 2000). . I asked why they used the phrase "gatekeeper of hell". My participant said they believed it was because it was a very difficult task to determine which patients were to be allocated to that unit and which were to be diagnosed, treated and discharged, or for another medical or surgical team to be consulted with a view to admitting them to the hospital. They explained that it was tempting to place patients in the EMU because patients were allowed to remain in the EMU for up to 24 hours, and this would alleviate the pressure to fulfill measurable targets of patient "flow" through the department. However, it was unclear how many patients might need to be allocated to the unit that night, given its limited number of beds. This made the decision "a delicate balancing act" (Fieldnote senior doctor B2: 24).

Interactionism assumes that shared meanings or shared definitions of the situation make interaction possible (Goffman ibidem: 83, 90, 231-2, 255). That is to say, although we do not make it explicit, interaction assumes a shared answer to the questions: "who are we and what are we doing?" (McCall 2003: 329). One initiates interaction on a hypothesis, announcing a definition of the situation. The action is based on the expected action of the other/s and the assumption that categorical or symbolic knowledge is shared with others (Hewitt ibidem: 313-4). A shared definition of the situation does not mean that people respond in an identical fashion under the same circumstances. People exercise choice or agency in their responses. If the hypothesized definition of the situation turns out not to be shared by the other, the

announcer seeks actively to re-align their behavior with the definition they perceive the other/s to have of the situation (Stokes and Hewitt 1976; Blumer ibidem: 47). Interactants adjusting or providing an explicit account of their behavior (Blumer, 1990: 47) has its roots in the interactionist assumption that we seek, in general, to behave as others would expect us behave (Turner 1962). What this means is that the meaning lies in the response of the other, not in the mind or action of the announcer (Mead ibidem: 75-82). Meaning therefore changes moment to moment in interaction. This gives interactionism its dynamic, emergent, situational, uncertain, unpredictable, improvisational, event-based flavour. Placing meaning in the response rather than the announcement diminishes the relevance of cognitive questions of whether, for instance, one is telling the "truth" or whether interactants do indeed share the same mental definition of the situation (Mills 1940: 900). For interactionism the point is less that the hypothesis is correct and more that people act on the basis of hypothesis. This is the "categorical attitude" (Hewitt ibidem: 313-4). So, moment to moment we improvise based on our perceptions of behaviours which we have learned are appropriate in particular situations. We adjust our presentation of self on the basis of the response of the Other.

Goffman (ibidem) introduced the notion of "dramaturgy" which focuses on the embodied gestures that communicate what words cannot. Dramatic presentation of self involves using the body to control "expressions given" (deliberately) and limit negative "expressions given off" (involuntary) (Goffman ibidem). Importantly, Goffman (1963: 31) proposed that people have a vested interest in and act to allow the other opportunities for "face-saving". For instance, people use "tact" to rescue the other in order to preserve the definition of the situation (Goffman 1963: 30-1). During our interactions, my participants announced a definition of the situation which I was eager to uphold. I believe that I needed to maintain the definition of the situation, that is, to try to manage, as Goffman suggested, that the impressions deliberately "given" were more influential in presenting my idealized self than the impressions unconsciously "given off". I needed them for my work; they did not need me to do their work. The dramaturgy, that is gesturing to communicate more than words can say (Goffman, ibidem), involved "fitting together the lines of communication" or "shoring up fractured sociation", through their unprompted accounts and disclaimers, and my reflexivity in my notes taught me to impression manage to get better data. I believe that my anxiety about the way I presented self centered on ensuring that my participants kept volunteering to speak to me in an unprompted fashion. I did not lie to my participants but my field notes remind me that I invested enormous emotional labor to appear non-judgmental and supportive, fascinated rather than merely interested when I was tired, nonchalant when I was so unoccupied that I wished the ground would swallow me up, and to feign distraction or disinterest if a participant appeared to be embarrassed or compromised in interaction with another, or simply appeared uncomfortable with my presence.

The foundation of my education was provided by the open questions in the interviews and observing my clinicians without engaging with them. These two forms of data collection took place during the same 10-month period, weaving in and out of each other as the busy timetables of my participants permitted. The quality of the relationships affected the type of information acquired, how often and what my participants volunteered to share with me, and importantly, my confidence in asking questions.

Re-defining emic-etic in the grounded process

As conceptualized by the grounded approach, the research focus took firmer shape as the research progressed. The combination of interactionism and a grounded approach accounts for the emergent process of aligning definitions of the situation. As my understanding of the cultures of the EDs − that is, their tacitly shared but observable practices, norms, rules and metaphors (Alvesson 2002; Schein 2004) − increased, I engaged with participants on more sophisticated and specific topics. This section accounts for the influence of interactionism on the way my emerging relationships with my participants generated data. Table one represents the differences between commencing as an outsider to interpreting the work of emergency clinicians. The differences are summarized as corresponding dualities.

Table 1: The interpretative journey

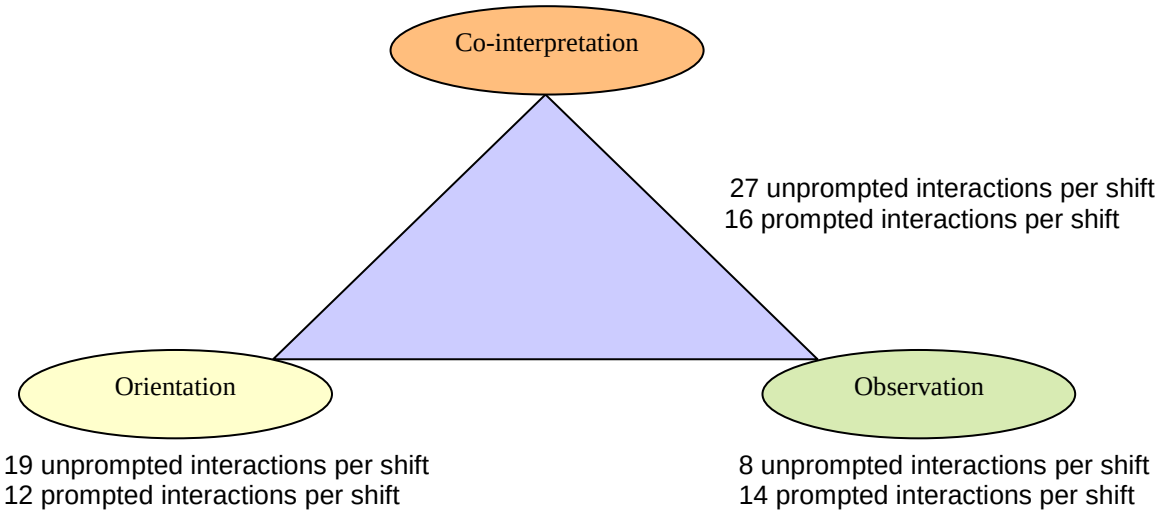
	Commencement	**Conclusion**
Status of researcher	Outsider/ Etic	Insider/ Emic
Research approach	General	Specific
	Looking for consistency (patterns) ('What's happening here?')	Looking for variation/ deviance ('Is this what's happening?')
Data collection	Unstructured observation	Structured observation
	Observation/ No interaction	Participation/ Field Interviews
	Open questions to generate themes	Closed (hypothesis-testing) questions to validate themes
	Qualitative methods	Qualitative and quantitative methods
Data analysis	Collating instances to build the story	Cross-referencing instances to account for variation
	Voice of the participant/ Researcher gaining knowledge	Voice of the researcher/ Researcher making interpretations

Table one summarizes, albeit in an over-simplifying and abstract way, my perception of the grounded research journey. The diagram shows that the research process was not merely emergent, but directional in terms of interpreting the inter-departmental work of emergency clinicians.

The research process presented a potential challenge to interactionism's focus on what human beings have in common rather than what distinguishes them. I derived different types of data depending on my perception of the quality of my relationships with core participants. This might appear to demonstrate the preeminence of personality characteristics and individual differences over interactionism's emphasis on what people have in common. However, my differential relationships with my participants are explicable not solely by personality and other inter-personal characteristics, but in terms of the relationship between inter-personal characteristics and differing degrees of success in aligning definitions of the situation. Specifically, I came to realign my conception of the emic-etic distinction along the lines of gender, age and personality. Analyzing my interactions retrospectively

through my field notes, I learned that I interacted more frequently with participants who shared my gender, general age range and personality style as I perceived it. My detailed fieldnotes enabled me subsequently to count the number of times I interacted with my core participants, that is the emergency nurses and doctors whom I accompanied and observed over various shifts. I recorded when they initiated interaction ("unprompted") and when I initiated interaction ("prompted"). On the basis of my quantitative account of engagement, and my subjective account of my relationships with these core participants, I divided them into the following three groups which are summarized in figure one below. The classifying groups transcended occupation, role and rank. The interaction with some participants was enjoyable, jovial and very relaxed and comfortable, helping to facilitate "co-interpretation". As shown in figure one these participants initiated interaction the most of the three groups. Those with whom the relationship was relaxed, friendly and comfortable "oriented" me to their work by explaining their tasks and activities. Most of the information they provided was from questions I asked, although I felt relatively comfortable asking. With some participants, I perceived that my relationship was characterized by observation, passivity and disengagement. In these cases the relationship was usually cordial and courteous but not warm on their part, and on two occasions I perceived at least mild irritation at being accompanied. These participants usually answered questions I had, but briefly, and I was less comfortable asking them questions than participants with whom I had what I perceived to have a more friendly relationship.

Figure 1: Quantity and quality of interactions with core observational participants



There were, of course points of co-interpretation with participants with whom my interaction was less comfortable, especially when they were less busy and had time to talk with me, and points of mere observation with participants with whom my interaction was enjoyable, especially for participants who appeared busier and more mobile. The point is, however, that the degree of comfort I experienced in being able to align with my participants the definition of the situation correlated generally with the frequency of our interactions. Such differences do not subsume interactionism as a frame for the research process because the degree of information yielded overtly by those whom I merely "observed" was limited by my relationship not by my categorical ability to pursue themes which appeared relevant to my research.

I came to realize when analyzing my interviews transcripts that my interviews shifted from being semi-structured to structured, and were accompanied by more closed than open questions. For instance, an emergency nurse told me in an interview that she believed that nurses from other wards sometimes say they are not ready to receive a particular patient whereas the emergency nurses believe they are in fact ready and they do not wish to receive the patient. Other emergency nurses told me in interviews that this frustrated them because the ED cannot control when and how many patients come into the ED. From my observations, and acknowledgement of this from nurses from other wards, I also believe that this was sometimes the case. However, drawing on an interview with a nurse from an inpatient ward, I asked the abovementioned nurse: "What if I was to tell you that a nurse from another ward said to me that, despite the apparent urgency, sometimes patients are transferred from the ED up to two hours after being told that a bed on the ward is available?" This is an example of a more closed question that I felt comfortable asking when our relationship developed , showing my confidence in our shared definition of the situation, and satisfying my desire to verify my emerging interpretations (Interview A1: 19).

Another closed question I put to an emergency staff specialist in an interview was to wonder whether it is easier for emergency clinicians to transfer patients to a non-organ specific specialty like aged care than an organ specific medical team who were in a stronger position to deflect the patient by referring to the specific features of a certain organ. In this case, the interviewee agreed with me. In most cases my participants either agreed with my emerging interpretation or found my perspective interesting. Sometimes they disagreed. For instance, I confronted a senior emergency staff specialist with my perception of the link between the relatively recent emergence of the College of Emergency Medicine, and hence formal recognition of the specialty status of emergency medicine, and the relative lack of respect for emergency doctors within the hospital. They told me that I was trying to push "hard core sociology" onto something that was not part of the everyday experience of emergency doctors (Interview B2: 3). I now believe that they were at least partially right. However, I formed my own view that there is a clearer association of context than they acknowledged or realized, but that it indeed could not explain the day-to-day dynamics of interdepartmental interaction. In other words, there was romantic appeal in the association but it did not fit together as neatly as I thought. The real world is not neat, and neither is systematic research.

Such closed questions within structured interviews produced two further limits on the generalizability of the data. First, I realized that my interviews and questions were becoming more focused and I deliberately asked hypothesis-testing and sometimes provocative questions, the result of which was that in every one of my final 23 interviews, the interviewee, at least once, made a comment such as: "I'm not qualified to answer that", "I can't say", or "you'll have to ask *x*".

Second, if we needed any more evidence against the limited perspective of talking about "sacred" versus "profane" accounts (Wolf 1988), that is the difference between what is performed at the "front" and what really *is* at the "back" of the dramatic scene (Goffman ibidem), interviewees spoke against what I would have perceived to be their interests. An emergency staff specialist claimed in an interview that doctors from other medical or surgical teams tended to resist becoming involved in the care of ED patients and persuade emergency clinicians to approach another medical or surgical team if they can. I asked them whether they sometimes also "market" or "market" the patient in a particular way to persuade other teams, as I

believed happened, if they are unable to persuade another medical or surgical team to accept care of the patient. He said:

> Ooh yes. If I'm having troubled getting anyone interested in a patient, I might ring a nice, friendly rheumatologist. I mean if they need to stay in the hospital they need to stay in the hospital. They like patients because they don't get many. (Interview A2: 11)

Similarly, a doctor from an organ-specific specialty[iv] acknowledged that, in the context of extreme busyness, a function of the decision to become involved in the care of an ED patient depended on their perception that the patient was or was not diagnostically "interesting" (a term they used without my prompting; Interview A4: 7). I perceive such closed questions as giving the participant an explicit opportunity to stop me from over-generalizing from my data. Such questions served a hypothesis-testing function. They served validating and ethical functions by giving participants the opportunity to respond to my emerging findings.

The shift from semi-structured to structured interviews attests to another dimension of the emic-etic distinction: that throughout the research process I turned from absorbing knowledge to making interpretations. This was aided by conducting interviews and undertaking observations at around the same time, so each was informing the other in a cyclical, grounded fashion. In the fashion of a grounded approach, I sought to use the interviews to derive subjectively produced themes and to compare and contrast these with participant-observation. True to constructionism, I was also reserving the right to make my own judgement for which I will be held responsible. The responses of my participants to my closed questions and field interviews represented our attempt to maintain a shared definition of the situation.

In essence, differences in the types of data generated from my participants evinced our common symbolic humanity because they depended not on our shared points of view, but on our ability to co-generate data and interpretations. I did not need a close relationship with my participants to yield data from my interviews and observations. What we did need was a shared definition of the situation. However, participants with whom I shared a closer relationship volunteered more information and I felt more comfortable drawing on our relationship to sharpen my emergent analysis, for instance through asking questions. Specifically, the substantive findings of the study were derived disproportionately from "hypothesis-testing interview questions" and "field interviews", more so than open-ended interview questions and field observations closer to the "observer" than the "participant" end of the participant-observer ethnographic spectrum. However, in support of interactionism's emphasis on commonality rather than difference, these latter two forms of data accounted for the vast majority of the time spent collecting data, and produced the foundational patterns without which I would not have known what to ask about and what particular questions to ask.

External validity of a sociological view on the organization

Interactionism goes beyond subject specific content to produce sociological or social psychological analytic content (Charmaz and Olesen 2003: 648). Interactionist ethnography is not about ethnographies of settings; it is about ethnographies of concepts (Manning 2005: 172). Clinicians, like all people, interact in the here-and-now and are not aware of the precise character of the social structures influencing their actions and their contribution to social structures in their ward or organization

(Katovich and Maines ibidem: 292). They seek to exercise agency in the here-and-now. The current claim to external validity, that is generalizability, is made not only through the inductive methods of a "grounded" approach but through interactionism's ability to facilitate examination of generalized contingencies of human interaction. Rejecting structurally causative theory helps avoid the charge sometimes level against medical sociology that it is "doctor bashing" (Anspach and Mizrachi 2006). Because interactionism focuses on individuals' responses to the expectations of roles they play, the focus is less on moral questions, such as which departments or clinicians are "good" and "bad, and more on the situations in which any person could, under particular circumstances, find themselves. For instance, after claiming that Emergency doctors treated psychiatric patients as "creatures from another planet" and not treating their presenting medical problems in the same way as they would others, a psychiatric registrar I interviewed then said: "But then again when I was an intern in emergency I hated dealing with psych patients too" (Interview A4: 11). Similarly, I spoke with an inpatient registrar who was rotating as the after-hours medical registrar (AMR) and whom I knew as having rotated through the ED at an earlier point in time. He said: "We have to put up barriers. The onus is on (emergency doctors) to convince us (to accept care of the patient). We can't survive if we don't manage our workload". I asked the AMR how it was then for him when he was in the ED. He said: "Well, we had to manage our workload too. That meant getting the patients out." (Fieldnote B6: 13) Therefore, by directing research attention to the roles that any person could find themselves in, rather than the fundamental moral categories of clinicians, empirical research is able to generate findings about the contingencies of human interaction that apply to social settings beyond the time and place of a particular investigation. Therefore, an interactionist focus demands attention to the roles that people play according to their circumstances.

Conclusion

This study has shown how the interactionist self of the researcher constructed the data. In doing so, it contributed to reliability and validity in an empirical study in the Emergency Departments of two metropolitan hospitals. Focus on the interactionist character of the relationship between my participants and me showed the dynamics of our attempts to align the definition of the situation. These attempts did not centre on my status as a non-clinician or social scientist as the defining characteristic of my etic status. Instead, the focus was on the categorical nature of human beings, more so than whether or not we shared the same opinion. This focus revealed how I attributed meaning to my participants' responses to my announcements in aligning the definition of the situation. It further showed how I sought to manage the impressions "given off" to ensure that my participants continued to volunteer information. The interactive dynamics of our defining of the situation also governed my preparedness to ask closed interview questions and to conduct focused observations based on my emerging interpretations of the social action occurring in the EDs. These enabled my participants to disagree with me, enhancing the reliability of the research. It also rendered the research more ethical, by disciplining the transition from evidence to findings.

The unique contribution of the paper is to show how interactionism and grounded research can be combined to enhance the trustworthiness of ethnographic research. They allow greater participant engagement in the findings and interpretations. Interactionism illuminates the dynamics of the researcher's potency

as a research instrument that needs to be accounted for reflexively. The categorical attitude has greater explanatory power than the genuine personality differences and qualities of interaction one encounters in the field. The categorical attitude allows participant worlds to present themselves to the researcher as the foundation of the researcher's testing of their interpretations among those participants who facilitate "observation", "orientation", and "co-interpretation" in particular. Interactionism eschews a focus on the fundamental moral categories of clinicians. By directing research attention to the roles that any person could find themselves in, interactionism shows itself to be a descriptive, social theory that is sufficiently abstract to account for the universal interdependence, or the inherent socialness, of human beings. Thus interactionism enhances research validity by generating findings about the contingencies of human interaction. These apply to social settings beyond the time and place of a particular investigation.

Endnotes

i I will refer to the nurses and doctors working in the ED as "emergency" clinicians.

ii Although "grounded theory" is the label commonly used I will refer to a "grounded approach". The grounded approach is a "methodology" (research strategy) which I do not want to confuse with the more conceptually abstract "theory" of symbolic interactionism that informs it and which it is intended to operationalize.

iii A staff specialist equates with a hospital-employed physician in the United States.

iv The term "organ-specific" is applied as an adjective to specialty medical or surgical teams, or doctors of an inpatient specialty subdiscipline, based on specialised knowledge of a particular organ of the body, such as cardiology, respiratory medicine and neurology.

References

Albas, Cheryl A. and Daniel C. Albas (2003) "Motives." Pp. 349-66 in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*, edited by H.T. Reynolds and N.J. Herman-Kinney. Walnut Creek: CA: AltaMira Press.

Alvesson, Martin (2002) *Understanding organizational culture,* Sage: London.

Anspach, Renee R. and Nissim Mizrachi (2006) "The Field Worker's Ethics: Ethnography and Medical Sociology." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 28(6): 713-31.

Blumer, Herbert (1990) *Industrialization as an Agent of Social Change*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

------. (1969) *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Burke, Kenneth (1935) *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*. Los Altos, CA: Hermes Publications.

Charmaz, Kathy and Virginia Olesen (2003) “Medical Institutions.” Pp. 637-56 in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*, edited by H.T. Reynolds and N.J. Herman-Kinney. Walnut Creek: CA: AltaMira Press.

Counselman, Francis, Robert W. Schafermeyer, Rebecca Garcia and Debra G. Perina (2000) ”A survey of academic departments of emergency medicine regarding operation and clinical practice.” *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 36(5): 446-50.

Drucker, Peter (1989) *The New Realities*. NY: Harper & Row Publishers.

Forte, James A. (2002) “Mead. Metatheory and Twenty-first-century Interdisciplinary Team Work.” *Sociological Practice* 4(4): 315-34.

Gibson, Barry, Jane Gregory and Peter Robinson (2005) “The intersection between systems theory and grounded theory: The emergence of the grounded systems observer.” *Qualitative Sociology Review* 1(2): 3-21.

Glaser, Barney (1992) *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*, Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Goffman, Erving (1963) *Stigma: Notes on the management of a spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

------. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.

Halfpenny, Peter (2001) “Positivism in the Twentieth Century.” Pp. 371-85 in *Handbook of Social Theory*, edited by G. Ritzer and B. Smart. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hall, Wendy A. and Peter Callery (2001) “Enhancing the Rigor of Grounded Theory: Incorporating Reflexivity and Relationality.” *Qualitative Health Research* 11(2): 257-72.

Heckscher, Charles (1994) “Defining the Post-bureaucratic Type.” Pp. 14-62 in *The Post-Bureaucratic Organization: New Perspectives on Organizational Change*, edited by C. Heckscher and A. Donnellon. London: Sage.

Heckscher, Charles and Anne Donnellon, editors (1994) The Post-Bureaucratic Organization: New Perspectives on Organizational Change. London: Sage.

Herman-Kinney, Nancy J. and Joseph M. Verschaeve (2003) “Methods of Symbolic Interactionism” pp. 213-252 in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*, edited by H.T. Reynolds and N.J. Herman-Kinney. Walnut Creek: CA: AltaMira Press.

Hewitt, John P. (2003) “Symbols, Objects, and Meanings.” Pp. 307-26 in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*, edited by H.T. Reynolds and N.J. Herman-Kinney. Walnut Creek: CA: AltaMira Press.

Joas, Hans (2001) “The Emergence of the New: Mead’s Theory and its Contemporary Potential.” Pp. 89-99 in *Handbook of Social Theory*, edited by G. Ritzer and B. Smart. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Katovich, Michael A. and David R. Maines (2003) “Society.” Pp. 289-306 in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*, edited by H.T. Reynolds and N.J. Herman-Kinney. Walnut Creek: CA: AltaMira Press.

Konecki, Krzysztof, T. (2005) “The Problem of Symbolic Interaction and of Constructing Self.” *Qualitative Sociology Review* 1(1): 68-89.

Lincoln, Yvonna S. and Egon G. Guba (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lofland, John (1995) “Analytic Ethnography: Features, Failings and Futures.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 24(1): 30-67.

------. (1970) “Interactionist Imagery and Analytic Interruptus.” Pp. 35-45 in *Human Nature and Collective Behavior: Papers in Honor of Herbert Blumer*, edited by T. Shibutani. New Brunswick, NY: Transaction Books.

Manning, Philip (2005) “Reinvigorating the Tradition of Symbolic Interactionism.” *Symbolic Interaction* 28(2): 167-73.

McCall, George J. (2003) “Interaction.” Pp. 327-48 in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*, edited by H.T. Reynolds and N.J. Herman-Kinney. Walnut Creek: CA: AltaMira Press.

Mead, George H. (1934) *Mind, Self and Society*, edited by C. Morris. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mills, C. Wright (1940) “Situated Action and Vocabularies of Motive.” *American Sociological Review* 5: 904-13.

Neitz, Mary Jo (1999) “Prescriptions for Qualitative Research.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28(1): 100-104.

Nugus, Peter (2007a) *The Organisational World of Emergency Clinicians*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Sydney, Australia: The University of New South Wales.

------. (2007b) Jeffrey Braithwaite, Rick Iedema, Anna Holdgate, Joanne Travaglia, Sally McCarthy, Margaret Fry and Barbara Daly. “El Impacto del Conocimiento Clínico, su Estructura e Interacción en la Experiencia del Paciente: El Recorrido Organizacional del Clínico de Emergencias.” *Academic Emergency Medicine* 14(4): e97-e98.

Punch, Keith F. (1998) *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. London: Sage.

Schein, E. (2004) *Organizational Culture and Leadership,* 5th ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Scott, Marvin B. and Stanford M. Lyman (1968) “Accounts.” *American Sociological Review* 33(1): 46-62.

Snow, David A., Calvin Morrill, and Leon Anderson (2003) “Elaborating Analytic Ethnography: Linking Fieldwork and Theory.” *Ethnography* 4(2): 181-200.

Stokes, Randall and John Hewitt (1976) “Aligning Actions.” *American Sociological Review* 41: 838-49.

Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tedlock, Barbara (2000) “Ethnography and Ethnographic Representation.” Pp. 455-86 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Thomas, Jim (2003) “Resurrecting the ‘Science’ of Symbolic Interactionism.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 32 (4): 475-78.

Turner, Ralph H. (1962) “Role-taking: Process versus Conformity.” Pp. 20-40 in *Human Behavior and Social Process*, edited by A.M. Rose. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Vryan, Kevin D., Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler (2003) “Identity.” Pp. 367-90 in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*, edited by H.T. Reynolds and N.J. Herman-Kinney. Walnut Creek: CA: AltaMira Press.

Weigert, Andrew J. and Victor Gecas (2003) “Self.” Pp. 267-88 in *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*, edited by H.T. Reynolds and N.J. Herman-Kinney. Walnut Creek: CA: AltaMira Press.

Wolf, Z.R. (1988). *Nurses’ Work: The Sacred and the Profane*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Citation

Nugus, Peter (2008) “The Interactionist Self and Grounded Research: Reflexivity in a Study of Emergency Department Clinicians.” *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Lucija Mulej
Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia

Construction of Scientific Facts – Why is Relativism Essential in Bypassing Incommensurable Gaps in Humanities. Case of Personal Involvement – Biased Scientific Facts

Abstract

This paper addresses the theory of knowledge in relativistic terms of Paul Feyerabend, stressing the importance of personal involvement in the research and theorizing. Since the topic is a constant and widely accepted premise the author is insisting that it has been actually ignored in the sociology and philosophy of science. It is apparent in discursive form, neglected in actual consequences for science in general. Defending the thesis of relativism had remained unacknowledged by the general scientific community. Biographies of mavericks and their struggle and exclusion from scientific community etc. had been constant in the history of science. Is science nowadays able to accept criticism and implement arguments of knowledge beyond the institutionalized standards?

Throughout this article we argue that personal involvement creates biased scientific facts; acknowledging and applying tacit knowledge we move beyond personal involvement and create appropriate interpretations of facts and phenomena under investigation, where we reconsider the construction of facts and personal beliefs, knowing that our fields of expertise are incommensurable.

Keywords

Comparative methods; Interdisciplinary research; Paradigm (gestalt) shift; Relativism; Incommensurability; Psychoanalysis; Interpretative gaps; Epistemology; Logical inconsistency; Logic

Incommensurability – Reality Gaps In The Case Of Human Affairs

The main divide between hard core (natural sciences) and soft (humanistic) science is the mode of thinking that results in a conundrum of outcomes and presumptions. Obviously, two researchers, investigating the same topic, should arrive at different conclusions, taking into consideration the specific paradigm one is subjugated to[i]. The facts that induce us to agree (Boudon 1997) are a foundation of the epistemological framework, in which we perceive and interpret, were explained in various manners: from the Greek philosophers to modern postmodernist classics. The discrepancy of interpretations, given by the subjects of investigation, is a

constant, indispensable variable, yielding an affluent reservoir of realities, perceived by a human mind. A contemporary example of interpretations, grounded in two opposite paradigms, is the dichotomy in sociology of science, the dichotomy between positivism vs. relativism[ii]. Here, the two studies of prostitution are presented as a show case of paradigm-grounding, e.g. Heyl (1977) vs. Pines and Silbert (1983). While the former studies prostitution (positivistic perspective) from the view-point of occupational and client - management skills (Heyl 1977), the latter (relativistic perspective) concentrates on how victims of incest are more likely to become prostitutes. This leads us to the question, which of the two studies is a sufficient analysis of the cause of prostitution? (Marvasti 2004) Certainly, there are multileveled causes, within theoretical frameworks presented as causes of milieus one is committed to. The question of which study is "true" or "real", irrelevant as these two approaches reflect different realities, e.g. two "truths", emerging from two different theoretical perspectives, with two different agendas, represents the show case of incommensurable core presumptions, creating primordial sets of theoretical suppositions and beliefs. As Bachelard says, the formation of scientific mind is a psychoanalytical fact of objective knowledge acquisition (Bachelard 2002).

Also, many arguments are convincing, even though their structure bears no resemblance to that of a line of reasoning which logic would regard as valid. Is validity of argumentation coherent to the logical recognition of facts and interpretations regarded as legitimate and valid? Not necessary. Surely people often have good reasons to believe in dubious or false ideas. As Boudon (and Bachelard) show, explicit line of argument is contaminated by hidden a priori notions: "For this reason, this process seems to be an essential theme in the sociology of knowledge. It suggests in fact that collective belief in weak, dubious or false ideas can sometimes become established simply because the ideas are legitimated by reasoning which there is no reason not to regard as valid" (Boudon 1997:XI). Also Polanyi implies that informed guesses, hunches and imaginings that are part of explanatory acts, are motivated by passions. Since there are many types of a priori statements (epistemological, linguistic, ontological type etc.), we shall focus on epistemological as well as ontological a priori, combined with Polanyi's idea of tacit knowledge, understood as knowledge, comprised of a range of conceptual and sensory information and images, that can be brought in an attempt to make sense of something, despite the fact that this something is senseless.

In this paper, psychoanalytical fact of objective knowledge acquisition is perceived from two standpoints: firstly, from ontological Lebenswelt reality (Husserl), with ready made pictures unquestioned in everyday life (black is black and white is white[iii], a cat is a cat, and a dog is a dog), where the focus of this paper is on second reality, which is constructed reality. Epistemological reality is constructed through the processes of science legitimization and creation of scientific community: social construction of reality has been investigated by sociological classics (Berger & Luckmann 1991) as well as anthropologists, philosophers and historians. Social sciences were legitimized through the methodological standards and regulations of physical science, where the aim is to uncover universal laws, e.g. causes and effects explanations for "human affairs", e.g. behaviour and characteristics that hold true across time and place. On the other side, relativism often reflects notions of constructionism and questions of how human interactions help to create[iv] social reality. Moreover, constructionists believe that as human beings we do not find or discover knowledge as much as we construct it. (Bachelard 2002; Hacking 1999; Dilley et all 1999; Feyerabend 1992)

Constructionism is an umbrella term, covering different specialized fields of

paradigms, such as interpretive sociology, political science (symbolic interactionism, interpretivism etc.) and anthropology in general. Constructionists are more interested in what goes into creating the social world and less in its causes (Marvasti 2004) Differences between these two approaches, sometimes profound, often subtle, derive from the epistemological division between form and substance. Relativism suggests that social "reality" is subjective, situational, culturally varied and ideologically biased, while objectivism (positivism) suggests the opposite. The difference between these two aspects is demonstrated (Table 1; Marvasti 2004:12) in the table below:

Table 1

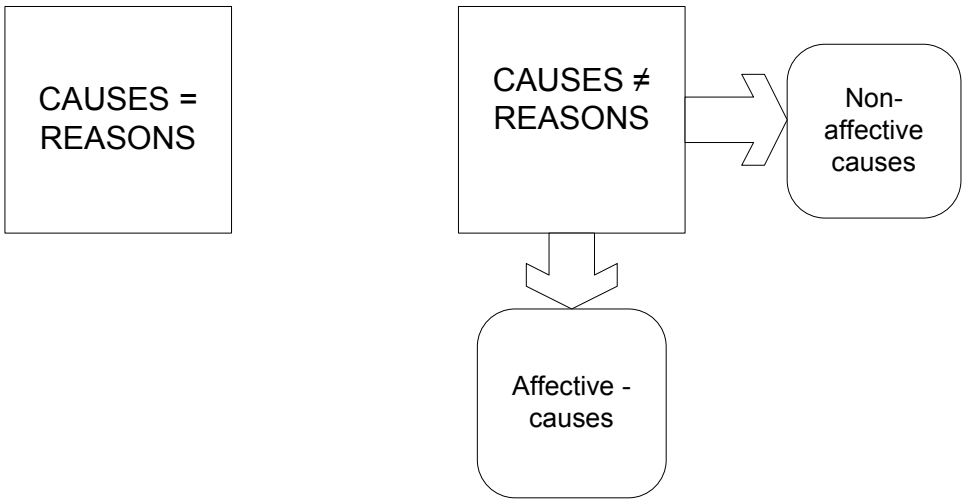
	POSITIVISM	CONSTRUCTIONISM	COMMON THEMES
THEORETICAL STANCE ON SOCIAL REALITY	How can we use objective research methods to capture the essence of social reality?	How "reality" is socially constructed?	IMPORTANCE OF EMPIRICAL DATA
GOAL OF RESEARCH	What are universal laws that explain the causes of human behaviour?	How do situational and cultural variations shape "reality"?	PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE
ENDURING QUESTION	How can we improve the standardized and neutral language used to report research findings?	What are the ideological and practical consequences of writing and research?	INTERNAL VARIATIONS AND LOGICAL INCONSISTENCES

With the objectivistic approach we neglect a number of important questions; namely, not just why (motives, social and psychological causes), but how (i.e. technicalities, options in different types of societies) does one become a prostitute for example? Do prostitutes believe that their actions are criminal, and moreover, is prostitution universally regarded as a criminal act (legality vs. legitimacy)? Consequently, we might ask, should wives, who use sex as a way of gaining financial leverage in a marriage, be defined as prostitutes?[v] As we can see, prostitution is a field that penetrates social morality and is a good example of how emotional distance would be difficult to obtain for any researcher and layman. The problem of stigmatization, social labelling and moral standpoint, reflecting a specific time, place or culture, will also create a bias that will colour the approach of any study. It can be said that "moral positions typically do not require empirical support" (Marvasti 2004:4) In fact, a strictly moral agenda requires constant rethinking of what we know. Constant rethinking of what we know is a domain of relativism as well as of constructionism. To scrutinize the problem of construction, interdisciplinary research and constant rethinking of what is known is an essential constituent of every sane science.

One group of thinkers, who refuse to admit that the reason for a belief can ever be the cause of that belief, are called the "strong programme" in sociology of science. One of the psychoanalytical facts of objective knowledge acquisition is a belief, created in a mind of an investigator. Belief as precedent to a conviction or a consequence of cognitive processes, suggests different types of models, e.g. modes of reflecting, feeling, interpreting and thinking, showing that the dynamic between the researcher and the subject investigated is entangled and intertwined. The cause of a

"belief" can be either reasonable or affective, as Boudon suggests: "Causes are factual and in contemporary human sciences we are witnessing the shift in explanation from reasonable causes to causes of another sort" (Boudon 1997:5) as

Figure 1



Backed by the theory of "primitive mentality" at the colonial times of ethnocentrism and anthropological evolutionism, evolutionist thinkers assigned affective causes to cultures, designated as "primitive". A few decades later, adherents of cultural relativism showed that the rules of thinking are variable across societies. The contemporary approach of challenging things that lie below the surface is constructivist thinking, inherent to many reflexive disciplines such as anthropology, psychoanalysis, some branches of philosophy etc. (Marvasti 2004). Constructivists, instead of being bound by universal human laws would try and envisage the meaning and practical consequences of having sex for gain, describe the morality imbedded in different cultures, different times and space. In other words, they would seek hidden meanings, transparent in the lives and experiences of their subjects. Cultural relativism destroyed the idea of the universality of logic as we practice and demonstrate it – surely, the rules of thinking are variable between societies, as well as modes of thinking are variable between paradigms, where the awareness of incommensurability is highly represented. Constructionists try do de-compose and de-structure meanings, a priori statements and, primarily, hypocrisy, inherent to the institution of the intellect, e.g. science. The facts that in each analytical and methodological approach, there are variations and inconsistencies, yields the urge to continuous rethinking. Smelser (2003) argues the most fruitful approach is neither objectivistic nor relativistic, but should involve a systematic incorporation of contextual analysis[vi]. "It is demonstrated that in order to carry out such contextual analyses effectively, the researcher is impelled toward both an interdisciplinary approach and international collaboration" (Smelser 2003:643). In other words, three major presumptions are summarized (Table 2 and Table 3) in the logic of objectivism and relativism as follows (see Harré and Krausz 1996:6-23)

Table 2: VARIETIES OF OBJECTIVISM

UNIVERSALISM	OBJECTIVISM	FOUNDATIONALISM
Discursive variant: there are beliefs which hold in all contexts, at all times and for all persons	Discursive variant: there are beliefs which hold independently of the point of view, corpus of beliefs or conceptual scheme held to and employed by any particular person or society	Discursive variant: there is a common set of basic statements, not capable of further analyses, which serve in each context for each kind of enquiry for the assessment of all judgements of a relevant kind
Ontological variant: there are entities which exist for all persons	Ontological variant: there are entities which exist independently of the point of view, corpus of beliefs or conceptual scheme held to or employed by any particular person or society	Ontological variant: there is a common ontology or set of basic existents, incapable of further analysis, out of which all other existents are constructed

Table 3: VARIETIES OF RELATIVISM

BY TOPIC
SEMANTIC RELATIVISM: relativity of meaning to language; a word cannot be translated into another language without loss of meaning, and some words cannot be translated at all
ONTOLOGICAL RELATIVISM: relativity of existence to conceptual systems: for example electric fluids existed for Franklin but not for us; witches existed for Azande and not for us
MORAL RELATIVISM: relativity of moral worth to societies and epochs; sex before marriage was once held to be wrong but is not considered as such in the contemporary world

Bypassing the Gap – Logical Inconsistency (Why One Should/ Should Not Follow the Rules of Scientific Re-Thinking)

If we take a closer look at the idea of interdisciplinary approach, we can see it as a modern expression, addressing the themes such as post-modernity and its' almost Dadaist slogan "anything goes". Varieties of relativism are not addressing that kind of chaos created by the ideology of anything goes[vii]. In my opinion "anything goes" is more tuned to a deconstructed and creative type of reality *non bis in idem.*

Kuhn argues that within every scientific tradition called paradigm, there is a period of normal science, where progress is linear, logical and accumulative. This is the epoch of any specific scientific paradigm, the time of peace, mutual agreement and common shared values. It is the time of puzzle-solving[viii], ad-hoc adjustments and alternative-modelling of theories in an atmosphere, giving and sharing ideas within an unquestioned paradigm. At a certain point, in any given paradigm, there is a period where problems become unsolvable, data become unreliable and variances of meanings, produced by our scientific tools, become incompatible. *A posteriori* hypotheses are constantly brought in and tend to outnumber the initial hypotheses

being investigated. At this point, revolutionary science emerges where previously linear transcends into nonlinear, illogical and un-accumulative. If a paradigm is full of gaps one must find theoretical groundings in other branches of inquiry, e.g. taxonomies. Does constructing taxonomies not imply that we look at types of behaviour within types of contexts, and that the existence of this type can be investigated empirically for the frequency of occurrence? If so, then, this way of looking at the investigation activity, resembles positivism or at least its nomothetic ideal, law-like statements?.

This is not the case of constructivism. Incommensurability suggests we are facing a communication gap wherever we turn, even if we adopt an alternative taxonomy. For example, incommensurability in hard core science became obvious as a result of the introduction of the theory of relativity and echoed in sociology of science as the dichotomy positivism vs. relativism. In physics, the idea of Niels Bohr, suggesting *complementary of theories,* (quantum vs. wave theory) is an example. The main problem in "hard-science" is that comparisons are possible within their own field, but comparisons across disciplines are plagued by incommensurability, where data being compared are not comparable; hard science tends to omit the idea of social and cultural indicators, being brought into the equation (an exception being the so called 'personal equation in astronomy'). Indicators of this type seem unrealistic because the comparative contexts in which they are embedded are so different and taxonomically specific. This leads to a paradox in that equivalence of indices is best achieved by seeking different indicators for the same phenomenon in different settings, that is logical inconsistency, theoretically established by Feyerabend in his work *Against method* (1975).

This model of explanation shows incommensurability as a fact of comprehension gaps: logical gaps, linguistic gaps, epistemological gaps, ontological gaps, cosmological gaps and gaps between natural sciences and social sciences. Since the term logical inconsistency is interrelated with Feyerabends' theoretical anarchistic theory, embedded in the principle of proliferation, where positivism stems from Putnam's tenacity principle, which is based on the idea of theories being discarded and replaced when proven wrong, the proliferation principle advocates plurality of well supported arguments and methods that are not necessarily logical or linear. Feyerabend defends aesthetic criteria and intuitively generated assumptions that can through time gain general acceptance (for example Galileo in *Against method*). Our thesis is that acknowledgement of logical inconsistency, used to bypass the gaps between the rational and the irrational, implies the adoption of an attitude, which tries to deconstruct and decompose assumptions and personal biased opinions, scrutinizing every research, one is subjugated to. Surely, human potential in general as a major divide of incommensurability as a variable in research and theorizing, has been continuously neglected throughout the establishment of scientific venerable traditions. The fact is that people hold tightly to opinions and understandings and can barely change them, whether we are talking in the language of logical, linguistic, epistemological, ontological and cosmological gaps as well as gaps between natural sciences and social sciences.

Jacobs (2003) illustrates this point by using the argument put forward in Polanyi's investigation of Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande (1976).* As we have illustrated, Kuhn's shift from normal to revolutionary science happens with the end of the myth of science as logical, linear and accumulative; in his later writings (1977 and 1983) he tried to explain this transition within terms of revised incommensurability which bears resemblance to Polanyi's work *Personal Knowledge* (1958)[ix]. Polanyi argues that different methodological rules

determine each kind of research (not solely the cases of discovery), where human potential (we can know more than we can tell) is a major divide. But having understood the limitations of methods and theories, incorporated within the language of a given paradigm, one is facing taxonomically and idiosyncratically specified and inconsistent agendas (this also holds for what is being studied, for example the language of Papuans on Borneo. Not only tools (paradigms) but also the objects being studied can be seen as facing taxonomically and idiosyncratically specified and inconsistent agendas). Central to Michael Polanyi's thinking was the belief that creative acts (especially acts of discovery) derive from strong personal feelings and commitments, where he sought to bring into creative tension a concern with reasoned and critical forms of knowing, like for example tacit knowledge.

Furthermore, this logical gap signifies a point in time where cognitive change in science is disruptive and non-accumulative. Cognitive change in Kuhnian terms is the switch from normal to revolutionary science; cognitive change in ethnography is the divide between phonemic and phonetic, "emic" (researchers' culture) and "etic" (culture of research). The switch or rather the change of perspectives in the anthropological sense refereed to the ability to reflect on and constantly rethink of what we know and at the same time, to observe and participate. 'To use the metaphor of a painted portrait, contemporary ethnographers are very sensitive to how their use of colour and light will create a particular impression of their subject matter. Of course, many questions come up regarding this context. To expand the metaphor and imagine that you commission three artists to paint your portrait and each returns a different image. One seems to be realistic, another emphasizes your idiosyncratic qualities in an abstract style, and the third returns a satirized caricature that challenges your sense of identity. In judging these works, it is difficult to answer the question: which is the best reflection of who you really are? (Marvasti 2004:37). We can conclude that ethnographic portrayals of other cultures and their people raise similar questions.

There is a path that balances objectivistic requirements with constructionist awareness, where ethnography is as much about the practice of writing as the activity where observing and participating co-creates and constructs social life. Seeds of logical inconsistency can be found in Struan's (2003) interpretation of Polanyi's writings; Polanyi discusses differences within science, naturalism and various rival interpretations of nature (Polanyi 1996; Struan 2003:61). Rival interpretations of nature are embedded in *topoi* where belief is acquired by the process of language acquisition and cultural transmission. Historically, a term neglected and opposed by philosophy, tacit knowledge is indeed a sphere of logical inconsistency, based in intuition and irrational (non-rational?) thought. The act of choice between two incomparable taxonomic structured realities is demonstrated in the writings of Evans-Pritchard *Azande*. For example, witchcraft has its own logic and rules of thought, grounded in logic and coherence of its unique idiom (Evans-Pritchard 1976). Their beliefs function within the confines of their own idiom but face difficulties outside their taxonomically structured perception of reality - they have no other idiom to express their thoughts. The idiom, in which their beliefs are embedded, holds all relevant facts of witchcraft, oracles and magic. So from this point of view, the naturalistic beliefs embedded in rationality of any given idiom will form the foundation of that idiom's scientific thinking (Struan 2003:66). We can conclude that taxonomies of magic and science hold incommensurable modes[x] of thinking and we also know that we can apply a quite opposite logic - generate concepts during research and data analysis and create new theories through combination of these concepts[xi]. But still, this kind of methods and argumentations try to hide the basic

notice, put forward by many theoreticians, like Prus, Atkinson, Hammersley, Garfinkel, Wittgenstein, Davidson etc. Levy-Bruhl[xii] did not suggest that we should put our logic and that of "primitive people" on the same plane. Evolutionists argued that the highest stage of evolution (Western civilization) was characterized by reconciliation between human thought and the real world – primitive logic was therefore condemned as a residue. In contemporary science local paradigms (for example in the paradigm sociology local paradigm is positivism) that challenge generally accepted arguments, doctrines and unspoken rules of scientific enterprise, usually end up as residues, needing extra work and professional initiation.

Answers to the Fact of Incommensurability: Kuhn's Case

What criteria are used in deciding between rivalling interpretations of "reality"? The principle of proliferation, which is reflected in the writings of Polanyi is that chosen premises are more a matter of intuition and consciousness rather than an instrument of argumentation; conversion is the psychological concomitant of logical discontinuity (logical inconsistency). Within the idiom of anthropological idiosyncratic structure, the midway is substituted with the term "ethnographer's magic" (Malinowski 1979), hitherto understood as a principle of proliferation and means of logical inconsistency.

We always need to be aware of the fact that what is idiomatic in one culture, language, morality, can be idiotic in another; in ideal communicative situations where literal translations are assumed to be possible, the gap is estimated as to be zero. But the difference between denotation and connotation, language and translation, is an obstacle (Bryder 2003). As we will see, the term incommensurability, meaning the absence of "common measure" shows that in the case of paradigm P1 and paradigm P2 we are facing the absence ("no common measure") of P3 taxonomy, comparable and shared within taxonomies P1 and P2.

Kuhn develops a different aspect of incommensurability; firstly, in his earlier writings (1962), he uses an analogy with Gestalt shifts (switches) to illustrate that scientists see things in an entirely different way after a revolution (a shift from one paradigm to another), as if they were wearing glasses with inverting lenses (Kuhn 1962: 122), where "no ordinary sense of the term interpretation fits these flashes of intuition through which a new paradigm is born. Though such intuitions depend upon the experience, both anomalous and congruent, gained with the old paradigm, they are nor logically or piecemeal linked to particular items of that experience as an interpretation would be" (Kuhn 1962:123). Similarly, sociocentrism sates that in a case of beliefs that seem strange to us – such as magical beliefs - we almost by definition do not see the reason for it. As Boundon explains, "other more subtle factors go to explain very ancient philosophical tradition, which conceives of knowledge as a sort of reflection of reality in the mind. As soon as one takes this image seriously, one is easily led to explain asymmetrically adherence to a true idea and adherence to a dubious idea – adherence to a true idea will be explained by its objective validity" (Boudon 1997:11). In theorizing and argumentation, the component of rhetoric, persuasion, communication and communicational influence should not diminish. The incommensurability thesis in the stated examples implies that scientists will experience difficulties in evaluating rival paradigms because there are no shared standards and shared concepts among them. (Chen 1997) To avoid irrational criticism of being relativistic without scientific arguments, Kuhn later (1983[xiii]) modified his position. He developed a metaphor based in language: during a scientific revolution, scientists experience translation difficulties (between P1 and P2) when

discussing concepts from different paradigm taxonomy, P1 and P2. This change in paradigms, and/or change in ideas, leads to incommensurability. As a result, incommensurability becomes a sort of un-translatability, where understanding is only achieved by comprehension of both paradigms (bilingualism) where translatability is maximized. To minimize the complexity of taxonomic structures, he later introduces a local notion of incommensurability (Barker 2001:436), claiming that most terms common to two theories function the same way in both and that their translation is simply homophonic, where theory of "kind terms" or core terms is advocated. Kind terms, according to Kuhn, are natural kinds, artificial kinds and social kinds (Kuhn 1991:4), classified as universal similarities, comparable with the cognitive apparatus of human thinking and computer functioning. But, what was once a single conceptual structure (Gestalt paradigm shift) now exists in more versions (introduction of kind terms): the hierarchy before modification of its lowest level, and the hierarchy within the modifications of similar and different classes (language, bilinear oppositions) finally correspond to changes within the objects. As a result, incommensurability in Kuhnian's terms becomes a sort of un-translatability where understanding is only achievable through comprehension of both paradigms (bilingualism) where two lexical taxonomies differ and kind terms remain comprehended as generally the same otherwise one would face complete communication-breakdown. What confirms our thesis that acknowledgement of logical inconsistency, used to bypass the gaps between rational and irrational, implies the adoption of an attitude, which tries to deconstruct and decompose assumptions and personal biased opinions, scrutinizing every research, one is subjugated to, is the articulation of incommensurability as:

- gestalt switch as a consequence of incommensurable taxonomies where commensurability is evolving
- local notion of incommensurability
- bilingualism as a consequence of the gap being continuously filled
- translatability as a consequence of idiomatic variability

Common to these conclusions is Aristotle's statement, that there are many kinds of subjects which cannot, by their very nature, be tackled in a demonstrative mode. They are just approaches using modes of reasoning, which are never without passion of persuasive force. Arguments can provide reasons which are perhaps without objective foundation, but in fact can exert a real causal influence on the beliefs of the speaker or the speaker's audience.

Epilogue: no true causes for beliefs

As we are faced with incongruent descriptions, language theory leadenness and the lack of self-reflection in science in general, sufficiency of common and shared observational language would seem to unblock comparison between theories and observations, using different concepts. Is comparative ethnography, for example, productive, when taking into account that the comparison between observational and theoretical premises is difficult? The question is what do we compare?

Feyerabend would suggest data is infected by our speculation, prejudice, ambition and so forth. But the subject of human science is constituted by human affairs, and the methodology should try to seek tools for strengthening researcher's autoreflexivity[xiv]. Autoreflexivity (autoetnography) is an essential part of every research[xv]. (The psychoanalyst Theodor Reik once wrote a book called *Listening with the Third Ear.* It is a kind of manual for self-reflection to be accomplished by people

who interview and who must adhere to the principle that one never interviews a person, but a person who is being interviewed[xvi]).

Tacit knowledge can be summarized by the following sentence: 'We know more than we can tell'. The idea that knowledge is propositionally oriented is underscoring the inner relationship between knowledge and language, epitomized primarily in ancient Greek's Socrates proposition "that what we know we must surely be able to tell" (Plato 1961:133) is the direct opposite of tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge as something that cannot be articulated verbally but still can be articulated by other means (motion, paralinguistic forms of communication etc.) shows the hidden meanings we are faced with in every research. Tacit knowledge has been interpreted in many different ways (gestalt analogy, epistemic regionalism, strong thesis of tacit knowledge), where the core message is undoubtedly one: there is more to theory of knowledge than an eye can meet. Even though many theoreticians search the theory of knowledge, the subject is still fresh and alive. The problem is not in the amount of monographs investigating the question of knowledge; the problem is the ignorance of incommensurable facts, being given to the professionals.

Within the comparative principle where samplings of interpretation meet, the interpretation gap (incommensurability) should be minimized, but I believe it is not. Entropy, defined as chaos (high entropy) or order (low entropy) caused by this sort of manipulation, is questionable. A comparative approach of different interpretations might have produced a coherent argument of "what was going on in Samoa", but this sort of coherence could well miss the substance of "what is going on". With comparison we achieve universality but also a weakened partiality of interpretation. But comparison is still a form, a system (form, instrumental) opposed to Lebenswelt (substance, communicative reality), where Lebenswelt is colonized by the system. (Habermas 1979 and 1995) The two studies in Samoa might come to a common consensus about the certain point, but the system entropy (a specific methodological tool) could cause the lack of the substance of "what was really going on".

The image, science portrays when neglecting auto ethnography (psychoanalysis), is an image of prejudice-free discipline, searching for stories that have never been told, a systematic tool, needed to be taken into account when a young researcher forms his/her academic/scientific profile (this is to an extent also the case with postmodernist writers, who are too concerned about the self-presentation and pure subjectivity related to personal autobiography). Within that kind of methodological apparatus we are facing a severe intellectual dogmatism, where just a few researchers question their topoi in the strict sense of the word. Another dilemma is benevolence of field-work process (Stocking 1983: Observers observed; Van Mannen 1988: Tales of the field) or report on how the field was influenced by researchers' presence, ideas and influence where one should emphasize ethical and moral dilemmas when "going native"?

Scientific community has been often able to capitalize on well known facts among social scientists, that several concepts indispensable for their disciplines are inherently vague, by substituting methodology for mysticism, theory for wild guess and empirical facts for wishful thinking and conjectures (Bryder 1998), the future research should avoid false reasoning and establish causal induction, acknowledging that sociology of science must analyze scientific ideas through many coexisting models, not just referring the assumption about who has been directly or indirectly influenced by whom / since human mind can address coherent ideas via incoherent theoretical schools or intellectual upbringings. Constructionism, or, precisely, relativism has been used in Kantian terms as the theory of knowledge of indispensable nature of a priori in any knowledge process. Relativism in general

terms has become a kind of alternative to scepticism, where knowledge has a vague regulative function, since it depends on the viewpoint where one is situated. The relativism in sociology and philosophy of science, called sceptical relativism, dealing with scientific facts and constructions of science in general, is undeniable.

The idea of what science is - the consensus adoption, relevant to the scientific community and optimal to policy makers - interpreted as a portrayal of knowledge is being constantly negotiated. The rise of natural science is obvious, since the world no longer needs an ideology; the world needs outputs of any kind. The question how to bypass incommensurable gaps is a question of personal involvement and biased opinions, where the majority of researchers is aware of the issue but is ignoring the gaps. Since we all know that "rationality" and "science" are constructs, even tough we live in a scientific century, centred on the potentials of human power in logic and reasoning, the definition of science is in some respects more problematic today than at the time of its early institutionalization and what really counts is the quantity of articles, quantity of conferences, where the core problem of incommensurability remains unsealed: auto reflexivity is beyond self marketing, dedicated to the analysis of what can be a "real" and sufficient image of reality we construct every moment we enter the world as we comprehend it.

Endnotes

i The classic example in anthropology is the interpretation gap between field workers Mead and Freeman and their conclusions about sexual freedom of young adolescents in Samoa (Geertz 1993:347; Schwartz 1983: 928; Mead 1961; Freeman 1983)

ii Dichotomies in sociology are determinism vs. voluntarism, structure vs. action, positivism vs. interpretivism etc., where classics such as Comte, Durkheim, Marx, Parsons vs. Weber, Garfinkel, Husserl, Schutz can be found.

iii The idea of common sense reality is not universal, but particular to every culture, or society. Example: the colour white is perceived by Inuit's in more than 20 different ways.

iv Positivism perceives reality from an objective point of view. Positivism is perceived as objective and free of senses, but in neglecting the reality of emotions, we neglect the true substance of social sciences, *the human perspective*. In the real world, emotions and senses are an integral part of our concepts of reality. In some of the traditional studies of political culture, emotions were taken into account, together with cognitions and calculations of chances. This is for example the case in the works of Sidney Verba and Gabriel Almond, who were influenced by Malinowski and Clyde Kluckhohn (see Almond and Verba 1989)

v The philosopher Bertrand Russell once asked a lady with whom he had diner, if she was willing to go to bed with him if he paid her 1 million pounds. She said that she would consider it. He then went on, "would you do it for two pounds?" She became annoyed and then said, "Do you mean to imply that I am a prostitute?" To which Bertrand Russell said, "We have already established that. Now we are negotiating the price".

vi Contextualism has been theoretically as well as practically introduced by Bronislaw Malinowski in 1915. Contextualism is conceived as context-relative and sensitive in epistemology of science. The main tenet of contextualist epistemology is the orientation when attributing knowledge, what matters, are

multileveled contexts we exist in at the moment which create the notion of knowledge.

vii "Anything goes" in common terms suggests that anything is possible (Welsh 1993). The term used in Feyerabend's work *Against Method (1975),* shows that hidden meanings are unfolded through the proliferation principle, where additional statements and clauses are taken into inductive and deductive argumentation, whereas the model of contra-induction is introduced.

viii The term highlights several prominent themes where established knowledge is testable (see Kuhn 1962:37)

ix Certainly, theories and practices do not begin and end within one discipline; scholars share and are influenced by their colleagues' ideas and that is why it is sometimes difficult to determine when one school of thought begins and another ends.

x Magical beliefs are explained by the fact that primitive people conform to a system of thought different from our own.

xi Which is called Grounded Theory Methodology (Strauss and Glaser 1967)

xii Early twenty-first-century discussions that attempt to characterize the forms, or modes of thought in different cultures, as well as their reliance on magic, often retrace debates around the work of Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1857–1939). His ideas have implications for a series of complex questions concerning the way culture can shape thought, providing an individual with either limitations or extended possibilities. Levi-Bruhl proposed that there was a major distinction between the thought of European and preliterate people, which he termed primitive "mentality". He stressed that the difference was due to the content of the ideas and causal understandings in culture, and was not the product of different mental capacity. He termed the modes of thought that characterized each as scientific and pre-scientific (or pre-logical), respectively. He proposed that "primitive" societies tended to use mystical or supernatural explanations for unexpected occurrences. He contended that this form of thought does not permit a kind of logic that challenges or tests it. The thought process has an internal consistency and rationality, but does not follow the rules of scientific thinking and does not differentiate between what Levi-Bruhl called the natural and supernatural.

xiii In *Commensurability, comparability and Communicability* in P. Asquith and T. Nikles, eds.) PSA 1982, Vol. II, Philosophy and Science Association. East Lansing, pp. 669-688.

xiv Autoethnography is a type of self-ethnography that uses experiences of the researcher as a source of data process through which one presents himself and is perceived by others. Gender, race, ethnicity etc. are immediately noticed by others in social interaction and, depending on the culture of the setting, are viewed as important markers of one's identity (Marvasti 2004:50)

xv According to anthropologist Benedikte M. Kristensen the roles, ascribed to participant-observation enrolment, are transparent: "The clown position gave me insights, but it was also an obstacle, since it defined me as a child, who was not permitted to discuss serious questions of cosmology" (Kristensen 2004). With further field adaptation, she was seen as presumably having inherent qualities of shamanistic spirit, since she was regarded as an oracle.

xvi Brown (1984: 2) has etymologically traced the concept of empathy in the evolution of the split between natural and humanistic scientific cultures. According to Brown one characteristic (though not invariable) of the Counter-Enlightenment is the belief of thinkers that the "meaning" of a social situation can

only be discovered by imaginative sympathy on the part of the interrogator, by his entering into, or feeling into, the projects, emotions, and thoughts of the participants. This special ability was given many names during the nineteenth century: empathetic understandings, sympathy, Einfühlung, are only three of them. The ability was always contrasted with ordinary analytic reason of the kind employed in logic, science, and technology. Thus there were to be at least two major areas of human knowledge, *Naturwissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft*, and two different abilities or procedures or methods of enquiry which were appropriate to their respective areas of knowledge.

References

AAA (1998) Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association. Retrieved July 2007 (http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm)

Agassi, Joseph (2003) "Comparability and incommensurability." *Social Epistemology* 17(2&3): 93-94

Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba (1989) *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Bachelard, Gaston (2002) *The Formation Of The Scientific Mind: A Contribution To Psychoanalysis Of Objective Knowledge*. Manchester: Clinamen.

Barker Peter (2001) "Kuhn, Incommensurability, and Cognitive Science." *Perspectives on Science* 9(4): 433-462

Beck, Ulrich (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.

Beck, Ulrich, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash (1994) *Reflexive modernization*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Bell, Daniel (1990) "Resolving the Contradicitions of Modernity and Modernism." *Society* 27(185): 43-75.

Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann (1999) *Modernity, Pluralism and the Crisis of Meaning*. Bertelsmann Foundation Publisher.

------. (1991) *The Social Construction Of Reality: A Treatise In The Sociology Of Knowledge*. London: Penguin Books.

Boudon, Raymond (1997) *The Art of Self-Persuasion*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brown I. Harold (2005) "Incommensurability Reconsidered." *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 36(1): 149-169

Bryder, Tom (2005) *Stereotypes, Ethic Prejudice and Catharsis In Political Jokes And Graffiti*. Unpublished manuscript.

------. (2005a) "Political Hypes: New trends in the psychology of political advertising and propaganda." Paper presented at 3rd ECPR Conference "Political Psychology", Budapest, September 8-10.

------. (2003) "The Political Psychology of Conditional Jokes." Paper presented at the Annual Scientific Meeting, International Society of Political Psychology, Boston Plaza, July 5-10.

------. (1998) *The Human Face of Politics*. Copenhagen: The Political Studies Press.

Chen Xiang (1997) “Thomas Kuhn's Latest Notion of Incommensurability.” *Journal for General Philosophy of Science* 28(2): 257-273.

Dilley, Roy, Ladislav Holy, Sandor Hervey, Elzbieta Tabakowska, Johannes Fabian, Mark Hobart, Brian Morris (1999) *The problem of context*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Encyclopedia of Social Measurement (2005) Volulme 3. Boston: Elsevier Inc.

Evans-Pritchard, Edward (1976[1973]) *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande.* Oxford: Claredndon Press.

Feyerabend Paul (1992) *Three dialogues on knowledge.* Oxford: Blackwell.

------. (1975) *Against Method*. London: NLB.

Freeman, Derek (1983) *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Geertz, Clifford (1993) *The Interpretations of Culture*. London: Fontana Press.

Habermas, Jűrgen (1995) *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

------. (1979) *Communication and the Evolution of Society*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Harré Rom and Krausz Michael (1996) *Varieties of Relativism*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.

Heyl, Barbara (1977) “The Madam as Teacher: The Training of House Prostitutes.” *Social Problems* 24: 545-555.

Hung Edwin H.C. (2001) “Kuhnian paradigms as representational spaces: new perspectives on the problems of incommensurability, scientific explanation, and physical necessity.” *International Studies in The Philosophy of Science* 15(3): 275-292.

Irzik Gürol and Teo Grünberg (1998) “Whorfian Variations on Kantian Themes: Kuhn's Linguistic Turn*.” Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 29(2): 207-221.

Jacobs, Struan (2003) “Two sources of Michael Polanyi s prototypal notion of incommensurability: Evans-Pritchard on Azande witchcraft and St Augustine on conversion.” *History of The Human Sciences* 16(2): 57-76

Kristensen, M. Benedikte (2004) “The Living Landscape of Knowledge: An analysis of shamanism among Duha Tuvinians of Nothern Mongolia.” Online article. Retrieved March 2008(http://www.Anthrobase.com/Tyt/K/Kristensen_B_02.htm)

Kuhn Thomas (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lakatos, Imre and Alan Musgrave, editors (1970) *Criticism and The Growth of Knowledge*. London: Cambridge.

Malinowski, Bronislaw (1922) *Argonavti zapadnog Pacifika*. Beograd: BIGZ.

Marvasti, B. Amir (2004) *Qualitative Research in Sociology*. London: Sage.

Mead, Margaret (1961 [1928]) *Coming of Age in Samoa*. New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks.

Polanyi, Michael and Harry Prosch (1975) *Meaning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Polanyi, Michael (1998) *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Pos-critical Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Povinelli A. Elizabeth (2001) "Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and inconceivability." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30: 319-334.

Sapir, Edward (1994) *The Psychology of Culture*. Berlin-New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Schwartz, Theodore (1983) "Anthropology: A Quaint Science." *American Anthropologists* 85(4): 919-929.

Silbert, M.H. and Pines, A.M. (1984) "Pornography and sexual abuse of women." *Sex Roles* 10: 857 - 868.

------. (1983) "Early sexual exploitation as an influence in prostitution." *Social Work*, 28:285-289.

------. (1982) "Victimization of street prostitutes." *Victimology* 7(1-4): 122-133.

------. (1981) "Sexual child abuse as an antecedent to prostitution." *Child Abuse and Neglect* 5: 407-411.

Smelser, Neil (2003) "On Comparative Analysis, Interdisciplinarity and Internationalization in Sociology." *International Sociology* 18(4): 643-657.

Sankey Howard (1991) "Incommensurability, translation and understanding." *Philosophical Quarterly* 41(165): 414-127.

Tedlock, Barbara (2000) "Ethnography and ethnographic representation." Pp. 455-486 in *Handbook of qualitative research*, edited by N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Toulmin, Stephen (1958) *The uses of argument.* New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Welsch, Wolfgang (1993) "Postmoderna." Pp. 20 - 55 in *Postmoderna ili borba za budućnost*, edited by Peter Kemper. Zagreb: August Cesarec.

Citation

Mulej, Lucija (2008) "Construction of Scientific Facts – Why is Relativism Essential in Bypassing Incommensurable Gaps in Humanities. Case of Personal Involvement – Biased Scientific Facts." *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review – Book Reviews
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Iza Desperak
Lodz University, Poland

Book Review: The Scientific Reproduction of Gender Inequality. A Discourse Analysis of Research Texts on Women's Entrepreneurship by Helene Ahl. Liber, 2007, pp. 235

As the title suggests, the book focuses on the phenomenon of reproduction of gender inequality. Moreover, the field of the study is research articles, an area usually considered objective and free from ideologies or superstitions. Research results are one of the pillars of sociological reliability, and empirical research seems to be a reliable basis and test for theoretical reflection. Research concerning gender issues is especially expected to be bias - free. The study of Helene Ahl reveals deeply rooted bias in such writings. The author also calls her book "a critical study", as she proves, research articles need such critical approach.

The book is divided into three main parts. The first part presents a necessary theoretical foundation. The second part presents the analysis. The following part is not only a summary of the findings - it ties together theory and results and draws some guidelines for both further research and future writing and publishing of research articles - at least those concerning gender issues.

After reminding to the reader the basics of feminist theories and different grounds for feminist research, the writer comes to the subject of entrepreneurship as gendered. She also calls out the idea of feminist deconstruction. She uses this approach to analyze the construction of discourse concerning female entrepreneurship - which means the study and comparison of the discourse of entrepreneurship and the discourse of "woman". It is not surprising, that these two discourses are opposite ones, the discourse of entrepreneurship is closer to men and a construct of masculinity, and woman and feminity are defined in categories that are very distant from the definition of entrepreneurship. As the subject of entrepreneurship is usually described as: a market activity, done for profit, in private sector, being innovative and giving a chance of change and some risks, while its opposites are not-trading activity, non - profit, public sector, traditional and offering stability and safety; feminity is being described as opposite to entrepreneurship and masculinity is being defined as a mirror reflection of entrepreneurship. According to famous Bem's scale of masculinity and feminity, an entrepreneur is viewed as self - centred, mentally free and able, strong willed, able to withstand opposition and firm in temper (the features very similar to characteristics of a male); whereas the features associated with feminity are rather connected to those opposite to "entrepreneur words", such as: loyal, sensitive to the needs of others, gentle, shy, yielding or gullible.

To conduct such an analysis Helene Ahl applies Foucault's concept for discourse analysis. The description of research process is begun by presentation of

the objectives for selection research texts. Few leading research journals in the field of management and organization have been chosen; mainly four entrepreneurship research journals, as: “Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice”, “Journal of Business Venturing”, “The Journal of Small Business Management”, and “Entrepreneurship and Regional Development”. All the journals belong to discourse community defined by the author as: based on blind reviews process and using some disciplinary rules of describing entrepreneurship, resulting in regulative effect onto the discourse. The analysis material was expanded by additional thirteen articles published in other journals that were taken into account. They were included into analysis because of frequent citations, proving their influence onto the discourse. Finally, 81 articles from 1982 and 2000 were analyzed. They covered topics such as: personal background and firm characteristics, attitudes to entrepreneurship or intentions to start, psychology, start - up processes, management practice and strategy, networking, family, access to capital and performance. The most common research question in those texts was related to differences between male and female entrepreneurs. The analysis results show how female entrepreneur is being constructed in such writing. It reveals that writers’ interest in female enterprises was caused by their impact onto the markets, not from positions of interest in equality issues. Entrepreneurship is being defined as male feature - the words with a masculine connotation are equated with entrepreneurship, whereas the words with feminine connotations are associated with weakness. The world of entrepreneurship is being described through opposition of strong and weak sides, correlating with male and female bodies. Three strategies were used in this discourse of diversity and inequality: firstly, it was focused on small difference and ignoring the similarities. Another strategy was to declare women entrepreneurs as exceptions compared to regular women. The third strategy was to mould an alternative: a motherly entrepreneur. Such strategies resulted in polarisation in portrayal of entrepreneurs, with male figure as a norm, and female as an exception.

The research also focused on constructing the work and family. The results show that division into public and private sphere exists also in research articles on entrepreneurship, and strong gendering of the two spheres is not avoided. Men’s place in the public sphere is not unquestioned, and it is the woman who is thought to adapt to her husband’s fixed schedule, and the task of caring for small children is regarded as the woman’s responsibility. Women’s entrepreneurship means rather challenge in combining private and public, family and career, or as a chance to combine those two opposite spheres. Men are excluded form such an alternative, and women seem to be devoted to both spheres, as public childcare is excluded from the discourse, although the question of flexibility arises. Entrepreneurship is generally viewed as positive value and experience, and women are advised to adapt to double burden by adapting themselves, and not to question the general rules.

Such scientific reproduction of gender inequality in the sphere of entrepreneurship is based on some discourse practise, revealed through the analysis. Entrepreneurship is male gendered, even though thought as neutral. Although entrepreneurship and the sphere of business are defined as good ones, one should remember that men and women are essentially different, as public and private sphere of life. The ideology if individualism, one of the basic roots of ideology of entrepreneurship, supports differentiation, as analyses quoted and conducted usually concentrate on individual aspects, individual biographies and tend to omit social context and aspects. That is why the power perspective is lost, as well as the processes of social change excluded from analysis.

As a result, women entrepreneurs are being described in research articles as "something else", i.e. something compared to male entrepreneurs. Such vision is based on stereotypes, not clear data findings, and fail to observe changes in gender roles and their definitions in contemporary culture. Increasing number of women entrepreneurs cannot be described and explained by old category of "exception". Women, who gain and advance in real world of entrepreneurship, do fail in scientific discourse on entrepreneurship. It does not mean that men automatically gain in this discourse. Instead, the traditional social order is being supported discursively, with the idea of male entrepreneurship supported by the idea of women entrepreneurs as 'unusual' women.

From the feminist point of view (defined by the author as recognizing women's subordination to men and wanting to do something about it) such study results should be used not only to criticize, but also to modify the practice. The writer suggests two ways to achieve such an objective: the expansion of the research object and some shift in epistemological position. As a current research object is usually defined by individual focus and essentialist assumptions, the new perspective should cover more factors, use contingency studies and also comparative methods. Current epistemology based on looking for female construction of business and lives of businesswomen should be replaced by new approach, including studies on how social orders are gendered and of the mechanisms by which this gendering is reconstructed. Such new approach should result in improvement, feminist theories and feminist - based research can enrich current research perspectives, and should be included not only into theoretical reflection, but also into current research. Feminist perspective adds equality perspective - invisible in material researched by Ahl, and encourages including the issue of power relations. Women's entrepreneurship should be described - concludes Ahl - differently, and suggests expanding both the resarch object and epistemological perspective. Such conclusion corresponds with new policies of gender mainstreaming aiming to obtain equality or - at least - avoid inequality. Ahl's analysis shows that even research articles need more equality approach and should abandon inequality discourse. It shows that from gender perspective blind - review system is neither bias - free, nor fair, and suggests its revision.

Citation

Desperak, Iza (2008) "Book Review: The Scientific Reproduction of Gender Inequality. A Discourse Analysis of Research Texts on Women's Entrepreneurship" *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review – Book Reviews
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Izabela Slezak
Lodz University, Poland

Jakub Niedbalski
Lodz University, Poland

Book Review: Dirty Work. The Social Construction of Taint by Shirley K. Drew, Melanie Mills and Bob M. Gassaway. Baylor University Press, 2007, 272 pp.

The book edited by Shirley K. Drew, Melanie B. Mills and Bob M. Gassaway is a collection of articles concerning the ambiguities inherent in the concept of a "dirty work". Usually regarded as stigmatized, the "dirty" occupations are sometimes related to low prestige and very often to hard, unpleasant tasks and activities. Yet they are necessary to guarantee an appropriate standard of life, to which we have become accustomed. This is why it is essential to learn more about everyday work of people who are doing for us and instead of us these dirty tasks.

The main focus of the book is on how people working in particular occupations construct and reconstruct the understanding of their jobs and its value, especially if it is a dirty work. The term "dirty work", introduced in 1951 by E. Hughes, refers to tasks and occupations that are likely to be regarded as disgusting or degrading. Although these kinds of work have to be done, the society stigmatizes people who do it, which is why the dirty work is connected with physical, social and moral taint (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999). The physical taint appears in case of job connected with dirt, garbage, death, bodily fluids and dangerous conditions. The social taint appears when a job requires from employee a servile relationship to others or regular contact with stigmatized people; and the moral taint occurs when the occupation is generally regarded as sinful or of doubtful morality. These categories of taint are not exclusive; therefore, the "dirtiness" is rather a social construction than an objective feature of the work. The employees in order to manage taint connected with their work construct several taint-management strategies. Applying these strategies to everyday practices and interactions help to reframe dirty tasks as valuable and to concentrate on positive aspects of the job.

The book is a good example of application of "dirty work" conception to the ethnographic research conducted in various fields. The book is divided into three main parts: "Taint Management Ethnographies", "Case Studies" and "Conclusions".

The first part (chapters 1 to 7) focuses on the results of ethnographic studies in different research areas. In the first chapter, „Doing Justice", Shirley K. Drew introduces the reader to the world of everyday activities of lawyers and judges working in the criminal justice system in southeast Kansas. During the eight months of participant observation, "hanging around" in courthouse, analyzing documents

(court documents, newspaper articles) and conducting semi-structured and unstructured interviews with the counsels for the defense, public prosecutors and the judges, the Author collected a detailed data, which allows her to present a quite different picture of legal professions than the one known from popular media broadcasts. Describing courtroom proceedings, interactions between judges, defense attorneys and prosecutors the Author emphasizes the existence of social and moral taint connected with these occupations (dealing with murderers, drug users and child abusers). What is of great value for a reader not familiar with occupational culture of legal professions, is description of rituals (observed in language, nonverbal behaviors, and dress code), storytelling, humour (inside and outside of the courtroom) and everyday conversations between members of this community, which allow them to manage taint associated with their occupation.

Second chapter, entitled "Dirty Work and Discipline behind Bars", written by Sarah J. Tracy and Clifton Scott presents daily work of correctional officers in prison. What is worth mention is that this particular perspective is different to most of social studies concerning rather prisoners then prison guards, whose work is often disregarded.

According to the Authors, everyday duties of the prison officers fall into the category of dirty work. This work is physically dirty due to unfriendly environment (constant threat of violence, in some cases even death threats), engagement in materially dirty and disgusting activities, such as cleaning up after the inmates, conducting strip search, managing the inmates who try to hurt themselves and rape or assault other inmates. Also relationships with people who are already stigmatized can cause a social taint. Moreover, the prison guards are sometimes regarded by outsiders as similar to the prisoners (contagion effect), which is considered as a moral taint. On the one hand, the officers are often described as deviants, malicious, brutal or stupid; on the other hand they are also labeled as babysitters and "glorified maids" who make inmates lives too easy. To examine closely misunderstandings surrounding the "dirty work" of prison officers, the Authors present organizational practices and interactions associated with the correctional work and taint management techniques used by the officers (reframing, recalibrating, refocusing, distancing, differentiation, and blaming the client).

For some readers it could be surprising, that the next chapter, "Riding Fire Trucks and Ambulances with America's Heroes" by Clifton Scott and Sarah J. Tracy, related to the firefighters, was published in this book. Firefighting is one the most respected jobs and it is unusual to regard this work as a "dirty" one. Regardless of good salaries, public trust and esteem connected with this occupation, firefighters have to manage tainted tasks, clients and material filth in their everyday experience. They work in dangerous conditions, have to deal with death, mutilated bodies and bodily fluids, and respond to false alarms and "shitbums", that often evoke physical taint. Analyzing ways in which firefighters construct and sustain preferred interpretations and meanings of their work, the Authors present the taint management strategies, such as selective social comparisons, refocusing by celebrating manliness and dominant sexuality.

"Without Trucks We'd Be Naked, Hungry and Homeless" – this mantra of truck drivers became a title of a chapter written by Melanie Mills. In contrast to firefighting, this occupation does not have a high social status and people who work as truck drivers often find themselves misunderstood, unappreciated, and defamed by general public. They are physically tainted because their job is associated with dirt, grease and dangerous conditions and the social taint, they have to manage day by day, arise from a low prestige of this occupation. Moreover, the truckers also have to

deal with a moral taint as they are suspected of dubious behavior (breaking the rules on the road, using drugs and alcohol, prostitution). This is clearly seen in the most popular images of truck drivers widely portrayed in a popular media, also described in this article: trucker as rebel, white knight, brute monster, concrete sailor, "American cowboy", "King of the Road", and a professional/small businessman. Identifying with a chosen image truckers pursue a strategy to manage their taint. The Authors also mention procedures of identity management and the process of creating professional culture through sharing the "war" stories during the truck stops and learning the rules of CB conversations.

The next chapter, "Bitching about Secretarial "Dirty Work" written by Patty Sotirin concerns the secretarial work "dirtiness" as a results of its specific character and its social perception. Public opinion often diminishes the value of secretarial work, which is regarded as trivial, although necessary. Secretaries are even called office servants and treated as invisible. In fact, they are in a servile position in relation to anyone who makes a legitimate demand on their service. Moreover, they are often regarded as morally suspected, because of the lies or half-truths they are telling in order to avoid unwanted visitors and save the boss's time or cover up his mistakes. Sometimes they are even perceived as lovers of their bosses. To deal with the taint connected with their work, they elaborated a specific form of office talk - *secretarial bitching*. Unfortunately, the bitching carries its own social stigma and that is why secretaries fail to effectively reclaim dignity of their work using this method.

The chapter entitled "Bedpans, Blood, and Bile. Doing the Dirty Work in Nursing" is written by Melanie Mills and Amy Schejbal. Most of us would accept the status of "dirty work" given to this occupation. Nursing is physically tainted due to close contact with bodily fluids, functions as well as accompanying stench and possible personal danger. Nurses "see people at their worst" (p. 119) and the Authors present some examples of disgusting, terrifying and even dangerous tasks, which nurses complete every day. This occupation is also socially tainted because of the servile nature of this work, either in relation to the patients or doctors and administrators. What is more, the social skills of nurses have not always been highly valued since nursing has traditionally been considered as a feminine job, and that is why it has lower prestige and salaries than, for example, doctors. This occupation is also morally tainted because of depictions of nurses in the pornographic films, which results in sexual proposals from doctors and patients. The Authors also described the taint management strategies observed in this environment, such as using humour in everyday interactions and constructing a social support system, which allows developing a strong organizational culture and helps to deal with the difficulties of this job.

In this chapter the Authors begin with a brief history of nursing and social development of this occupation. They consider the role of technology and changes in the public perception of personal responsibility for health management and health care. The role of professional spaces (physical, psychological, online, and third spaces) and material artifacts (tools, dress, gloves, masks, texts and language, titles) in the social construction of definition to be a nurse is considered as well. Unfortunately, the Authors fail to examine in detail methodological aspects of their research, especially the one they call "research as a mode of friendship".

The last chapter in this part of the book written by Stephanie Poole Martinez is „Crack Pipes and T Cells. Use of Taint Management by HIV/AIDS/Addiction Caregivers". This chapter in based on a yearlong participant observation at Alexian Brothers Saulus Place as a volunteer, twenty-five hours of conversation and fourteen open-ended ethnographic interviews with employees of this institution. Undoubtedly,

the employees of the residential transitional environments for people living with HIV/AIDS and addiction are doing the dirty work connected with physical, social and moral taint. They establish relationships with stigmatized people (due to living with HIV/AIDS, for being addicts, homeless and living in poverty), who are often regarded as deserving condemnation or violent treatment. That is why the employees apply specific taint management strategies to promote a positive occupational identity. The Author describes such strategies as reframing (e.g. working in this institution as paying back for the things the worker had done in the past), recalibrating ("I am saving people's lives by working at Saulus Place") and refocusing (e.g. on fundraising – transforming their "dirty work" into "good work") and additional one, which is using of dark/silly work-related humor within the community.

The three subsequent chapters of the book present a characteristic of American administration of justice focusing on the activity of the police, which is the crime scene investigators working on crime scene as well as the occupation of forensic pathologist. All these professions are classified into the category of "dirty work" due to the character of activity and peculiarity of situations in which these duties are carried out, thus direct contact with a dirty (blooded, reeking and hideous looking) things, objects and the socially marginalized people (offenders, criminals, druggists, prostitutes and homeless) or the inspection the scenes of cruelty, violence as well as crime scenes.

Chapter eight, entitled "Good Cops, Dirty Crimes", by Bob M. Gassway, shows the world of crime scene investigators and how these technically skilled specialists in police department cope with physical, social and moral taint. The article is based on a two-years ethnographic studies on crime scene investigators, during which the Author participated in more than two dozen death scenes, saw an autopsy and spent a lot of time observing the work of crime scene investigators in the Criminalistics Unit of the Albuquerque Police Department. Under the impressive titles of some paragraphs, such as "The Dirty", "Smelly Crime Scene", "Dead on the Trash Heap", "Disposing of the Body" the Author gave vivid accounts of frightful facts, e.g. searching the wreckages of the human body, blooded objects or pictures of victims of a crime. It follows that the taint is caused not only by the direct presence in a crime scene but also by the contact with objects of crime, photos from the place of crime or blood samples, even, if they were found in the laboratory conditions. One also should not overlook the fact that informal behaviors and rituals exhibited during crime scene investigations and the role of informal language, euphemistic formulations and phrases as well as the specificity of humor of the crime scene investigators, are equally important. Finally, the Author shows methods of taint management, which may have a physical (e.g. protective clothes), social (the consciousness of socially useful work) and moral (e.g. humor, joke) aspect.

Chapter nine "Cops, Crimes, and Community Policing" (by Shirley K. Drew and Mendy Hulvey) link to the previous one, describing the work of the Pittsburgh Police Department (PPD), where Authors carried out ethnographic studies directly participating in the service activity of a policeman. Showing the history of Pittsburgh and its Police Department, the Authors go beyond the social image presented by media and deliver contradictory, but empirically grounded picture of the police. Searching for a positive social image the Pittsburgh Police introduced a public strategy called "Community Policing", based on active participation in the life of local community and direct contact with its members as well as pleasant, careful and polite bearing. In the opposition to this, the "Professional Policing" style based on hard rules and a focus on enforcement the law. Pursuing public strategy of "Community Policing", the police created positive social identity. However, regardless of police

efforts, this occupation will be always perceived as dirty, because it is connected with such circumstances as: solving crimes, contact with socially marginalized groups or individuals, presence in crime scenes. The Authors describe strategies adopted to cope with physical, social and moral dirt, taking also into account the role of humor as a interactional tool for managing taint in a policeman work.

In the tenth chapter, entitled "The Death Doctors", readers are introduced to the world of forensic science. In an attempt to answer the question of how the forensic pathologist manages everyday contact with dead bodies, the Author carefully examines the secrets of his/her work, in which the most important is to resolve two fundamental problems: *What was the cause of death?* and *What was the manner of death?* Vivid descriptions of autopsy allows the reader to feel like participating in the event, showing the difficulty of this work, which results from permanent and direct contact with the carcasses (often in poor condition) and risk of disease infection. This socially useful occupation, which allows identifying of criminals or preventing from spreading of dangerous diseases, requires excellent qualifications, but becomes a source of ennoblement for the person who does it.

The two last chapters are integral part of the book, joining previous articles together in a logical and coherent way. In eleventh chapter the ethnography itself is described as a dirty work. This part of the book presents the reader with a compilation of discussion between the Authors of included articles focusing on specific features of ethnographic studies. What is essential is that ethnography involves physical presence and a direct contact with persons in investigated social setting. Those places are often inhabited by socially marginalized people (homeless, disabled etc.), but the physical presence therein is only one reason of the ethnographer's tainted work. The moral dilemma concerning the ethical responsibility for conducting study, concealment of true identity of the researcher or disclosure of any information about the private life of the observed people also contribute to the taint ascribed to ethnographer`s work (Humphreys 1970). Another reason is marginalization of qualitative research in the academic field. Despite the fact that ethnographical studies are based on elaborated rules and methodological principles, the information negating the true science of these is often presented. According to Authors, it seems necessary to elaborate some strategy helping ethnographers to cope with the problem of dirty work. The researchers need to strike a balance between data presenting examined fragment of the reality and ethical principles, implied in a concern for other people.

In the last, twelfth chapter, the reader will find a summary of the book with detailed explanation of methodological issues connected with conducting ethnographic studies, and the reasons that led researchers to use this particular (sometimes time- and labor-consuming) method. The the Authors emphasize the advantages of ethnography for in-depth examination of people`s lives, especially in regard to the problem of dirty work and dirty occupations. As they argue, we need to bear in mind that dirty work, although ungrateful and with many physical, social, moral and psychical difficulties, is socially useful and often a necessary condition for the existence and preservation of the social order.

The book "Dirty Work" is considerably interesting, reflective study on life experience of people, who perform useful work, but often are socially stigmatized. Its strong points are clearly presented categories of dirty work with detailed descriptions and reasons of taint of particular occupations as well as methods and strategies of protection against the physical, social and moral taint. This book is a valuable source of information regarding the usefulness of ethnographic methods as well as its position in present social sciences. For a careful reader, this book may become an

unusually fascinating and stimulating lecture, provoking to a deeper reflection over the problems of stigmatized professions and application of ethnographic methods in research practice.

Although "Dirty Work" edited by Shirley K. Drew, Melanie B. Mills and Bob M. Gassaway is an obligatory reading for every researcher interested in the problems of work and occupations, it can also be interesting for lawyers, correctional officers, fire fighters, truckers, secretaries, nurses, and everyone, whose work involves an element of dirtiness.

References

Ashforth Blake, and Glen Kreiner (1999) "'How Can You Do It?': Dirty Work and the Challenge of Constructioning a Positive Identity." *Academy of Management Review* 24 (3): 413-34

Hughes Everett (1951) "Work and the Self." Pp. 313-323 in *Social Psychology at the Crossroads,* edited by J. Rohrer and S. Muzafer. Oxford: Harper.

Humphreys Laud (1970) *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*. Chicago: Aldine

Citation

Slezak Izabela and Jakub Niedbalski (2008) "Book Review: Dirty Work. The Social Construction of Taint." *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review – Book Reviews
Volume IV, Issue 4 – April 2008

Waldemar Dymarczyk
Lodz Universtiy, Poland

Book Review: Maids to Order in Hong Kong. Stories of Migrant Workers by Nicole Constable, Cornell University Press, 2007, 242 pp.

The book *Maids to* Order in Hong Kong. Stories of Migrant Workers is a result of field research the Author, Nicole Constable, has conducted since mid-1990s. This anthropological and historical study of the lives of Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong is based on many sources of data. Constable visited organizations that advocate foreign workers (mutual-aid societies, religious missions, trade unions), met with staff of some employment agencies, talked to government officials and above all, she led many interviews and conversations with maids. As a support to the oral histories and observations she gathered a lot of archival documents: scientific and popular literature, newspapers, articles, editorials, newsletters and papers.

As Constable announces "the first three chapters of this book provide theoretical and historical background and place Filipino domestic workers within the context of wider political economy". This part of the book presents the reader with an excellent use of the archival data. In the sub-chapter "The Battle of Chatter Road" (p. 3-8), which itself is a good example of discourse analysis, the Author shows how xenophobia, racial and cultural prejudices are supported by media and local establishment because of demographic and economic changes. Next pages inform the reader about the main reason of Filipino migrations to the Hong Kong and "how particular local, cultural and historical factors have influenced attitudes toward Filipino domestic workers and their treatment in Hong Kong today". What is interesting, is that present attitude toward maids has its roots in the tradition. A lot of Hong Kong's employers still keep in their minds an image of the "ideal" contemporary Chinese servant (amah) who, in the past, was rather a member of a family then a salary worker. No doubt that this symbol serves to control present maids, as it locates this occupation in a specific, cultural context. Thus, one of the main advantages of this part of the book is a strong historical background and multicultural archival data.

The next three chapters describe how employment agencies, government and law regulations control and disciplin foreign domestic workers, how maids become docile; powerless and passive. Investigation of the methods used to discipline their bodies seems to be the most important issue. The Author shows how the process of recruitment and selection is oriented to mold women into docile domestic workers, becoming unconscious victims. "Applicants are fitted into uniforms, examined, photographed, x-rayed, measured and evaluated" (p. 74), thus making the role of a maid fully standarized. Maids have to accept very detailed regulations such as: an obligation to be patient, polite and respectful to all people in a family of the employer,

never complain about a salary, never go out without permission or not to attend any religious rituals other than simple prayer at night (p. 84-85). All these practices turn home workers into “standardized products” for trade. Certainly, the book profits from a very detailed analysis of agencies, employers and government control over domestic workers. Unfortunately, Constable does not describe sufficiently the process of becoming a maid from the point of view of a potential maid. For a one, becoming docile and disciplined has got a processual character, but we do not learn much about this process from the book.

The last three chapters examine everyday forms of maids` docility and resistance. Constable stresses that domestic workers are not simply the subject of institutionalized forms of power. The Author writes: “to regard these woman simply or solely as pressed by those “with power” is to ignore the subtler and more complex forms of power, discipline, and resistance in their everyday lives” (p. 202). Maids are disciplined not only by their employers, agencies or governments but also by themselves. Constable, for example, investigated Tining Filipino – popular magazine, written mostly by domestic workers. Many articles suggest workers “should find satisfaction “from within”, rather than address the conditions of their oppression” (p. 187), often invoking personal and national pride, obligations toward (their) family support and of course, debts to pay. Just as docility, resistance may take many forms, from demonstrations and public actions to less overt acts like jokes, pranks or assertive behaviours. The use of humour as a form of therapy symbolically reverses the roles of employers and maids. Being assertive and, for example, taking an advantage of the English language fluency domestic workers can control their employers. The last chapters provide the reader with examples of excellent ethnographical work as the Author concentrates on everyday life and everyday language and investigates different levels and meanings of ordinary behaviours and attitudes. It could be interesting, how problems of domination, docility and resistance are perceived by other side of the “drama” - employers. Yet the Author fails to address this point sufficiently.

Summarizing, in spite of some critics the Maid to Order in Hong Kong is an interesting and in many parts an excellent example of ethnographic account of domestic workers everyday lives. I do agree with the opinion placed on the back cover: “This ethnography is an indisputable contribution to both Asian studies and anthropology and a pioneering work in the field of transnational migration studies”. The book is worth recommendation.

Citation

Dymarczyk, Waldemar (2008) “Book Review: Maids to Order in Hong Kong. Stories of Migrant Workers” *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Qualitative Sociology Review – Book Reviews
Volume IV, Issue 1 – April 2008

Lukas Marciniak
Lodz University, Poland

Book Review: Multiple Case Narrative. A Qualitative Approach to studying multiple populations by Asher Shkedi. Studies in Narrative 7. John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2005, 210 pp.

In the last decades, narrative inquiry has been systematically developed as an independent and promising branch of qualitative research, useful for wide range of researchers including those practicing sociology, social anthropology, linguistics, education, psychology and related disciplines. The consequences of such popularization are twofold. On the one hand, researchers interested in narrative studies try to construct substantial basis for the approach, distinguishing many orientations towards narrative connected with a variety of schools of social thought and specifying common paradigmatic roots which are responsible for the existence of so called narrative tradition and its history among other research methods. On the other hand researchers, especially those focused on practical aspects of the approach, pay much attention to application of multiple techniques of data gathering and analyzing as well as their possible combinations in order to create more useful, multi-purpose or problem-oriented research method. The book written by Asher Shkedi seems to accomplish these goals and move beyond with a proposal of new research strategy based on the author's experience in the field of narrative research.

The structure of the book renders these purposes. First three chapters deal with theoretical foundations of qualitative research in general, ontological, epistemological, methodological and cognitive issues common for all research approaches and basic also for narrative inquiry and a research strategy proposed by Shkedi, called Multiple Case Narrative. The author introduces assumptions of the approach with respect to other existing methods and general social research methodology, shaping uniqueness of multiple case narrative mostly through comparison with methods for studying multiple populations like collective case study, case survey or meta-ethnography. These theoretical considerations make ground for step-by-step guide to applying presented strategy. Next nine chapters are devoted to the principles, types, combinations and innovations of data collection, analysis and integration into a research report. Almost all aspects of qualitative research practice are discussed, including a role of a researcher and his/her relationship with those under study, characteristics of observation and interview techniques, types and stages of analysis, connection between empirical findings and theories and finally suggestions for writing research reports. In the last chapter, author raises other well-known questions for qualitative researchers, questions concerning validity, reliability

and possibility of generalization, aiming to formulate standards of trustworthiness in accordance to the constructivist approach and multiple case narrative.

The whole book and all separate chapters aim to emphasize uniqueness of introduced strategy; offering new principles of doing narrative research but more often proposing new understanding of already established and developed prescriptions for qualitative research. Among many visible references to other methods, one inspiration seems to be most influential, shaping the process of data analysis and the whole research logic of the multiple case narrative, that is grounded theory methodology. Reading about a categorization as a way of analysis, about naming in the initial stages, mapping categories and properties, generating the core category and its sub-categories or constructing theoretical categories, it is easy to identify linkage with both classic and constructivist grounded theory procedures. Such reference gives a strong methodological basis but at the same time raises a question about real uniqueness of the strategy introduced in the book. What is new then? Shkedi aims to create a method which combines strengthens of qualitative and quantitative research strategies. The method with constructivist background and positivistic accuracy, which provides in-depth analysis and deals with large samples at the same time. For some readers, such method might be something they look forward, a smart mixture of quality and quantity in social research. For others, the method which is simultaneously wide and in-depth will be doubtful. It is not clear enough why multiple cases are better than single and it might be surprising to read about “correlations between categories” especially for an interpretive social researcher skilled in conceptualization.

Nevertheless, the book is a good overview of contemporary qualitative research strategies, methodological problems and procedural solutions. It will be useful for beginners and experienced researchers, as a source of guidelines, examples and inspirations for conducting case studies and narrative research in all fields and within multiple specializations.

Citation

Marciniak, Lukas (2008) “Book Review: Multiple Case Narrative. A Qualitative Approach to studying multiple populations.” *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. IV Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)

Contributors

Robert Prus, a professor of sociology at the University of Waterloo, is a symbolic interactionist, pragmatist ethnographer, and social theorist. Stressing the importance of connecting social theory with the study of human action in direct, experientially-engaged terms, he has written extensively on the ways that people make sense of and deal with the life-worlds in which they find themselves. His publications include *Road Hustler* with C.R.D. Sharper; *Hookers, Rounders, and Desk Clerks* with Styllianoss Irini; *Making Sales*; *Pursuing Customers*; *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research*; *Subcultural Mosaics and Intersubjective Realities*; *Beyond the Power Mystique*; and *The Deviant Mystique* with Scott Grills. Working as an ethnohistorian and theorist, Robert Prus has been tracing the developmental flows of pragmatist thought from the classical Greek era (c700-300BCE) to the present time. This transhistorical venture has taken him into a number of areas of western social thought -- including rhetoric, poetics, religious studies, history, education, politics, and philosophy.
Contact: prus@uwaterloo.ca

Deborah Ben-Shir is a lecturer at the department of Education and Psychology of The Open University of Israel. Her research interests focus mostly on self-identity, creativity and education.
Contact: dvorabe@openu.ac.il

Katarina Jacobsson is an Assistant Professor of sociology at the University of Lund (Department of Social Work). Interested in social control, rhetoric, narrative practices, and the sociology of deviance, she has studied 'the world of the deaf', and the Swedish legal system and its handling of cases of domestic violence and corruption. The concept of "objectivity work" is further examined in her present qualitative research project on medical decision-making.
Contact: katarina.jacobsson@soch.lu.se

Jack Fong (PhD) is currently a new Assistant Professor of Sociology, in the Department of Psychology and Sociology, at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Dr. Fong's interests as a political sociologist revolves around issues of ethnicity and race identities, ethnopolitics, and its material consequences. Dr. Fong's interest in ethnicity is derived from America's continuing efforts at redefining itself as different groups reshape the multicultural landscape of the country's rich identities, especially in the context of September 11, 2001. He has already published in Ethnic and Racial Studies. Moreover, his international orientation has also resulted in a historical ethnography based from his field research with the Karen people residing in their state Kawthoolei, and fighting the infamous military regime of Burma. This work will be released as a book via Universal Publishers, Boca Raton, Florida, USA, in mid-June 2008. It is titled Revolution as Development: The Karen Self-Determination Struggle against Ethnocracy from 1949-2004, and is currently entering the final stages of editing.
Contact: jackfong@csupomona.edu

Giampietro Gobo (PhD) is Associate Professor of Methodology of Social Research at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Milan. He teaches also Ethnography, and Evaluation Methods. He co-edited (with C. Seale, J.F. Gubrium and D. Silverman) *Qualitative Research Practice,* Sage (2004). His last textbook is *Doing Ethnography*, Sage (2008).
His current research interests are dealing with 'workplace studies' and CSCW (computer-supported cooperative work). Currently he is conducting ethnographic and discourse analysis studies in call centre, mainly in Italian Medic Emergency Dispatch Centres.
Contact: giampietro.gobo@unimi.it

Lori McNeil is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus. The majority of McNeil's research focuses on issues typically related to women, children and other marginalized groups. Her recent work has been featured in the *Journal of Applied Sociology, Michigan Sociological Review* and *The Journal of Children & Poverty.*
Contact: lori.mcneil@liu.edu

Caroline Pearce is a Sociology Masters student at the University of Manchester. She is currently undertaking research into the experience of grief following the death of a mother in adolescence in young women's narratives. Her central research interests are narratives, grief, meaning and memory.
Contact: caroline.pearce@yahoo.co.uk

Sang-hui Nam (PhD) is a sociologist and research fellow at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg. Her research interests include cultural studies and qualitative methods. She is currently working on the project "Innovation and Contention: Protest Waves in South Korea (1988-2005)". The project focuses on innovative processes in the civil society (i.e. citizen journalism, transnational collective action). She is planning the next research project about the formation of a regional identity in East Asia.
Contact: nam@giga-hamburg.de

Krzysztof T. Konecki is a Professor of Sociology, chair of Organizational and Management Sociology Department, Lodz University, Poland, Vice - President of Qualitative Research Network of European Sociological Association. His major research areas are: qualitative sociology, grounded theory, symbolic interactionism, visual sociology, sociology of management and organization, sociology of work, organizational symbolism, Japanese culture and management, human-non-human-animals relationships.
Contact: konecki@uni.lodz.pl

Peter Nugus (PhD) is a medical sociologist in the Centre for Clinical Governance Research, Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales, Australia. He researches on the sociology of health organizations, professional identity and integrated care. Peter is a Research Fellow on the Interprofessional Learning Project and is based in the ACT Department of Health, the Centre's industry partner, in Canberra.
Contact: p.nugus@unsw.edu.au

Lucija Mulej (PhD) is a fellow researcher at the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (www.zrc-sazu.si). She is working at the Section for the Interdisciplinary Research in Humanities. She is a head of international office specially committed to European projects and politics. Her research interests are sociology and sociology of science, especially the theories of knowledge and creativity. She teaches at the University of Nova Gorica (Science and the media, Social Ecology). Recently she has published a manual *"A Way to Brussels or How to Win a European Project in Humanities"* together with prof.dr. Oto Luthar and mag. Martin Pogacar.
Contact: lucija.mulej@zrc-sazu.si

Author-Supplied Abstracts & Keywords

Robert Prus
University of Waterloo, Canada

On the Pragmatics and Problematics of Defining Beauty and Character: The Greek Poet Lucian (120-200) Engages Exacting Portraitures and Difficult Subjects

Although best known as a satirist of the classical Roman era, Lucian's (c120-200CE) Essays in *Portraiture* and *Essays in Portraiture Defended* provide considerable insight into the problematics of people knowing and defining objects (along with the consequential and related matter of people sharing their definitions of reality with others).
Engaging notions of admiration, beauty, and character in these two statements, Lucian not only faces the task of establishing viable frames of reference for linguistically defining the essence of a woman deemed to be particularly beautiful and gracious but also assumes the challenge of defending one's preferred definitions of particular subject matters from others who do not share these views.
Whereas Lucian uses the works of prominent sculptors, painters, poets, and philosophers as reference points in articulating beauty and grace, this paper also acknowledges the perils of people who sincerely express their viewpoints on others even when these descriptions of others are cast in clearly positive terms.
Lucian may be a lesser-known classical Greek (Syrian) author, but he is an astute observer of human endeavor. Lucian's work on portraiture also has a striking cross-cultural and transhistorical relevance for a more enduring pragmatist emphasis on human knowing and acting. Not only is Lucian (a) explicitly attentive to the necessity of people establishing frames of reference for describing objects to others in meaningful terms, but he also overtly recognizes (b) the multiple viewpoints that people may invoke with respect to describing particular objects, (c) the resistances that people may encounter from others, and (d) the importance of speakers articulating the foundations for their claims amidst contested notions of reality.
Approached from an interactionist perspective (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969; Strauss 1993; Prus 1996, 1997, 1999), wherein attention is given to the more general matters of people acquiring perspectives, defining objects, and sustaining particular notions of reality, this paper uses Lucian's materials on portraiture as a cross-cultural and transhistorical resource both for assessing (and qualifying) existing interactionist conceptualizations of human group life and for suggesting some more particular areas of inquiry to which contemporary scholars may attend.

Keywords: Lucian; Beauty; Character; Art; Reality; Definition; Language; Resistance; Symbolic interaction

---

Deborah Ben-Shir
The Open University of Israel, Israel

Born to Write: Discovery and Construction of Self in the Identity Stories of Poets and Writers

The explorative study hereby presented is based on in-depth interviews with 16 renowned Israeli writers of prose and poetry. The aim of the study is to examine the identity-stories of these masters of the written word. By the term "identity-story", we relate to the self-reflective or "ars-poetic" sides of the life stories our interviewees presented, the hows, whens and whys which had brought them to realize their identities as their cultures' authorized authors or poets. Thematic analysis of these stories, conducted in the spirit of the Schutzian Phenomenological-Interpretive approach, reveals an interesting interplay of two seemingly

contradictory core meta-themes - identity-creation and identity-discovery. The present paper is focused on the identity-discovery meta-theme. Unlike the identity- creation meta-theme, which illustrates active, deliberate and conscious processes of identity construction within the social world, the identity-discovery meta-theme is based on narratives that detect the belief in the feasibility of a transcendental revelation of a given identity, whose roots lies beyond the ties of time and place.

Keywords: Self-identity; Life stories; Phenomenological - interpretative approach; Writers; Poets; "I" & "Me"

Katarina Jacobsson
Lund University, Sweden

"We Can't Just Do It Any Which Way" – Objectivity Work among Swedish Prosecutors

Objectivity is a principle widely acknowledged and honoured in contemporary society. Rather than treating objectivity as an *a priori* defined category to be tested empirically, I refer to the construction of objectivity as it is accomplished in practice as "objectivity work" and consider how Swedish prosecutors in interviews make and communicatively realize (i.e. "make real") its claims. In analyzing two facets of objectivity work – maintaining objectivity and responses to objectivity violations – seven mechanisms are identified: appeals to (1) regulation, (2) duty, and (3) professionalism; responses to violations by (4) incantations of objectivity, (5) corrections, (6) proclamation by contrast, and (7) appeals to human fallibility. Directions for future research emphasize cross-cultural and cross-occupational comparisons, not only within the judiciary as objectivity is of a general concern in any area where disinterested truths are claimed. The concept of objectivity work allows one to study how various actors bring principle into everyday life.

Keywords: Objectivity work; Prosecutors; Accounts; Ethnomethodology; Constructionism; Sweden

---

Jack Fong
California State Polytechnic University, USA

American Social "Reminders" of Citizenship after September 11, 2001: Nativisms and the Retractability of American Identity

My discussion considers how crisis dramatically changes social relationships and interaction patterns within a multicultural context. Specifically, I note the inherent social asymmetry of multicultural configurations, thus rendering it vulnerable for the dominant ethnic/racial group, the *ethnocracy*, to exact symbolically and materialistically punitive measures against minorities during periods of national crisis. I situate my discussion of dramatically changed social interactions in the post-September 11, 2001 period, when the attacks on the World Trade Center towers triggered nativism against Arab Americans, or any group phenotypically similar to the construction of "Arab." I note how this nativism is not new but is a historical and consistent articulation of the ethnocratic stratum that retracts the American identity and notions of citizenship away from minorities during times of national crisis. The discussion concludes with how American multiculturalism is still full of unresolved ethnic and racial symbolisms that hark back to nineteenth century attempts by the White power structure to idealize, culturally and phenotypically, the constitution of an "ideal" American.

Keywords: Racism; Nativism; Multiculturalism; Ethnocracy; Ethnicity; Identity; Citizenship

Giampietro Gobo
University of Milan, Italy

Crafting Blindness: Its Organizational Construction in a First Grade School

This article is based on a case study conducted in an Italian primary school where the interactions between a sightless girl (named Jasmine, aged 8) and her classmates were extensively observed. The initial aim was to understand and describe the problems encountered by the sightless pupil, who acted in a social, organizational and physical environment which was not designed for handicapped people. However, other theoretical issues emerged during the research. The main finding was that sightlessness seems socially and organizationally constructed before it becomes a biological/physical handicap. The organizational processes through which the blindness is slowly and routinely constructed were extensively described.

Keywords: Blindness; Social construction; Disability studies; Organization; Grounded theory; Ethnomethodology; Ethnography; Ergonomics

---

Lori L. McNeil
Long Island University, CW Post Campus, USA

Applying Institutional Ethnography to Childcare

This research applies institutional ethnography to childcare by employing participant observation, interviews and text examination at two childcare research sites. The initial focus of this work describes the daily happenings in childcare utilizing a grounded theory approach and makes connections between what happens in childcare and the structures and institutions that dictate those experiences. The construction of work was found to be a major contributor to childcare experiences. I conclude with an examination of U.S. childcare policy and suggestions for improving these policies and offerings.

Keywords: Institutional Ethnography; Childcare; Work and Family; Social Policy

---

Caroline Pearce
University of Manchester, UK

World Interrupted: An Autoethnographic Exploration Into the Rupture of Self and Family Narratives Following the Onset of Chronic Illness and the Death of a Mother

Informed by the developments in autoethnography, narrative analysis and biographical sociology this paper seeks to affirm that understanding our narrative enables self-understanding and more importantly enables the understanding of others. Using an autoethnographic approach this paper explores the rupture in self and family identity following two traumatic events: the onset of a chronic illness (Multiple Sclerosis) and the death of a mother. It is the story of the life of my mother, who suffered with MS for 9 years and the story of my sister and myself, who cared for her throughout our childhood up to her death in 2000. The rupture in identity that we suffered interrupted the world in which we lived and exposed the contents of our individual and collective world(s). The themes that emerged from the narratives in this study suggest rupture is experienced as a movement of transgression that leads to movements of regression and progression.

Keywords: Autoethnography; Rupture; Narrative; Identity; Story; Transgression; Regression; Progression

Sang-hui Nam
German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Germany

The Construction of Self-Identity in the Chronically Mentally Ill: A Focus on Autobiographic Narratives of Mentally Ill Patients in South Korea

A systematic policy for treatment and management of chronic psychiatric patients in South Korea was begun with the passage of the Mental Health Act in 1995. The mentally ill patients who were previously separated from the society now have opportunities to live in local communities under medication with the help of rehabilitation facilities. This study aims to understand how mentally ill patients deal with their new medical environment. An autobiographic narrative analysis is methodically applied in order to link the social and the individual levels. Autobiographic narratives of illness show how the patient's self-identity is formed and further developed according to the chronic conditions of his illness and the continual learning from experiences. In regard to the construction of self-identity, two aspects should be taken into consideration: First, medication is absolutely necessary before patients can leave the hospital and participate in rehabilitation programs. Secondly, social integration is usually evaluated by the return of the patient into a normal biographical stage. It turns out that medication deprives the patients of control over their emotions, their bodies. Furthermore, their social environments – including family, friends and the labor market – work against them. Under these circumstances, mentally ill patients are liable to adhere to their own interpretation of mental illness, and what they experience is far different from the expectations of experts in the field. The new mental health environment also contributes to the formation of patient communities. As a result, chronic psychiatric patients are able to build their own subculture and to see themselves through their own eyes. Further studies are needed to explore whether and to what extent the ongoing improvement of social conditions for mentally ill patients has an impact on autobiographic narratives and self-identity construction.

Keywords: Psychiatry; Chronic mental illness; Autobiographic narratives; Biographical methods

---

Krzysztof Tomasz Konecki
Lodz University, Poland

Grounded Theory and Serendipity. Natural History of a Research

The paper deals with the issue of "serendipity" (which constitutes the context of discovery) in field research and the analysis of data by using the grounded theory methodology. The thesis of the paper is: the methodology of grounded theory is naturally associated with serendipity. We describe two aspects of serendipity in grounded theory: 1. substantive, and 2. theoretical. We present in the paper serendipity phenomenon by using the case of research on the "social world of pet owners". We show how the research is developed by a sequence of decisions being made by researchers. The process of emergence of the main analytical category, subcategories and the whole theoretical construction during the long time of the field research and theoretical group analysis is presented, as well as the procedure of coming to unanticipated theoretical conclusions. It was all possible because of the interactional character of serendipity happening during the research in grounded theory style of investigation.

Keywords: Grounded theory; Serendipity; Qualitative sociology; Field research; Natural history of research; Sociology of interaction; Social world; Human-animals – non-human animals interactions; Anthropomorphization of animals

Peter Nugus
University of New South Wales. Australia

The Interactionist Self and Grounded Research: Reflexivity in a Study of Emergency Department Clinicians

This paper shows how the theory of symbolic interactionism shaped a grounded investigation of the organizational labor of Australian Emergency Department (ED) clinicians. Further, it shows how symbolic interactionism supports reflexive criteria for validating grounded research. Using ethnographic methods across two metropolitan EDs, interactionism's emphasis on roles applied equally to the relationship between researcher and participants as to the relationships among participants. Specifically, the researcher generated data by positioning interactionism as the mediator of the emergent relationship between researcher and participants. The results of this positioning were: a traceable path from understanding to interpretation and the search for consequentiality rather than truth. Interactionism facilitated the co-production by the researcher and participants of limits on the generalizability of the data. The paper is an argument for symbolic interactionism as a means not merely to generate sociological findings, but to conceptualize the impact of the researcher on the grounded research process.

Keywords: Symbolic interactionism; Reflexivity; Self; Emergency Department; Grounded theory

---

Lucija Mulej
Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia

Construction of Scientific Facts – Why is Relativism Essential in Bypassing Incommensurable Gaps in Humanities. Case of Personal Involvement – Biased Scientific Facts

This paper addresses the theory of knowledge in relativistic terms of Paul Feyerabend, stressing the importance of personal involvement in the research and theorizing. Since the topic is a constant and widely accepted premise the author is insisting that it has been actually ignored in the sociology and philosophy of science. It is apparent in discursive form, neglected in actual consequences for science in general. Defending the thesis of relativism had remained unacknowledged by the general scientific community. Biographies of mavericks and their struggle and exclusion from scientific community etc. had been constant in the history of science. Is science nowadays able to accept criticism and implement arguments of knowledge beyond the institutionalized standards?
Throughout this article we argue that personal involvement creates biased scientific facts; acknowledging and applying tacit knowledge we move beyond personal involvement and create appropriate interpretations of facts and phenomena under investigation, where we reconsider the construction of facts and personal beliefs, knowing that our fields of expertise are incommensurable.

Keywords: Comparative methods; Interdisciplinary research; Paradigm (gestalt) shift; Relativism; Incommensurability; Psychoanalysis; Interpretative gaps; Epistemology; Logical inconsistency; Logic

---

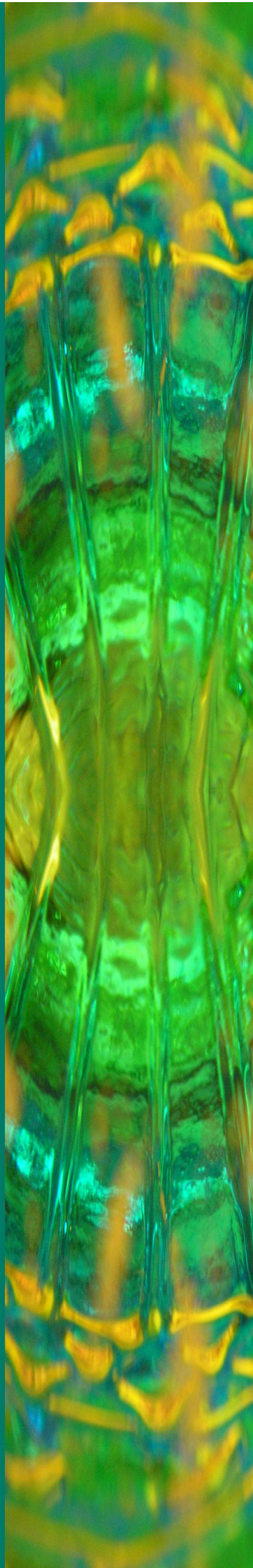
QSR

Available Online
www.qualitativesociologyreview.org

For all sociologists for whom interpretative paradigm and qualitative research methodology are basic perspectives of studying social reality.
In order to enable a free flow of information and to integrate the community of qualitative sociologists.

EVERYWHERE ~ EVERY TIME

Volume IV ~ Issue 1
April 30, 2008

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Krzysztof T. Konecki
ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Anna Kacperczyk, Slawomir Magala
EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Lukas T. Marciniak
COVER DESIGNER: Anna Kacperczyk

ISSN: 1733-8077