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## Poetic Expression and Human Enacted Realities: Plato and Aristotle Engage Pragmatist Motifs in Greek Fictional Representations

### **Abstract**

Poetic expressions may seem somewhat removed from a pragmatist social science, but the history of the development of Western civilization is such that the (knowingly) fictionalized renderings of human life-worlds that were developed in the classical Greek era (c700-300BCE) appear to have contributed consequentially to a scholarly emphasis on the ways in which people engage the world.

Clearly, poetic writings constitute but one aspect of early Greek thought and are best appreciated within the context of other developments in that era, most notably those taking shape in the realms of philosophy, religion, rhetoric, politics, history, and education.

These poetic materials (a) attest to views of the human condition that are central to a pragmatist philosophy (and social science) and (b) represent the foundational basis for subsequent developments in literary criticism (including theory and methods pertaining to the representation of human enacted realities in dramaturgical presentations).

Thus, while not reducing social theory to poetic representation, this statement considers the relevance of early Greek poetics for the development of social theory pertaining to humanly enacted realities.

### **Keywords**

Poetics; Fiction; Classical Greek; Plato; Aristotle; Pragmatism; Symbolic Interaction; Representation; Reality; Literary Criticism

On the surface, it may seem odd that poetic expressions or knowingly fictionalized representations of human situations from the classical Greek era (c700-300BCE) have fostered pragmatist conceptions of community life, but this appears to have been the case.

Indeed, while not proposing that poetic representations be envisioned as viable substitutes for the social science enterprise, the roots of a *sociological* theory of community life may be more appropriately located in some fictionalized texts and analyses thereof that date back to Homer, Plato, and Aristotle and others of the

classical Greek era than in the 19<sup>th</sup> century writings of Comte, Durkheim, Marx, and Weber. This claim may be unsettling to some, but one finds considerable "sociological" acuity in this realm of Greek literature.

Also, whereas this immediate discussion focuses on "poetics," somewhat parallel arguments can be made for the relevance of classical Greek considerations of rhetoric, religion, philosophy, ethnohistory, politics, and education for a more adequate sociological approach to community life (Prus 2004, 2007a, 2008a).

Developed from a larger, interactionist-informed (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969; Prus 1996, 1997, 1999; Prus and Grills 2003) project that focuses on the relationship of theory to humanly known and enacted realities over the millennia, the present statement is notably partial and vastly understates the significance of the broader corpus of classical Greek literature for contemporary social science.

Recognizing that many readers will have only vague familiarities with the early Greek literature, I have tried to contextualize this material in more general terms. Those more familiar with this material will find that I have exercised little "poetic license" in developing this statement. Focusing on pragmatist thought as signified by *linguistically informed intersubjectivity* and *human enacted realities*, I have relied most centrally on sources that attend to these matters in more explicit (vs. inferential) manners.

As used herein, the term *poetics* refers to knowingly fictionalized representations of things that are intended to have some entertaining qualities. Messages may be presented verbally or developed as texts to be read by audiences. Also, the linguistic statements embedded within may be presented more exclusively on their own or they may be supplemented by other sensory-enabled mediums, such as actions, physical items, sounds or other artistic productions. At a more minimalist level, however, poetic representations differ from other artistic expressions (as in shapes, images, motions, sounds) in that poetic materials are centrally reliant on *linguistic* communications.<sup>1</sup>

Notably, thus, while poetic text may be integrated with a seemingly unlimited range of other mediums, it is the deployment of language as an intentional, intersubjective (even if problematic) form of relating to the other that most centrally distinguishes poetics from other expressive representations (such as artwork, photography, movements, music) that may somehow be shared with others. Still, here, as with oral or written text more generally, it should not be assumed that poetic ventures will be interpreted by audiences in ways that the producers of these communications may have intended.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas all instances of poetic expression presume some knowledge claims, and the most effective fictionalizations may well be those that more extensively incorporate (other) elements that audiences would consider to be sincere or authentic, it is expected that poets would have some freedom or license to represent situations in ways that are knowingly distorted or inauthentic. Poetic representations are not expected to adhere to the requirements of rigor and accuracy normally associated with philosophy, science, law or other attempts to sincerely and closely approximate instances and/or analysis of "what is."

For our purposes, it is comparatively inconsequential whether "poetic" materials are presented in verse, rhyme, or prose. Also somewhat irrelevant, at a base-line level,

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<sup>1</sup> See Dewey (1934) and Becker (1982) for two notably extended considerations of art worlds and people's involvements therein.

<sup>2</sup> It may be observed that all representations are fictionalized in some way; that representations cannot completely capture all essences of the matters that are signified without actually being that which is signified. However, the emphasis here is on those representations that are knowingly misconstrued and intended to have some entertainment value.

are considerations about the length of these statements, the emotive tones (e.g., epic or heroic, tragic, comic) expressed, the number of speakers involved, the subject matters (humans or other objects) that become focal points of these endeavors, and any associated contextual features (e.g., settings, objects, appearances, sounds, motions) that may be invoked to generate particular effects.

Some poetic expressions may be self-directed or appreciated exclusively by the author, but the more general inference is that these statements would provide a means of connecting the thoughts of the author with the mind(s) of the other.

Further, although poets may assume that audiences derive meanings from these communications that correspond with the author's own thoughts, no claims of this sort are made in this statement. Indeed, the connections between intentioned meanings and assigned meanings are presumed problematic in practice.

## **Symbolic Interactionism: Premises and Practices**

While many readers may be familiar with aspects of interactionist thought (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969, Strauss 1993; Prus 1996, 1997, 1999; and Prus and Grills 2003), it is important to establish a set of shared reference points for examining the relevance of classical texts on poetics for the study of human knowing and acting.

Denoting a sociological extension of American pragmatic philosophy associated with Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and (especially) George Herbert Mead, symbolic interactionism may be seen to rest on premises of the following sort.

1. *Human group life is intersubjective.* Human group life is accomplished (and made meaningful) through community-based linguistic interchange.
2. *Human group life is knowingly problematic.* It is through group-based linguistic references (shared symbols and associated concepts) that people begin to distinguish realms of "the known" and (later) "the unknown."
3. *Human group life is object-oriented.* Denoting anything that can be referenced (observed, referred to, indicated, acted toward, or otherwise knowingly experienced), objects constitute the contextual essences of the humanly known environment.
4. *Human group life is (multi) perspectival.* Objects do not have inherent meanings, but take on meanings as people act toward particular things. As particular groups of people engage the world on an ongoing basis, they develop the viewpoints, conceptual frameworks, or notions of "whatness" that serve as the foundations of their senses of reality.
5. *Human group life is reflective.* It is by taking the perspective of the (community-based) other into account with respect to one's own being that people become "objects unto themselves" (and act accordingly).
6. *Human group life is sensory/embodied and (knowingly) materialized.* Among the realms of humanly knowing "what is" and "what is not," people develop an awareness of [the material or physical things] that others in the community recognize. This includes appreciations of the [sensory / body / physiological] essences of human beings (self and other). This involves acknowledging human capacities for stimulation and activity as well as practical (enacted, embodied) limitations and fragility.
7. *Human group life is activity-based.* The interactionists approach human behavior as instances of a meaningful, instrumental or purposive process. Not only is activity

seen as “something in the making,” but human endeavor also is envisioned in anticipatory, reflective, and adjustive terms.

8. *Human group life is negotiable.* Because meaningful human activity is so interwoven with people’s interactions with others, people commonly define, anticipate, and strive to influence others *as well as* accept and resist the influences of others.
9. *Human group life is relational.* People define or make sense of others and themselves (as objects) within group contexts. People act mindfully of, and in conjunction with, the identities they assign to others and themselves.
10. *Human group life is processual.* Human lived experiences (and activities) are viewed in emergent, ongoing, or temporally developed terms. Human group life, thus, is considered in process terms, within the developmental flows of activities (and the interchanges thereof).
11. *Human group life takes place in instances.* Community life is best known through an attentiveness to the particular occasions in which people engage things. Conceptions of human experience are to be developed mindfully of, and tested against, the particular occasions or instances in which people attend to and otherwise act toward self, other, and other objects of their awareness. The associated methodological emphasis, thus, is on studying “what is” by examining the instances in which any and all aspects of community life take place.

What most distinguishes the interactionists from the pragmatist philosophers is the interactionist insistence (following Blumer 1969) on the use of ethnographic research as the essential methodology for achieving substantive familiarity with the actualities of human knowing and acting. Relatedly, interactionist conceptualizations of community life are to be informed by, tested through, and adjusted in ways that are attentive to sustained instances of ethnographic inquiry. The objective, hence, is to develop increasingly more viable understandings of community life by ethnographically examining instances of human group life in broad arrays of life-worlds and using sustained examinations of the instances therein as the foundations for comparative analyses in assessing and adjusting earlier conceptions of human knowing and acting.

Given these theoretical and methodological emphases, it may seem unusual to refer to materials that have been developed over two thousand years ago by people who seem quite removed from contemporary developments in the social sciences. However, as may become more apparent as this statement unfolds, contemporary pragmatist and interactionist theory, as well as the human sciences more generally, are very much indebted to classical Greek thought.

Not only is American pragmatist philosophy grounded in the scholarship of Plato and (especially) Aristotle, but a somewhat broader Greek attentiveness to depictions and analyses of human knowing and acting very much resonates with interactionist scholarship (Prus 2003, 2004, 2007a, 2008b). Thus, following a consideration of some especially pertinent classical Greek texts and a highly abbreviated commentary on some subsequent developments in poetics, the paper concludes with an assessment of conceptual linkages between the ways in which human group life is portrayed in this literature and contemporary interactionist emphases.

## Foundational Emphases

As with so many other features of Western scholarship, Plato (420-348BCE) and Aristotle (384-322 BCE) emerge as particularly prominent figures in conceptual considerations of poetics. Still, it is instructive to begin some centuries prior to Plato and Aristotle, acknowledging a broader, albeit, less analytically explicit set of writings.

While Homer and Hesiod are generally taken as the earliest and most consequential Greek poetic authors of record, others notably include the playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, and Menander. Given the parameters of the present statement, only very brief references will be made to their works.

### *Homer's Iliad and Odyssey*

Whereas notions of fictionalized representations appear basic to all known human communities and clearly predate any written records those peoples may have developed, it may be adequate to begin our consideration of classical Greek poetics with *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These are two rather extensively developed "epic" (heroic account) poems attributed to Homer (c700 BCE).

*Iliad* and *Odyssey* are intense, adventurous, and complex accounts of people's experiences as they attempt to deal with matters of group life, personal honor, and physical survival, amidst an assortment of superbeings and very human (and mortal) others.

*Iliad* is developed around the experiences of a Greek warrior/champion, Achilles, a mortal superhero who encounters dramatic battlefield challenges with the Trojans. Still, Achilles also faces the tasks of coming to terms with the interests and maneuverings of a set of (immortal) gods as well as Achilles' own (less than honorable, but very human) Commander-in-chief, Agamemnon.

Presumably taking place after the Trojan War, *Odyssey* revolves around the trials and triumphs of (a Greek) King Odysseus who following a shipwreck initiated by the gods, finds himself thrust into a series of highly novel but mortally perilous adventures. After a series of incredible adventures, Odysseus eventually makes his way home. However, given his prolonged absence (during which time he is presumed dead), Odysseus now has to deal with those who have tried to take advantage of his queen and his position during his voyage.

While among the first, extensively preserved, written Greek texts, these two volumes depict a great many aspects of community life, both through author account and extended character dialogue.

Situated within developmental sequences or processes, the human interchange depicted in *Iliad* and *Odyssey* revolves around the matters of adversity, deliberation, agency, deception, affection, loyalty, morality, persona, mortality, and ongoing adjustment. Thus, whereas *Iliad* and *Odyssey* not only have inspired a great deal of classical Greek literature and have been treasured on a variety of literary bases by scholars familiar with their contents, these texts also represent particularly significant reference points for those embarking on scholarly considerations of things "human."

## ***Hesiod's Theogony***

While both Homer and Hesiod appear to have generated extended intrigues in religious and entertainment sectors of Western social thought by involving an assortment of gods and superheroes in their writings, it is Hesiod (c 700BCE) who developed a genealogy of the gods and stipulated their interrelatedness with one another and the human world.

Hesiod discusses some matters of divine revelation and interplay in *Work and Days*, but it is in *Theogony* that Hesiod develops these religious motifs in more sustained and comprehensive terms. Claiming instruction from the nine muses or daughters of Zeus, Hesiod's *Theogony* represents one of the most consequential instances of religious fiction in antiquity. Early Greek polytheism may be indebted to Egyptian and eastern sources, but Hesiod specifies the origins, evolution, roles, and relationships of some three hundred Greek gods.

Although Zeus and the Olympian gods (notably including *Poseidon*, *Hades*, *Hera*, *Hermes*, *Athena*, and *Apollo*) appear to have received the most attention, Hesiod's genealogy is much more extensive and multifaceted. Hesiod provides an account of the origins of the gods, beginning with *Chaos*. *Eros* (Desire) and *Gaia* (Earth) followed Chaos as also did *Tartarus*. Following an incredible assortment of matings and interchanges (alignments, conflicts, and violent encounters) among the gods and their exceptional progeny, it is *Zeus* – through his wisdom, courage, and heroics, who emerges as the ruler of all. Whereas many of the gods that Hesiod describes emerge more distinctively as characters and consequential actors unto themselves, other gods assume roles of more generic sorts, such as Persuasion, Deceit, Evil Tongue, Blame, Harmony, Fate, Forgetfulness, Sleep, Old Age, and Death.

Hesiod's *Theogony* may be seen to objectify or crystallize Greek views on religion and represent important themes in Greek civilization more generally, but it should be noted that Hesiod's views were not shared by the Greek intelligentsia.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, much like Homer, Hesiod's writings on the gods have inspired many other poets. Notably, this included the lyricist Pindar [c518-445BCE] who extensively blended Greek theology with athletic prowess and the Greek Playwrights

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<sup>3</sup> Thus, for example, Herodotus (484-425BCE), who in his *Histories* (B2: 50-65) is attentive to wide ranges of wondrous things in Eastern Mediterranean folk accounts, contends that the Greek gods are essentially Egyptian constructions conveyed through the fictions of Homer and Hesiod. Likewise, while Socrates (c469-399BCE; following Pythagoras [c580-500BCE]), and Plato (c420-348BCE; following Socrates) insist on a divine reality, they adopt a very different conception of divinity (especially see *Timaeus*). Others, such as the sophists Protagoras (c490-420BCE) and Gorgias (c485-380BCE) adopt standpoints that are so relativist or cynicist in cast that they do not allow for the existence of divine essences. Divine essences, especially of the sort discussed by Hesiod also receive little credence in works of Democritus and Aristotle. Adopting a materialist stance, Democritus (c460-357BCE) argues that all substances are made up of indivisible physical particles that undergo a continual process of transformation as the objects of which they are composed come and go overtime. Aristotle (c384-322BCE) dismisses the gods of Homer and Hesiod as mythical legacies of the Greek heritage (*Metaphysics* p. 1074b). While Aristotle makes the case for a "first mover," he also argues that this entity would be like nothing that is humanly known (see *Physics* pp. 266a-267b; *Metaphysics* pp. 1071b-1073a). Further, in contrast to Plato who subscribes to two realms of reality (divine and humanly known and a soul-body dualism), Aristotle focuses centrally on the humanly known world and envisions people as biological entities who develop mindedness through capacities for sensation, action, language, recollectable memories and the like. Still, some of the most consequential material on the diversity of Greek thought on divinity and the philosophical stances within can be found in Marcus Tullius Cicero's (106-43BCE) *On the Nature of the Gods*.

whose works not only intrigued the general public but also inspired a great many 16<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance and subsequent theatrical depictions.

### ***Classical Greek Playwrights***

Albeit only a small portion of a much larger and diverse set of classical Greek poets, Aeschylus (c525-456BCE), Sophocles (c495-405BCE) and Euripides (c480-406BCE) are particularly well known for their theatrically-contrived tragedies.<sup>4</sup>

While introducing a variety of innovations to both written text and staged performances, the writings of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides (like those attributed to Homer) are rife with images of living, thinking, acting, and interacting characters. As with Homer, the human characters portrayed in these tragedies often intermingle with (immortal) Greek gods and (other) fictionalized beings, but virtually all participants assume human-like stances (as in possessing reflective, purposive, communicative, and adjustive abilities).

These three authors differ somewhat in their relative emphasis. Overall, Aeschylus and Sophocles express much greater concern about using their work to promote theological viewpoints and community morality. Thus, for instance, Aristotle (1984: 1460b) cites Sophocles as saying that he presents people "as they ought to be" while Euripides presents "people as they are."

Relatedly, whereas Aeschylus and Sophocles honor the gods in their plays and develop character roles in more normative terms, Euripides is considerably less respectful in his portrayals of divinity. He also is less constrained in the ways he presents his human characters. At the same time, though, Euripides seems more intent on producing dramatic (i.e., thrilling, fantastic) effects amidst his practices of generating less divinely inspired scenes and characters.

Variants of these sorts aside, *all* three authors (whose plays appear to represent more common genres of the time) portray a comparatively full range of human association in these texts. This includes an articulated assortment of relationships, viewpoints, activities, influence (and deception) work, and emotional experiences.

Classical Greek poetics are also characterized by a pronounced tradition of "literary criticism," wherein fictionalized materials provide contexts for denunciations and/or endorsements of particular people, activities, customs, and the like.<sup>5</sup> Relatedly, by Aeschylus' time, it appears somewhat commonplace for authors and performers to compete for various honors at public (religious) festivals wherein their productions were openly assessed by both the spectators at large and selected judges.

Further, the classical Greek playwrights not only display considerable capacities to envision and convey the perspectives of an assortment of others in their written works, but the playwrights also overtly assume self-reflective stances in their texts. Thus, these authors also engage in instances of explicit (audience oriented) communications about their own plays and those of other poets.

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<sup>4</sup> As Oakes and O'Neill (1938: xxviii) observe, although these three authors (among themselves, alone, are thought to have written about 300 plays, the only surviving early Greek tragedies are also those (25) composed by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. While many translations and diverse collections of these playwrights exist, I have relied on the Oaks and O'Neill (two volumes) collection which includes not only the full sets of works existing for these three authors but also the surviving works of Aristophanes (c450-385BCE) and Menander (c344-292BCE).

<sup>5</sup> For more extended considerations of the "history of literary criticism," see Gilbert (1940), Dukore (1974), Kennedy (1989), Sidnell (1991), and Habib (2005).

Another Greek playwright, Aristophanes (c450-385BCE), who is known for having written a number of highly intricate, deceptive, multi-themed comedies, extends literary criticism yet further. Aristophanes not only presents human characters in fuller ranges of expression but also adds other dimensions to his comedies and literary criticism. In *Frogs*, for instance, Aristophanes presents two earlier playwrights (Aeschylus and Euripides) as the primary contestants (and explicitly critical confrontationalists) for the "throne of tragedy" situated within "the enduring world of the departed."

Elsewhere, Aristophanes engages some of the philosophers and political theorists of his time. Especially noteworthy in this respect are *The Clouds* (wherein Socrates is a notable target) and *The Ecclesiazusae* (wherein, a socialist state is satirized at least twenty years before Plato's *Republic* was written [Oates and O'Neill 1938:1005]). Although some likely found humorous Aristophanes' pointedly negative depictions of particular characters (such as Socrates), it should not be assumed that the targets (or their supporters) of Aristophanes' invectives were equally amused.

Moreover, comedy, which seems to have developed somewhat independently of, and been introduced to the theater after the portrayals of, tragedies, was not restricted to irony, satire and sarcasm. As Aristotle (1984: 1147a-1449b) notes, comedy is a mode of imitation, but one that focuses on the dramatization of the absurd. In contrast to tragedies, comedy is not intended to invoke emotions of pain or suffering on the part of audiences. Aristotle observes that some comedies are characterized by humorous invectives directed toward particular targets but explicitly cites Crates (date unknown) as the first Athenian poet to develop comedy around more general sets of human circumstances.

Given the enormous loss of Greek manuscripts, we are fortunate (at least) to have access to three (from about a hundred) comedies written by Menander (c344-292BCE). While commonly contrasted with Aristophanes by reference to the term, "new comedy," Menander represents a more general counterpoint to the invective style signified by the "old comedy" associated with Aristophanes.

Compared to Aristophanes' more critical, often politicized ventures, Menander's works constitute "romantic comedies" of sorts. Whereas Menander introduces considerable intense, somewhat tragic, interchanges in his portrayals of family life, things typically turn out well in the end.

Thus, popular sentiments involving orphaned children, kindly sponsors, affectionate and loyal bonds, and (heterosexual) romantic intrigues are developed and the central figures emerge triumphant amidst various difficult characters, deception, inadvertent confusions, unwarranted assumptions, material losses, and other humanly challenging circumstances.

More generally, too, from Homer onward a great deal of early Greek writings on poetic literature is presented as *dialogue-based* accounts of *human interchange*. People are portrayed as minded, reflective entities who actively (and knowingly) engage one another and other objects (physical conditions and humanly generated associations, practices, and technologies, as well as an assortment of superbeings) in their settings.

These works not only address diverse aspects of human association, such as loyalty and affection, playful and malicious deception, animosity and violence, and ingroup and outgroup relations, but early Greek poetical texts are generally developed in ways that overtly acknowledge participant objectives, intentions, activities, ensuing reactions, and subsequent adjustments and relationships.

Hence, whereas the classical Greek authors assume a variety of artistic styles and presentational formats, people are portrayed very much as *reflective* (although not always wise), *acting*, and *interacting community-based beings*.<sup>6</sup>

Notably, by identifying, emphasizing, and objectifying things *human* through both written records and collective performances, these poetic renderings of human arenas, experiences, folk wisdoms, and reflective enterprise and interchange, from Homer onwards, appear to have contributed to *media-based* representations (and realms of entertainment) and common *cultural motifs* that extend to the present.

Not inconsequentially, too, early Greek writings on poetics appear to have developed somewhat concurrently with the emergence of texts dealing with politics, religion, rhetoric, history, and philosophy.<sup>7</sup> However, as also is the case in so many other realms of Western scholarship, the works of Plato and Aristotle are remarkably consequential for comprehending the emphases (and debates) one finds in the poetics literature to the present. While not minimizing the relevance of other early Greek authors, it is important to acknowledge the positions that Plato and Aristotle assumed with respect to poetics.

### **Plato: Addresses Poetic Representation**

Since Plato (420-348BCE) (a) formulates his texts in the form of extended dialogues, (b) often questions the possibility of human knowing (and authenticity), and (c) generally presents his material in dialogical or conversational (if not intentionally entertaining) formats, it is tempting to envision Plato as the most poetic of philosophers.

Likewise, given Plato's apparent sympathy to a Socratic position on the impossibility of humanly knowing (i.e., that all human knowledge claims are [merely] mythical, symbolic representations - as expressed in *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*), one might expect Plato to be comparatively neutral, if not highly receptive, to fictionalized representations. Still, Plato's assessments of "poetic expression" are far from uniform or positive.<sup>8</sup>

Notably, thus, Plato's skepticist viewpoint shifts dramatically when he focuses more directly on the task of establishing his model (socialist) states in *Republic* and *Laws*.<sup>9</sup> With this latter objective in mind, Plato's spokespeople make some very specific

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<sup>6</sup> Readers familiar with Herodotus' *The Histories*, Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, and Xenophon's *Anabasis* (or *The Persian Expedition*) will recognize how very central these interactional themes are in these (quasi-ethnographic) historical accounts.

<sup>7</sup> It should be acknowledged that (a) classical Greek scholarship (which clearly predates Plato) was not one thing, but rather was characterized by a diversity (often contradictory) of theoretical emphases, and (b) early Greek scholars were often highly encompassing in the range of things they considered. Thus, classical Greek "philosophers" often engaged, in more comprehensive terms, a set of domains that we might presently (more exclusively) designate as science, social science, rhetoric, poetics, politics, religion, and morality.

<sup>8</sup> Even though Plato seems dubious of the value of all human (imaged) representations, the critiques that Plato directs toward poets in many ways parallel the criticisms that he (through his spokesperson, Socrates) directs at sophists (and practitioners of rhetoric) vs. more sincere philosophers (see Plato's *Sophist* and *Phaedrus* as well as *Republic*).

<sup>9</sup> In developing this statement from Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, I have relied centrally on Benjamin Jowett's (1937) translations, but also have benefited from Paul Shorey's (Hamilton and Cairns 1963) and G. M. A. Grube's (Cooper 1997) translations of *Republic* as well as A. E. Taylor's (Hamilton and Cairns 1963) and Trevor J. Saunders' (Cooper 1997) translations of *Laws*.

claims about human values, human knowing, human acting, and human accomplishment.<sup>10</sup>

As the architect of a "new moral order,"<sup>11</sup> Plato approaches things in more instrumentalist, enacted, or pragmatic terms as his spokespeople define their objectives and deliberatively assess situations, consider options, and readjust their plans to accommodate an assortment of human circumstances, interests, and practices.

While maintaining some other of Socrates' emphases, namely, forging community relations in ways that truth, justice, and virtue are maximized in both broader and more personal ways, Plato (as a Socratic tactician) notably *relinquishes* the position that the world is humanly unknowable.

Thus, although Plato seems keenly aware that the model societies he addresses in both *Republic* and *Laws* are inevitably fictionalized since they deal with "what could be" rather than "what is," Plato astutely utilizes observations of, and experiences with, actual life-worlds in developing these texts. Even as he develops these fictionalized images of model societies, he builds on existing stocks of knowledge and an "ethnographic wisdom" of sorts (see Prus 2007b, 2007c) by considering more particular variations of societal organization and the comparative implications thereof for achieving social order in his model societies.

In the process Plato clearly and more or less continuously develops what Aristotle (*Poetics*, 1451a) would describe as the philosophic or analytic potential of poetic representations to address the more *generic* features of phenomena – as in components, processes, and interlinkages -- vs. the more singular or isolated specifics of history.

In some cases, Plato's speakers openly acknowledges the artificial (i.e., fictionalized,) nature of certain stories they reference. Likewise, Plato openly displays the contrived nature of the two model societies that his speakers develop. Even though Plato is attentive to "what is" at many points in both *Republic* and *Laws* and Plato's considerations of community life are instructively detailed, his analysis is still presented at a conceptual-prototypic level. This is not to deny the incredible philosophic insights that Plato generates in *Republic* and *Laws*, along with his other dialogues, but to acknowledge the exceptionally enabling quality of "the fictionalized representations" of human knowing and acting that Plato presents in his texts.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, it is in articulating the foundations of a model state in *Republic* and *Laws* that Plato overtly *attacks poetry* and insists on the *censorship* of artistic

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<sup>10</sup> Although Plato is often referenced (and dismissed) as an idealist, those who carefully examine *Republic* and *Laws* will find that Plato not only considers a variety of standpoints on matters of education, scholarship, entertainment, work, religion, politics, intergroup relations, crime, justice, and other aspects of community life but that Plato also attends in considerable detail to the interconnected and problematic features of human group life. In this respect, Plato is considerably more instrumentally "grounded" than are most reformers.

<sup>11</sup> Clearly, as indicated explicitly in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* (and earlier in Aristophanes' *The Ecclesiazusae*), the idea of a socialist state was "nothing new" to classical Greek scholars. Like Plato, Aristotle (*Politics*, *Constitution of Athens*) also explicitly considers the contingencies of succession between oligarchies, democracies, socialist states, and monarchies.

<sup>12</sup> Viewed thusly, whether or not the material in *Republic* and *Laws* might be classified as "poetic representations" would be contingent on the relative emphasis that Plato (as the author) and/or his others (as audiences) might place on these texts as having an entertainment vs. an instructive, educational, philosophical or even a moralistic or remedial quality. Still, as Aristotle (1984) would remind us, these two (or more emphases) are not mutually exclusive.

expression.<sup>13</sup> This deep disaffection will be the subsequent focus in discussing Plato's views on poetics.

On an overall basis, Plato seems negatively disposed toward poetics because of the practice of people representing things in ways that are not authentic or true to their humanly experienced essences. Still, whereas Plato (following Socrates) intends to defend Pythagorean conceptions of religion and, relatedly, to protect people's spiritual essences from the more sordid depictions of divinity that Plato associates with Homer, Hesiod, and others who derive inspiration from their works, Plato's concerns are more encompassing. These poetic materials, Plato contends, have negative implications for people's education and characters as well as community morality, religion, law, and justice. In short, virtually all realms of human knowing and acting. Still, even in the midst of his criticisms of fictionalized representations, Plato provides some instructive considerations of the poetic venture.

### ***Republic***

In developing *Republic* (X: 595a-608b), Plato portrays poetry as an inevitably partial and weak *imitation* of things. In addition to (a) contrasting the limitations of these mirror-like images with the physical objects themselves, Plato also (b) denigrates poetic renderings by contrasting these with the productive activities (and products) of [sincere] craftspeople at work.

Plato contends that poets lack genuine knowledge of how things are produced and that poetic endeavors lack the serious, contributory implications of [other] crafts for community life (especially see *Republic* X: 599a-601b).

Not only, thus, does Plato dissociate poetry from more meaningful productive *and* consumptive (X: 601d) activity, but he also alleges that poetry is removed from the truth (X: 598b). Elsewhere (in *Ion*), Plato claims that poetic renditions are based on emotion rather than knowledge and that these ventures, as such, do not constitute a genuine (meaningfully, knowingly constructed) craft.

Still, even with these failings, Plato (*Republic* X: 607b-608b) observes that poetry can be entertaining or intriguing. However, rather than viewing this engaging aspect of poetics as a more redeeming feature, Plato expresses concern that poetic materials may significantly distract people from pursuing much more important matters, particularly wisdom, justice, and virtue.

Likewise, Plato's speakers (*Republic* II: 376e-401a) express concern about the corrupting potential of poetics for children (and most importantly those children who might later become guardians of the state). Observing that children often learn things through songs and stories, Plato proposes that poets be monitored and censored.

In *Republic*, as well, Plato not only attends to the content of poetic materials (*Republic* II: 377b-392c), but also provides a more detailed analysis of various features of poetic productions. Thus, he explicitly considers the particular styles (II: 392c) that

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<sup>13</sup> Notably, even when Plato is not referenced more directly in the writings of later authors (e.g., moralists, scholars, poets), Plato's texts appear to form the bedrock of many statements (and some associated analyses) that would be developed both "in condemnation" (following Plato) and "in defense" (opposing Plato) of poetics. Although only some of these texts have been preserved, it appears that hundreds of scholars may have written materials in analytical prose or other poetic formats (e.g., plays, poems) intended to defend poetic representations (including poets' intentions and virtues; poetic text, theater and other forums of expression; and performers of various sorts) over the millennia (e.g., see Gilbert 1962; Dukore 1974). On the flip side, a great deal of moral criticism (and censorship) of poetic representation in Western social thought, especially from St. Augustine (354-430) onward, reflects the viewpoints that Plato expresses. For a most interesting reversal, readers are referred to [the reputed romanticist] Rousseau's (1758) censorial reactions *against* some Christian clergy who proposed that a monitored form of theatrical entertainment might be beneficial for the citizens (and tourists) of Geneva.

poets use, the ways they portray various characters (II: 394d-397b), the rhythms they use in their productions (II: 397b-400d), and the specific words (II: 400d-401a) that they employ in developing their expressions.

Plato's emphases shift somewhat in *Laws* (developed after *Republic*), as Plato subsequently focuses on the task of achieving social order through a more extended and explicit regulatory system. This contrasts notably with his concerns in *Republic* about developing a set of "philosopher guardians" who, more autonomously, would serve as managers dedicated to the well-being of the community. Plato will explicitly acknowledge some relativistic and instrumental features of poetic materials in *Laws*, but he remains highly concerned about containing the risks of poetic representations.

## **Laws**

*[Athenian]Ath. Is it altogether unmeaning to say, as the common people do about festivals, that he should be adjudged the wisest of men, and the winner of the palm, who gives us the greatest amount of pleasure and mirth?... Now is this a true way of speaking or of acting?*

*[Cleinius] Cle. Possibly.*

*Ath. But, my dear friend, let us distinguish between different cases, and not be hasty in forming a judgment: One way of considering the question will be to imagine a festival at which there are entertainments of all sorts, including gymnastic, musical, and equestrian contests: the citizens are assembled; prizes are offered, and proclamation is made that any one who likes may enter the lists, and that he is to bear the palm who gives the most pleasure to the spectators--there is to be no regulation about the manner how; but he who is most successful in giving pleasure is to be crowned victor, and deemed to be the pleasantest of the candidates: What is likely to be the result of such a proclamation?*

*Cle. In what respect?*

*Ath. There would be various exhibitions: one man, like Homer, will exhibit a rhapsody, another a performance on the lute; one will have a tragedy, and another a comedy. Nor would there be anything astonishing in some one imagining that he could gain the prize by exhibiting a puppet-show. Suppose these competitors to meet, and not these only, but innumerable others as well-- can you tell me who ought to be the victor?*

*Cle. I do not see how any one can answer you, or pretend to know, unless he has heard with his own ears the several competitors; the question is absurd....*

*Ath. If very small children are to determine the question, they will decide for the puppet show.*

*Cle. Of course.*

*Ath. The older children will be advocates of comedy; educated women, and young men, and people in general, will favour tragedy.*

*Cle. Very likely.*

*Ath. And I believe that we old men would have the greatest pleasure in hearing a rhapsodist recite well the Iliad and Odyssey, or one of the Hesiodic poems, and would award the victory to him. But, who would really be the victor?--that is the question...*

*Ath... The ancient and common custom of Hellas, which still prevails in Italy and Sicily, did certainly leave the judgment to the body of spectators, who determined the victor by show of hands. But this custom has been the destruction of the poets; for they are now in*

*the habit of composing with a view to please the bad taste of their judges, and the result is that the spectators instruct themselves;-- and also it has been the ruin of the theatre; they ought to be having characters put before them better than their own, and so receiving a higher pleasure, but now by their own act the opposite result follows.*

Plato, *Laws II*: 657-659 [1937, Trans. by B. Jowett]

Although Plato will propose a solution for more viably judging entertainment within his model society, he explicitly acknowledges the *relativity* of people's senses of entertainment in the preceding extract. Definitions of "good entertainment" vary with audience interests (*Laws*, II: 652-660).

It is in *Laws* (II: 656-660), too, that Plato attends more centrally to the strategic use of poetry as means of socializing the young. Relatedly, given the stringent criteria regarding religion and associated honorable matters of state that his speakers invoke, Plato proposes that a committee of knowledgeable and highly responsible citizens be established to insure quality among any who might be approved to create (educationally-oriented) poetry for the community (*Laws VII*: 801-804; 829).

Still, there is another important undercurrent in Plato's condemnations of poetic representations in *Republic* and *Laws*. In addition to these other, more earthly concerns, Plato also writes as a theologian. Seemingly following Socrates and Pythagoras (c580-500BCE) on these matters, Plato seems especially concerned about promoting a philosophically informed, virtuous religion. Thus, his spokespeople in *Republic* and *Laws* express the more general concern that the gods not only be represented in manners that are consistent with their divine essences (as in virtuous, noble, and caring beings) but also be portrayed in ways that foster cohesion and justice in the community more generally. Likewise, the gods are to be represented in ways that encourage virtuous beliefs and practices on the part of the members of the community. Thus, Plato's spokespeople in both *Republic* and *Laws* insist on the desirability of a more pronounced respect for the religious viewpoints of the state.<sup>14</sup>

In sum, Plato depicts poetic representations, variously, as (a) inauthentic, frivolous activities and productions; (b) emotional rather than knowledgeable endeavors; (c) alluring, distracting, tempting and potentially corrupting ventures; (d) reluctantly employed educational devices; (e) focal points for moral censorship; and (f) antithetical to both a more virtuous, philosophically informed theology and a state characterized by higher levels of social (and moral) integration. Plato may be the most poetic of philosophers but he is extremely concerned about the potentially disruptive implications of poetic endeavor that is not stringently monitored by highly responsible guardians of the community.

Still, before leaving Plato's consideration of poetics at this point, it may be instructive to examine Plato's *Ion*. Although one of Plato's shorter dialogues, *Ion* represents a bridge of sorts between Plato's discussions of fictionalized representations in *Republic* and *Laws* and Aristotle's *Poetics*.

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<sup>14</sup> For materials dealing with divinity in *Republic* and *Laws*, see *Republic* II: 358-392; X: 609-621 and *Laws*, I: 644-645; IV: 709-717; VII: 821; VIII: 828-829; IX: 854-855, 884-448; X: 885-910. While Plato deals with poets and their depictions of the gods most directly in *Republic* and *Laws*, Plato also addresses religion at some length in *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*. Interestingly, although critical of poetic representations of all things, Plato seems comparatively unconcerned with any fictions that he may be invoking with respect to divinity. Thus, while Plato's speakers sometimes preface their materials by saying that these are stories they have heard from other people, Plato does not subject his theological beliefs (i.e., those that his speakers represent) to the same sorts of dialectic (comparative, skepticist) analysis that he applies to other realms of human knowing and acting.

In the process of questioning the art of the *rhapsode* or someone who presents poetic materials for audiences, Plato (with Socrates as his spokesperson) addresses the matters of knowing, judging, and art (as a technique and, relatedly, a realm of serious study) in succinct but important, fundamental terms.

Engaging *Ion*, a rhapsode who claims great knowledge and skill in his profession, Socrates (1937: 531-535) asks about *the adequacy of Ion's abilities to know and judge* the quality of the poets that he represents as well as Ion's abilities to assess his own performances.

While acknowledging Ion's extended popularity as a performer, Socrates observes that Ion, who has not adequately studied the fuller range of poets, lacks a *comparative base* (and more discerning analytical standards) on which to judge the merits of various poets.

Socrates (ibidem: 535-536) subsequently asks about Ion about his more vivid portrayals of the characters he represents. Socrates suggests that when performers relate to audiences in more compelling fashions, they not only take on the role of the persons being portrayed, but also lose their own senses of self. Ion assures Socrates that truly is the case. Further, Ion contends, an accomplished rhapsodist such as himself can take and move his audience in any direction that he desires.

Socrates (ibidem: 536-541) then asks about the adequacy of Ion's portrayals of different characters (as in presenting the roles of charioteers, women, slaves, and military generals). After Ion asserts that he can perform all roles with excellence. Socrates questions Ion about basis of his claims. Who, Socrates asks, would be better able to judge the authenticity of Ion's performances? Would it be Ion or the people who actually live those roles? [In the process, Socrates argues for the viability of the *experiential base* of human knowing and judging.]

Ion acknowledges that certain judgmental privileges may be associated with actual lived experience, but he stresses both his exceptional abilities as a performer and his competence to judge his representations of other people. In response, Socrates (ibidem: 541-542) states that because poets (and rhapsodes) fail to attend to the comparative and experiential base of knowing (and thus lack well defined standards of analysis and judgment), poets are not to be seen as knowledgeable or credible sources.

Moreover, given their persistent claims, as in Ion's case, regarding human knowing and acting, Socrates contends that poets and rhapsodes are either dishonest or (divinely or emotionally) inspired. Viewing inspiration as the nobler of the two options Socrates has given him, Ion subsequently elects to be among the inspired.

Given Plato's moralistic emphases, his exceptional ability to articulate analytical themes, and his own engaging, "poetic" style,<sup>16</sup> Plato's works have served as highly consequential reference materials for considerations of poetic representations over the millennia. Still, Plato's considerations of poetics do not provide an adequate base for developing the linkages of theory and action.

It is here that we turn more directly to Aristotle's *Poetics*. While this text provides a highly consequential counterpoint to Plato's treatment of poetics, Aristotle's writings

<sup>15</sup> This statement is centrally informed by Benjamin Jowett's (1937) translation of *Ion*.

<sup>16</sup> Whereas Aristotle is generally more direct, analytically precise, and comprehensive in the ways that he engages materials than is Plato, many scholars appear to prefer the more playful expressions that Plato generates to the more focused and incisive analyses that Aristotle provides.

more generally have particular relevance for considerations of humanly known and enacted realities.

### **Aristotle's *Poetics***<sup>17</sup>

While Aristotle's (384-322BCE) *Poetics* is best appreciated within the context of his other writings (especially *Rhetoric*, *Politics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*),<sup>18</sup> wherein he discusses other aspects of human-based knowing, acting, and interacting, Aristotle's *Poetics* is a remarkably analytic, highly instructive statement on literary theory, practice and history.

Thus, although the issues that Plato raises have become pivotal to a great many debates about poetic representations of divine and more earthly matters,<sup>19</sup> Aristotle's *Poetics* is exceptionally central to the analysis of poetic endeavors (theory, direction, representation, and criticism). Still, even though Aristotle's *Poetics* was first translated into Latin in the 1200's (Habib 2005), this text was barely known to Western scholars prior to the 1500's (Butcher [Aristotle] 1951: lxxiii).<sup>20</sup>

Given the subsequent impact of Aristotle's *Poetics* on Western scholarship, some may be surprised to learn that the material to which we have access not only is a partial text but also mainly deals with Greek drama (tragedies). The section (apparently) dealing with comedy has been lost.<sup>21</sup>

In his typical, conceptually systematic manner, Aristotle approaches poetry in generic terms. Thus, while (a) embedding his analysis within a historical context, Aristotle also discusses the (b) essences, (c) forms, and (d) implications of poetic representation, along with (e) the features of representation and (f) matters pertaining to the ways that poetic materials (as human products) are assembled. These are the elements of great importance to a scholarly consideration of poetics.

Nevertheless, whereas Aristotle provides scholars with a powerful conceptual base on which to generate theory about entertainment motifs of all sorts, he also assumes two other objectives that detract at times from a more purely analytical emphasis.

Hence, in a fashion also generally consistent with his other writings on human affairs (i.e., rhetoric, politics, ethics), Aristotle attempts to (g) encourage the use of poetics to foster personal and community morality as well as (h) provide instruction on how poetic representations could be more effectively developed as a craft or art form.

At a base-line level, Aristotle shares Plato's conception of poetics as a partial imitation or incomplete representation of [something]. However, in sharp contrast to

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<sup>17</sup> While particularly indebted to I. Bywater's (see Barnes 1984) translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, I also have benefited from the translations of S. H. Butcher (1951) and Theodore Buckley (1992).

<sup>18</sup> For synoptic, interactionist considerations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Rhetoric*, see Prus (2007a and 2008a, respectively).

<sup>19</sup> More generally, it might be recognized that Plato often introduces a variety of viewpoints (idealist, moralist, structuralist, and pragmatist) in his theological dialogues.

<sup>20</sup> The analysis of Latin-European poetics was largely sustained by Horace's (c65-8 BCE) "On the Art of Poetry" and Longinus' (c100CE?) "On the Sublime" (see Prus 2008b). While there is much of merit in these two Latin texts and these statements are still better known in many academic circles than is Aristotle's *Poetics*, Aristotle's *Poetics* is vastly more philosophically, historically, and conceptually astute.

<sup>21</sup> We do not know exactly what Aristotle's statement on comedy would look like, but Cooper's (1924) attempted reconstruction, of Aristotle's "theory of comedy" seems highly consistent with what one might expect (judging from Aristotle's works more generally). Not only does Cooper's statement very much parallel Aristotle's treatment of tragedy in *Poetics*, but it is as consistent with Aristotle's other works (e.g., *Rhetoric*, *Nicomachean Ethics*) as one might reasonably achieve.

Plato, Aristotle envisions poetry not only as a *meaningfully experienced* realm of endeavor, but also as something that is *purposively (productively and technologically) crafted*.

Aristotle is critical of the ways that much poetic endeavor has been developed and presented, but he evidences comparatively little of the negativity that Plato expresses in *Republic* and *Laws*. Instead, Aristotle insists that poetry be developed in ways that are more technically competent for communicating messages, producing desired audience effects, and promoting community morality.

Envisioning poetics to involve instances of deliberative fictionalization, Aristotle exempts poetics from the rigors of authenticity or correctness associated with politics, law, and other (knowing) arts (Aristotle 1984: 1460b).<sup>22</sup> At the same time, though, Aristotle (1461b) explicitly identifies five aspects of poetic endeavor that are likely to engender criticism (i.e., matters around which people often challenge the feasibility of poetic representations). These pertain to allegations that particular expressions involve things that are (unduly) impossible, improbable, corrupting, contradictory, or technically unsound.

Given (a) the broad range of issues that both Plato and Aristotle introduce and (b) their differing positions on the moral and applied relevancies and desirabilities of poetics, the current statement focuses more directly on (c) the more analytic aspects of Aristotle's *Poetics* as these pertain to people's lived experiences with entertainment. It is here that the more sociological features of Aristotle's analysis of poetic endeavor become apparent.

### ***Human Enacted and Represented Realities***

Because this immediate statement focuses primarily on the representation of humanly experienced intersubjectivity and enacted realities, it contrasts with most considerations of poetics that one encounters in the literature (wherein debates about poetic morality and the technicalities of form and expression are much more prominent).

Especially important for our purposes, thus, are Aristotle's [pragmatist] attentiveness to (a) *activity*, (b) *generic representations* of the characters or roles signified, (c) authors' capacities of *constructing and shaping people's* (actors and audience) experiences with *emotionally*, (d) the quest for projecting *authenticity* within fictional representations, and (e) the matter of authors explicitly attending to *audience viewpoints* (reflecting on, anticipating, and adjusting to) in developing their materials.

First among these notions is Aristotle's (1984) observation that poetic portrayals of human life (as indicated in tragedies) revolve around *action*:

Tragedy is essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life. [All human happiness or misery takes the form of action; the end for which we live is a certain kind of activity, not a quality. Character gives us qualities, but it is in our actions that we are happy or the reverse]... In a play accordingly they do not act in order to portray the characters; they include the characters for the sake of the action. So that it is the action in it, i.e. its plot, that is the end and purpose of the tragedy; and the end is everywhere the chief thing. Besides this, a tragedy is impossible without action, but there might be one without Character. (p. 1450a )

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<sup>22</sup> Relatedly, Aristotle's material also is instructive for scholars who attempt to differentiate poetics from other realms of analytical endeavor (ergo, history, philosophy, law, social science).

Identifying poetics (along with other realms of artistic expression) as an imitative production, Aristotle (1984: 1447a-1448a) observes that poetic imitation encompasses three things: (a) the means of expression (rhythm, language, harmony), (b) the objects or focal points (actions and moral agents), and (c) the styles of representation (as in narratives or speeches).

Speaking generically, Aristotle (ibidem: 1448b) envisions poetic expression as a rather natural human practice. He attributes poetic expressions, thus, to people's tendencies (a) to be the most imitative of animals and (b) to experience pleasure at learning and comprehending things.

However, Aristotle also posits that more explicit or standardized poetic forms that one finds in particular communities develop somewhat gradually, from more tentative notions to routine practices, and are subject to subsequent improvisations.

As two instances in point, Aristotle (ibidem: 1448b-1449b) makes specific reference to (a) the Greek tendency to divide poetry into tragedy and comedy and (b) the transitions made in terms of the ways that speakers have been incorporated within Greek theater.

Since most of (the preserved text of) *Poetics* focuses on tragedies, wherein human interchanges of serious proportions (signified by pity and fear) are projected, it is useful to acknowledge the features of tragedies that Aristotle introduces here.

Aristotle (ibidem: 1450a-1450b) says that there are six parts to every tragedy: (1) plot, (2) characters, (3) diction, (4) thought, (5) spectacle, and (6) melody. While considering all of these components to be important, he deems melody (music, rhythm; while potentially pleasurable), spectacle (props, attire; while potentially attractive in scenic design), and diction (word choices, versification; intended as stylistically engaging) to be much less consequential overall.

For Aristotle (ibidem: 1449b-1450b), tragedy revolves most centrally around a plot, which he insists is an imitation not of (particular) persons but of *action and life*. While cast in specific circumstances, the *characters* are important not for their unique qualities or individualism but because of the *more generic realms* of human experiences, choices, and outcomes that the (particular) characters represent.

Whereas the characters may more routinely make (deliberative, often openly communicated) choices and engage in meaningful, often strategic, interchange (dialogue) in tragedies, Aristotle here uses "thought" more specifically to refer to those instances in which the characters discuss or debate about certain aspects of the situation in more analytical or generic / abstracted terms.<sup>23</sup>

Because tragedies attend to more dramatic shifts (particularly losses) in people's circumstances, the success of these representations is to be judged by poets' abilities to evoke emotionality (especially pity and fear) on the part of their audiences.

Relatedly, Aristotle (ibidem: 1452b-1453a) stresses the importance of achieving careful balances between the moralities of the characters featured and the outcomes they experience. Hence, he observes that because of the excessive disparities between model or idealized citizens and subsequent disasters that might befall these people, authors are likely to generate greater pity on the part of audiences when unavoidable misfortune befalls those who are more typical of people generally (as somewhat imperfect but basically acceptable personages). Similarly, it is those

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<sup>23</sup> It might be observed that this reference to "thought" is more situated. More generally, Aristotle and other Greeks of the era tend to use thought in ways that are more synonymous with speech, as implied in the Greek term *logos* (wherein thought and speech are used interchangeably, depending on the context).

characters with whom particular audiences can most directly identify who make more viable representatives for arousing fear on the part of those audiences.

In developing his analysis, Aristotle not only is attentive to the *deliberative construction* of poetry, but very directly encourages poets to be *mindful of their audiences* (i.e., "take the role of the other;" Mead 1934) in developing and presenting their materials:

At the time when he is constructing his plots, and engaged on the diction in which they are worked out, the poet should remember to put the actual scenes as far as possible before his eyes. In this way, seeing everything with the vividness of an eye-witness as it were, he will devise what is appropriate, and be least likely to overlook the incongruities... As far as may be, too, the poet should even act his story with the very gestures of his personages. Given the same natural qualifications, he who feels the emotions to be described will be the most convincing... (Aristotle 1984: 1455a)

In a related manner, Aristotle also observes that poetic representations are apt to be better received (i.e., achieve greater audience impact) when they convey fuller senses of authenticity. Consequently, he contends that a more compelling poetic portrayal of the impossible is to be preferred over a less convincing account of the probable (ibidem: 1461b).

In more fundamental terms, Aristotle (ibidem: 1460b) notes that poetic imitations may portray things (a) as they were or are, (b) as they are described or envisioned to be, or (c) as they were intended or ought to have been. These distinctions are important for appreciating variations in poetic emphases, licenses, and criticism. However, these delineations are also vital for differentiating emphases (and instances) of poetics from portrayals (emphases and instances) of humans in philosophy, history, and the social sciences.

Because history is intended to provide descriptive accounts of particular instances, while poetic representations can deal with things at more abstracted levels, Aristotle (ibidem: 1451a) observes that poetry may achieve a redeeming universalistic or philosophic quality that history (as a more singular or particularized flow of events) generally lacks.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, whereas Aristotle envisions the community as indebted to poetic works for some scholarly insights and fascinations, it should be noted that Aristotle clearly does *not* see poetic representation as a substitute for more careful scholarship regarding the human condition:

It was naturally the poets who first set the movement going; for words represent things, and they had also the human voice at their disposal, which of all our organs can best represent other things. Thus the arts of recitation and acting were formed, and others as well. Now it was because poets seemed to win fame through their fine language when their thoughts were simple enough, that language at first took a poetical colour, e.g. that of Gorgias. Even now most uneducated people think that poetical language makes the finest discourses. That is not true...

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<sup>24</sup> As Lessing (1962 [1769: 94-95]) notes, "truth in poetry," thus, may be seen as contingent on the extent to which poetic expressions attend to some (projected) generic essence or form of things. Viewed in this manner, highly detailed renderings of specifics (to the extent that they lose sight of consequential generic qualities) may signify "poetic falsity" even while achieving more accurate portrayals of specific instances. The distinction, thus, is between a more adequate fundamental representation of things and a more precise representation of a particular (somewhat less typical overall) instance.

We may, then, start from the observations there made, and the stipulation that language to be good must be clear, as is proved by the fact that speech which fails to convey a plain meaning will fail to do just what speech has to do. (Aristotle 1946, Book III: 1404a-1404b)

## Extending the Theaters of Poetic Representation

Despite the highly insightful materials situated within the classical Greek poetic tradition, this literature would be only partially known and utilized over the following centuries. As with much of the classical literature, a great deal of early Greek poetic materials would be lost through natural disasters and decay, the ravages of wars, and a wide variety of human considerations. Relatedly, as with Greek scholarship more generally, the reception of Greek poetical texts would be highly uneven.

This ranged, for instance, from some comparatively open and extended imitations of Greek poetics (especially the works of Homer and the tragedian playwrights) during the classical Roman era (e.g., Plautus [254-184BCE], Terrence [185-159BCE], Virgil [70-19BCE], Horace [65-8BCE]), to more general (often intense) condemnations and censorship on the part of Christian theologians, to comparative disregard of all written text on the part of the various barbarian groups who overran large sectors of the Western Europe (particularly amidst the demise of the Roman Empire and the subsequent Western European "dark ages").

Still, even amidst these comparatively tumultuous conditions, aspects of classical Greek thought (already conceptually embedded in Roman thought) were carried forward in Latin (and Latin Christian) considerations of the ways in which human experiences, activities, and interchanges might be represented in both fictional and nonfictional renderings thereof.

Whereas Greek scholarship dissipated notably with the demise of the Greek empire following the death of Alexander the Great (358-323BCE), it was the Romans who would dominate the poetic productions of record for the next several centuries. These materials represented a synthesis of Roman emphases and expressions with the classical Greek literature. This came about both through longstanding Roman contact with Greek instructors working in Rome as well as other modes of exposure to classical Greek texts, both before and after the Romans took possession of Greece (151BCE).

Interfused with Greek materials, Roman poetics very much imitated the epic or heroic texts of Homer and the works of classical Greek playwrights. Greek templates commonly were used as the base for presenting Roman settings, personages, and lifestyles. By comparison, Roman attentiveness to Greek philosophic texts was much more limited. Notably, too, even though the Roman authors Horace (65-8BCE) and Longinus (circa 100CE) provide highly insightful analytical instruction on the production of poetic materials (Prus 2008b) and cite Greek authors as consequential reference points, they appear unfamiliar with the exceptionally potent conceptual resources located in Aristotle's *Poetics*.

As another, increasingly important set of participants in the broader European theatre, the Christians did little to sustain the analysis of poetic materials. Indeed, even though the early Christian gate-keepers seemed particularly intrigued with some of Plato's religiously oriented texts (especially *Timaeus*), most of Plato's texts – along with most of those of (the secular philosopher) Aristotle would become lost (disregarded, censored, or destroyed) to scholars in Western Europe for several centuries. In this

regard, the writings of St. Augustine (354-430) have been highly instrumental in encouraging a Christian attentiveness to education, philosophy, and rhetoric.

Still, it would only be centuries later that most classical Greek texts would be more directly resurrected. Thus, whereas Latin scholarship barely survived the intervening centuries, a small preserved portion of Latin texts would become the object of more sustained attention as Alcuin (732-804), Charlemagne (742-814), and their associates sought to restore academic life in Western Europe.

Even though the Christian scholars were especially devoted to the preservation of religious texts, an interest in poetic materials appears to have been sustained through some, albeit very uneven, access to pagan materials. Notably, this included Cicero's (106-43BCE) *Rhetoric ad Herennium* and *De Inventione*,<sup>25</sup> Virgil's (70-19BCE) *Aenid*, Ovid's (43BCE-18CE) seemingly irrepressible *The Art of Love*, and Martianus Capella's *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*. Collectively, these texts, along with others preserved by the Christian scholars, appear to have provided extended inspiration for works such as Alain de Lille's (1120-1202) *Anticlaudianus*, Andreas Cappellanus' (circa 1150) *The Art of Courtly Love*, and Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's sequentially developed (circa 1230 and circa 1275) *The Romance of the Rose*. Albeit presented in fictionalized settings (as in dreams), thereby allowing Christian authors some safety of expression, these texts address matters of human knowing and acting in highly consequential ways. Like the texts on which they built, these latter poetic ventures are attentive to human capacities for instruction, reflective thought, purposive activity, strategic interchange, and ongoing adjustment within a community of others.

Although various Greek philosophic texts had been preserved by Islamic scholars who had access to the materials left in Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean region centuries earlier by the Greeks (following the conquests of Alexander the Great), many of these texts would only become known to Latin scholars as a consequence of interchanges between Islamic, Jewish, and Christian theologians following the crusades in Spain. Still, it is not until Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and his associate William of Moerbeke (1215-1286) accessed some of Aristotle's texts that these began to achieve a more explicit presence in Latin scholarship. Whereas William of Moerbeke provided particularly viable translations of several of Aristotle's texts, it was Thomas Aquinas who gave these materials greater profile through his extended commentaries on some Aristotelian texts (e.g., *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul*). However, given the time of his death Aquinas would not have had access to Moerbeke's translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* [see Habib 2005]).

The ensuing literature on poetics is much too extensive to detail here, but included among the 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Century Western European scholars who subsequently engaged the representation of human speech, action, and interaction in more explicit, analytical terms are Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), Giovan Giorgio Trissino (1478-1550), Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484-1558), John Heywood (1497-1580), Lodovico Castelvetro (1505-1571), Franciscus Robortellus (1515-1567), Philip Sidney (1554-1586), Francois Hédelin

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<sup>25</sup> Although rhetoric is focused on winning cases, establishing particular viewpoints, or obtaining certain decisions and commitments, rather than entertaining others in ways that are more typical of poetic endeavors, rhetoric often reflects a blending of "fact and fiction" -- as speakers define situations and contest the definitions of others in attempts to persuade their audiences in more compelling terms. Relatedly, whereas poetical materials often build on rhetorical techniques, so may rhetoric build on materials of more distinctively poetic sorts. Cicero's *Rhetoric ad Herennium* and *De Inventione* are illustrative here as also is Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (Prus 2008a).

(1604-1676), and John Dryden (1631-1700).<sup>26</sup> Even though they worked with a wide range of interests and objectives, and engaged pragmatist motifs in more sporadic rather than systematically sustained terms, these scholars helped maintain a focus on *portraying* and *analyzing* the human lived experiences as realms of minded activity and interchange.

These analytic emphases may have been more occasional and more diffuse than that we associate with the social sciences, but it should not be assumed that the images generated through the theatre and other poetic forums have been inconsequential for broader public and academic conceptualizations of human lived experience. Indeed, and rather ironically, the poetic tradition appears to have been highly consequential for maintaining “an authenticity in representing the human condition” that extends well beyond the factor-driven, mechanistic images of community life that have characterized so much of the social sciences (following Cartesian rationalism and Comtean positivism).

## In Perspective

Whereas the present analysis of poetics is informed by Chicago-style interactionism (theory, methods, and ethnographic research), the somewhat related matter of conceptualizing and representing the human condition has been of concern to scholars of “poetics” at least since the writings of Homer and Hesiod (circa 700BCE).

As well, it appears that those engaged in developing and analyzing fictionalized representations of all sorts (e.g., tragedy, comedy, theater, lyrics, prose) have been instrumental not only in helping to preserve the broader intellectual Greek heritage that has been so instrumental in shaping Western civilization, but in helping to maintain an emphasis on *the analyses of human enacted reality* over the millennia.

Thus, although much overlooked in the contemporary social sciences and often mixed with other viewpoints (e.g., religious, moralistic), the classical Greek poetic literature has helped sustain a number of pragmatist insights that are exceedingly central for comprehending community life. While not or systematically directed toward the study of community life or so explicitly expressed, these insights pertain to matters of (1) viewing human group life as taking place in process terms, (2) attending to multiplistic / relativistic viewpoints that people may develop on matters of all sorts, (3) acknowledging the linguistically informed nature of human perspectives, (4) being mindful of people’s capacities for persuasive exchange (and resistances thereof), (5) viewing objects (people, material phenomena, desires, moralities) as important because of the ways that these things are meaningfully incorporated into particular realms of activity, (6) focusing on community life-worlds as realms of activity, (7) recognizing embodied (human) agency, whereby people intentionally, reflectively, and adjustively enter into the causal process as agents, (8) attending to people’s capacities for self-reflectivity (and deliberative thought), and (9) addressing knowingly contrived relationships as consequential features of community life. As well, insofar as many of these authors envisioned notions of these sorts to be relevant across varieties of

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<sup>26</sup> Some may be surprised that I have not included some well known playwrights (especially William Shakespeare [1564-1616]) in this list but I have focused on people who, in at least some of their writings, addressed poetic productions in more explicit analytic terms. Still, this list only goes to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and (given my limited familiarity with this broader literature) is apt to be notably incomplete.

humanly engaged settings, one also witnesses (10) an appreciation of the abstracted, parallel, or transcontextual features of community life.

Approaching poetic representations from an interactionist perspective, a sociological paradigm that is informed by pragmatist social thought and ethnographic research, we may be able to use those poetic texts that deal more directly and extensively with human knowing and acting as instructive (substantive, quasi-ethnographic) comparison points for developing more comprehensive conceptual appreciations of human lived experience in both developmental-historical and in comparative-analytical ways. Given the sparsity of more fully developed ethnographic inquiries from the past, poetical materials may be especially valuable in this regard.

Clearly, there is no attempt to encourage the production of poetical statements on the part of social scientists. Whereas great care needs to be taken in the development of ethnographic research, it is especially important to be mindful of the problematics and limitations of representing the human condition through poetic materials (Schwalbe 1995; Prus 2008c). Still, all resources (ethnographic, historical, poetic, philosophical) pertaining to the study of human knowing and acting, offer greater potential for comprehending community life when these materials are subject to comparative analysis within a broader pragmatist emphasis on learning about people's life-worlds and the activities (and interchanges) they develop therein.

Given its introductory quality, the present statement is just one step in that direction. Hopefully, though, by alerting others to the comparatively untapped resources suggested by the some of the detailed accounts of human group life that one encounters in the poetics literature and other "historically situated" materials, this statement may encourage more sustained considerations of community life "in the making."

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## Perform Strikes. A Case Study

### Abstract

In this paper we show the results of an analysis of the production of individual class subjectivities in the context of strikes among both those in favour and those against. Among the several processes going on in the production of subjectivities of class, we consider strikes because we want to emphasise the active role that the subjects keep up within the class relationships of domination and exploitation. We start from a conception of the subjectivity understood as fragmentary and contingent that we apply to our analysis of class, but in this paper we limit production of individual subjectivities to context of strikes. Our analysis focuses on a case study from the beginning of the 1970s to the end of the 1990s, which was led by the workers of a company in the motor industry, situated in Catalonia. The main devices used to work on the empirical material are biographical interviews and informative interviews. We start the analysis by showing the various directions taken by that the subjectivities of workers and of the company in strike interactions, in individual terms. Then we look into the role of gender in the provisional configuration of these subjectivities in the context of a strike when these subjectivities became collective subjectivities. In this respect, we focus on the company's workers.

### Keywords

Social classes; Gender; Subjectivity; Conflict.

This paper analyses<sup>27</sup> the production of subjectivities in the context of labour strikes. This context is related to a wider interest in the analysis of social classes. The last few years (Mora 2003; 2005; 2007; 2008) have seen the development of an

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<sup>27</sup> This paper is the result of an investigation, in the form of a doctoral thesis, titled *Las clases sociales como forma de interacción social. Una estrategia de aproximación* supervised by María Jesús Izquierdo and defended before the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. This investigation was undertaken as part of the UAB Grup d'Estudis sobre Sentiments, Emocions i Societat (GESES), which is coordinated by M.J. Izquierdo, and specifically followed the research lines defined by *Relaciones de producción, subjetividad, sentimientos y acción*, which aims to analyse the relation between the creation of subjectivity and its objectification. In other words, it is concerned with the relation between the conditions that produce subjectivity and the conditions under which it is expressed and acts. The notion of relations of production is a key concept for dealing with this concern, in its capitalist and patriarchal dimensions.

approach to class analysis that seeks to study social classes on the basis of patriarchal capitalist relations of production. In this paper we take the position that the production of our life is not just capitalistic, but also patriarchal. Both are characterised by exploitation —the appropriation of other's work. We define the relations of production as practices instituted and institutive in social interaction between subjects. The social classes consist of relations of dependency between individual and collective fragmentary subjectivities in a process of formation, which are analysed within the scope of relations of production. These interactions define the relations of dependency under circumstances that are not of one's choosing and operate as disciplinary contexts that reiterate or undermine the subjects in the interaction. These relations are characterised by antagonism, conflict and struggle, as well as instability. All this because the social agents that bring them about are endowed with intentions, desires and needs. Their form of interaction, as social beings that produce significances, is discursive interaction (Antaki 1994; Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Billig 1991; Edwards 1997; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Fairclough 1992; Heritage 1997; Potter 1996; Sacks 2000; Silverman 2001; Van Dijk 2000).

The basic premise of this approach is that the classes are formed in the interaction and not prior to it (we follow M. Burawoy, K. Mark, and E. P. Thompson). This paper will concentrate on one specific factor: the production, during strikes, of individual subjectivities<sup>28</sup> and the role of gender relationships in the provisional shaping of these subjectivities when they form into collective subjectivities. Strikes are a specific aspect that characterises the relations of production under patriarchal capitalism. The importance given to the study of strikes arises because in the processes of institutionalising patriarchal capitalist relations of production, there is a deployment of strategies with foreseen and unforeseen effects, not to mention resistance, that attempt to consolidate the extraction of the surplus. Concentrating on strikes is to concentrate on an explicit, visible component of the process of production of social classes. In this process, workers were not driven to participate in strikes because they have well developed class consciousness; rather, consciousness emerges in a messy, dynamic way from participating in labor actions (Fantasia 1988).

Special attention is given to those interactions that help us reveal the undermining nature of the instituted dimension of patriarchal capitalist relations of production: labour disputes that arise from disagreements, or even opposition, and lead to strikes. These point to the presence of certain rules of the game that are older than the subjects in interaction, they demonstrate that the essence of what is instituted is the reiteration of actions, but also that its fragility lies in the undermined dimension of what is instituted. The study of strikes enables us to specify the precarious as well as constant nature of the construction of subjectivities.

The theoretical references on which this analysis is based start off by attempting to understand the formation of subjectivity in terms of what Butler (1990a, 1990b[1987], 1993, 1997a, 1997b, 1998[1990]) calls *performative* acts and applying them to gender analysis. This means that subjectivity is only so when it is acted out. But this is an action that always implies punitive results. In fact, Butler considers that gender is a "performance" that brings sanctions in its wake to those who are not able

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<sup>28</sup> We use the expression "the production of individual subjectivities" to indicate that subjectivity is not an innate attribute of the individual, but a result of the social interactions in which one takes part. We talk about the *production* because the subjectivity needs a daily working routine to adapt it into the context. The subjectivities can be individual or collective.

to draw their gender distinctions well enough. And this is so because there is no *essence* that gender can express or exteriorise, nor an ideal objective it may aspire to. Gender is not an event, the various gender acts create the idea of gender, and without these there would be no gender at all. Such a formulation points to a series of fundamental factors regarding subjectivity. It tells us of constant processes that are never fixed on something distant from our own interactions. The subject is not a unified, homogeneous entity, but rather a plurality dependant on various performative acts through which it is constituted within different discursive formations, acts that may also be fetishistic, without a necessary prior relationship between the discourses that construct the various subjectivities of the subject. But this plurality does not so much imply a coexistence of distinct subjectivities that are isolated from one another or relations that have no effect on their constitution, but instead are in a relation of constant subversion of one by the others (Goffman 1959; 1967; Hall 1997; Mouffe 1993).

All this points to the criticism of all manner of fixed subjectivity *per se*, as a single and founding act, to the assertion of the incomplete, open and politically negotiable nature of subjectivity. However, this does not mean to say that subjectivity is indefinable for each historical moment. On the contrary, it is, but at the same time this subjectivity does not manage to completely consolidate itself as a social process. And this is due to one basic reason: the presence of the *other*. From the point of view of discursive interaction, subjectivities are precariously fixed, in the sense that each one contains the presence of the other subjectivities, the *other* that modifies them, that subverts them, achieving a provisional meaning at each historical moment. But this does not mean to say that they are arbitrary. Their production lies in our social dealings. Therefore, our social dealings only produce our subjectivities within us. One example of this is the question of the *subjectivity of women*. As Benhabib (1990[1987]) point out, women in the third world have brought into question the supposition that there is a generalised, identifiable and collectively shared experience of being a woman. Being black and being a woman is being a black woman, it is being a woman whose subjectivity is constituted differently from that of a white woman. At the same time, this example demonstrates the problem of the constitution of subjectivity in terms of political operation, and the possibility of articulating collective subjectivities. We should not forget, as Izquierdo (1998) says, that diversity can block the constitution of a historical subject individual. Creating and enhancing differences is a well-known tactic when it comes to breaking up collectives involved in a struggle and to prevent individual needs from being recognised as common to others. This demonstrates the problems associated with the constitution of collective subjectivities. However, the needs of some may be subsumed by others for the sake of unity. Therefore, ignoring these considerations could imply returning to those methods of analysis that, for example, defining women as part of the working class (given the relationship of women with capitalism and not necessarily with men) subsumes the relation of women with men in the relation of the worker with capital, as Hartmann cautions us (1980 [1979]). The result of this is that the interests of workers are common to those of women, whose political consequences are to agglomerate women's movements with those of workers, but on the basis of converting the former into the latter (women and in particular housewives would form part of the working class, given that their situation would be considered an effect of the capitalist relations of production). As we shall see in the analysis, this type of conception is one of the cards that come into play in the process of producing collective gender subjectivities.

From the interactionist view of the formation and sustaining processes of subjectivity, or which in any case contemplates the presence of the *other*, it is possible to avoid the leap from essentialism to nihilism in our conception of subjectivity. We defend a conception of subjectivity as a social process as do Atkinson and Housely (2003), Blumer (1982[1969]), Garfinkel (1976, 1986), and Goffman (1959, 1967). Subjectivity depends on relations with others, which introduces the impossibility of closure, of its firm and final consolidation. Subjectivity is not something given and immutable (Benhabib 1990[1987], 1996, 1999; Hall 1997; Goffman 1959, 1967; Mouffe 1993). It is precarious, no matter how hard we try to sustain it as if it were otherwise. The presence of the other within ourselves, in a *dialogical* relationship, whose replies produce doubts and the blindest of certainties, not only highlights this precariousness but also the process of change. We cannot alter our form of participating in the production of life, in a solipsistic act; we need the other. The impossibility of closure is also the possibility of change. And this breach is an abyss of social indeterminacy (not attributable to any structural moment, but rather to political operation), of suffering, but also of hope. In this sense the elaboration of the *other* together with *others* to create, construct an *us* before a *them* plays an essential role, precarious as it may be. All of this is to question any essentialist and unitary conception of subjectivity. As Laclau and Mouffe (1985) say:

(...)the meaning of all identity is overdetermined to the measure in which all literality appears to be constitutively subverted and overwhelmed; in other words, to the measure in which, far from producing an essentialist *totalisation* or a no less essentialist *separation* between objects, there is a presence of certain objects in others that prevent their identity from being fixed." (p. 116)

## Production of Data

Given our interest in analysing the production of subjectivity in the context of labour strikes, it was important that the empirical data referred to situations of sustained interaction over time, between subject who knew one another to some degree and had interacted, whether individually or collectively, at some moment. Also, the importance we gave in our approach to patriarchal capitalist relations of production implied concentrating on a company and on the families. The impossibility of accessing the family home meant that the nucleus of the case study would revolve around a company we have called MSA over a period of time running from the early seventies to the end of the nineties. This was a company in the auxiliary motor industry sector located in Catalonia (Spain). The company was founded with Spanish capital, and sold off to various foreign capital transnationals in successive phases. From the beginnings of the company as a small workshop (end of the sixties) to its high point, an increasing number of workers were hired. In the mid-seventies it had almost 1000 workers, but the late seventies and, above all, the early eighties saw the consolidation of a trend to reduce workplaces. By the end of the nineties there were less than 200 workers. The history of the company workers is characterised by a long and intense tradition of strikes. Table A1 in the appendix shows the most important strikes from the early 70s to the late 90s.

The empirical approach we would have preferred to have employed was the participant observation method. However, this route was outside our material possibilities. We then decided to use other techniques: a) biographical interviews with people who knew and had interacted with one another at some moment during the

period under consideration, a total of 21 interviews; b) informative interviews with members of the Works Committee and the Company Management, a total of 3 interviews. Table A2 in the appendix lists the profiles of the interviewees.

## The Individual and Strikes

As we have seen in the introduction, the subject is not a unified, homogenous entity, but a fragmented plurality. However, this plurality does not consist of the coexistence of distinct dimensions of subjectivity that remain isolated from one another or of relations that are not affected in their constitution, but in a relation of constant subversion between one another. This does not mean to say that subjectivity is indefinable for any given moment. On the contrary, it is, but at the same time, as a social process, it does not manage to completely consolidate itself. And this occurs for a basic reason: the presence of the *other*. The subjectivities as precariously fixed, in the sense that each one contains the others, the *other* that modifies them, that subverts them, producing provisionality and instability.

In terms of who intervenes in strikes, with greater or lesser intensity and involvement, subjectivity tends to acquire a double nature. We can speak of two fundamental concepts of subjectivity regarding strikes. The first is the one that relinquishes its own individuality to join a collective *solidary*<sup>29</sup> subjectivity where the personal dissolves into the general. The other is the one that refuses to give up its own individuality, distancing itself from the solidary subjectivity that unites the strikers. Nevertheless, we should not confuse subjectivity with the subjects, empirically considered, that beget it. There may be subjects who systematically participate in the solidary subjectivity that produces each strike, others who systematically shy away from or refuse to participate in said subjectivity, and others who, at some given moment, join a specific solidary subjectivity and at other times not. In any event, the process seems clear. In each strike, from what we can deduce from the case under study, it is necessary to produce solidary subjectivity, and thereby foster the transition from the individual to the collective, of the personal to the general, where the role of the leader is fundamental. As we shall see, this transition is precisely one of the objects under implicit dispute in strikes. Company management places special importance in frustrating this first factor in the formation of collective subjectivity that could threaten its interests. However, it is not enough to simply construct a solidary subjectivity to define the subjectivity produced by a strike. Some form of antagonistic subjectivity is also required.

During strike action, various ways of presenting oneself can be observed: there are those who accept them as long as they have been collectively decided on in assemblies, irrespective of whether they are more or less in agreement on a personal level (*Strikers*); those who organise the strikes and have a strategic vision of where they want to go (*Leaders*); those who rely on their own individuality to decide, for whom participating in a strike is understood as a personal and not a collective decision, without necessarily being against the strike; those who, relying on their own individuality, are always against strikes (*Blacklegs*); those in positions of management and their associates; and those who pay the consequences without having taken part in the decision process (*Housewives*).

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<sup>29</sup> The use of *solidary* as an adjective is taken from *solidarity*. In the Anglo-Saxon context this is not really common, but in the Latin context it is. Perhaps the nearest English equivalent is *socially conscious*, but the meaning is broader and is more closely related to the term *solidarity*.

Finally, I would like to close this paper by pointing out the gender configuration of these subjectivities produced in the context of strikes, for company workers and the confrontations it can lead to.

### ***The Strikers***

The solidary subjectivity expressed by the interviewees is constructed when they put their own individuality to one side. One becomes active in a strike by participating in a shared subjectivity, one with the others. Out of personal subjectivities, linked to a variety of contexts, a unifying collective action is articulated for a period of time and space that constitutes a collective subjectivity, which modifies individual subjectivities. It unites into action. And a strike is the supreme example of this process. But the starting off point is personal individuality (created from other shared subjectivities) and one's circumstances:

RhA (Skilled worker, masculine, workers' representative)<sup>30</sup>: When there is a strike each one sees it in his own individual way, there're those who say 'Hey, I don't mind being on strike for fifteen days" and those who say "I couldn't hold out for two days'  
[Said in the general context of strikes in general]<sup>31</sup>

In the action, differences yield to equivalence, affecting the subjectivity of every individual. It is a case of the desire to be like others. In principle, opinions come in all colours, and one has to relinquish personal opinions. Individual subjectivity is annulled to form a collective strength, and strength, and collective desire, is expressed by guiding action to a common end. This leap from the individual to the collective is especially visible when the interviewees tell of their participation in strikes against lay offs or the practice of wage discrimination against women employed on production lines, two struggles that have had a special impact on their lives:

RmE (Specialist worker, infrafeminine): Yes, I've never gone to work when there was a strike, I go along with the majority.

[Said in the context of the strikes against women's wage discrimination and lay offs of '97]

RmF (Specialist worker, neutral): Me, if I had to down tools, I downed tools, (...) I've never gone to work when there's been a stoppage, I'd be the first one to down tools, but not the others.

[Said in the context of the strikes against women's wage discrimination]

RhG (Specialist worker, inframasculine, workers' representative): Some willingly and others grudgingly, we managed to create a sense of solidarity, we made a common block and from there we organised ourselves into groups, workers' groups and a strike committee was created (...).

[Said in the context of the strikes against lay offs of '97]

The strength of solidary subjectivity is even more clearly evident when, despite not sharing the opinion of the majority, one does not hesitate in participating and

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<sup>30</sup> The profile of the interviewee is listed for each quote. Table 2 in the Annex describes these profiles. The interviews were recorded and literally transcribed in Spanish. The paper shows a version with grammatical corrections to make reading and translation easier, while attempting to affect the rhetoric of the text as little as possible.

<sup>31</sup> For each quote we point to the context in which it is made. We define the context in terms of the strike to which it refers. There are two basic types: the context refers to one or various specific strikes, which we will mention; or it refers to a generic discussion on *the strike* or *strikes*.

being involved in the strike, because you want to participate in the solidary subjectivity being created collectively. This collective subjectivity we hope to build consists precisely of joining a strike, despite not sharing its reasons and aims, simply because it has been democratically decided on in a meeting. What comes into play in the strike actions according to the interviewees are not just common interests, but also one's relationship with the rest. Not the rest one by one, but rather as "the majority", aggregations of masses, aggregations that justify the relinquishment of oneself:

RhI (Team leader, masculine): I've not been the kind of guy (...) well, what I liked, I liked, what I didn't like, I didn't like, if a majority voted for something, I always went along with it, and if we had to go on strike, I went on strike and that's all. You went on strike and that's it. There were always people in strikes who didn't want to go on strike and people who, though they weren't one hundred percent behind the strike, at least were there, it wasn't a case of people saying, "I'm going to work and that's it".

[Said in the context of strikes in general]

RhG (Specialist worker, inframasculine, workers' representative): So under the criteria that I wasn't much in agreement with the way it was set up, I respected it. Perhaps people were sold out, or people thought that it had to be the workers themselves who had to control the strike committee, because you know it's the strike committee that directs, and the works committee is relegated to second place.

[Said in the context of the strikes against lay offs of '97]

If the reasons and aims of a strike play an important role but are not the *sine qua non* condition, then we could come to the conclusion that it is the emotional ties established in the creation of a solidary subjectivity that plays a fundamental role. And these established ties sometimes create long-lasting relationships that are expressed in a need for the other, for their help, to feel taken care of:

RmU (Specialist female worker, workers' representative): Well, as far as I'm concerned, on one level the party takes care of me, on another my mother looks after me—who adores me—, on another my husband and my son, and on another level friends of many years' acquaintance, friendships of some twenty odd years I continue to have, from the other factory where I was laid off I still have two friends who were also fired when they went on strike because I was laid off, I even have co-workers from that plant who are now working in my factory and remember me from then.

[Said in the context of a strike not related to this case]

A strike also implies the separation of other shared subjectivities. When we join something like a strike, our subjectivity is transformed and it is possible that we distance ourselves from shared subjectivities of past times. We distance ourselves, and even come into conflict with those who do not go on strike, even though we may have emotional ties with them, like a friend from an assembly line, the husband or father. We drift apart from those who do not share that form of social struggle, perhaps because we begin to doubt the emotional ties that unite us. At that point a strike becomes a test of our relationships, not just at work, but in other areas, creating and dismantling individual and collective subjectivities. This implies reconsidering our relations with others outside what is, strictly speaking, the working context. This becomes particularly clear when the interviewees refer to strikes that repeatedly stand out, like the strike of 1973, which for many was the first strike they experienced, or strikes to defend the application of legal judgements against

women's wage discrimination from 1986 to 1989, or the strikes of 1997 organised to combat lay offs:

RmJ (Specialist worker, infrafeminine): (...) I don't know, when I had to go on strike in the company or had problems to defend my workplace or my salary, he [the husband] gave me no support (...).

[Said in the context of the strikes against women's wage discrimination]

RmJ (Specialist worker, infrafeminine): He [the father] didn't support me (...) he said that people who went on strike were lazy.

[Said in the context of strikes for collective agreements and policies in the 70s]

RmR (Specialist worker, infrafeminine): (...) with a strike [for it to be understood] in your home, you need someone who is going through the same thing, to know what it's like.

[Said in the context of strikes in general]

The individual joins the group; he does not form a class by joining the members of the group, but rather the individual joins the group as a whole, and the trigger to the union is the affection for a leader that perhaps arouses admiration and respect:

RmJ (Specialist worker, infrafeminine): After that, there were other strikes, the metal workers here in S. [referring to a specific town] (...) and I got to meet people, beginning to approach people that I thought were fighters, helping them.

[Said in the context of strikes in general and the supportive strikes of '76]

RmR (Specialist worker, infrafeminine): And at that moment, as she had to stay and say, "gentlemen, this is the strike committee, the strike has just been called off, here's the Guardia Civil lieutenant and he's a witness that the strike has been called off, and everyone back to work", and we pushed the managers aside and all went inside, strong, no? All in a matter of seconds, seconds, you better believe it, that's strong, eh.

[Said in the context of the strike for a collective agreement, against women's wage discrimination and the voluntary bonus of 8'7]

### ***The Leaders***

In the case of leaders the question is presented in another way. They present themselves as someone who proposes strategies, who aids decision making, who analyses and evaluates the development of the strike and its scope. This is an individual who anticipates the movements of collective subjectivity but does so in relation to others who support the leader. The leader modulates people's desires, channels them and ensures that they continue to be subjects, even when they lose. Calling off a strike, as told in the following quote, means asserting oneself as a collective subject before the company's intentions of turning the strikers into objects, had the company succeeded in breaking the strike:

RmU (Specialist female worker, workers' representative): [Tells of the final outcome of the strike of 1987, when the company manages to get some of the staff to agree to return to work, thereby preventing the strike from being broken by the company] The company had arranged it so that the manager would come in first, followed by the management and the company lawyer, and then everybody else. Let's say that the company would break the siege, enter by force and, seeing as we were about to stop this from happening, there was going to be a confrontation between us. We agreed to meet one hour before and saw that the factory was completely occupied.

But with video cameras and such like, police, rather than security guards on the roofs, in the windows, all the streets taken, a horrendous deployment for a confrontation. The company had provoked things so that there would even be a certain amount of repression, if anything happened the works committee would get it in the neck and be fired. So there we were and let the head of personnel through, we let the manager in and all the managers, and then we cordoned the place off and let nobody else in. Only one worker went through. Nobody else went in, we prevented it, we'd already organised that that nobody would go in. And then we looked at the letter [the company promised a series of improvements in wages to break the strike] and we decided to return to work all together, because the only condition that the company didn't set was signing any form of collective agreement, we didn't have to give anything up [the strike was for the collective agreement and against women's wage discrimination, subjects on which no agreement was ever reached].

[Said in the context of the strike for the collective agreement, against women's wage discrimination and for the volunteer bonus of '87]

For the interviewed workers, a leader must be incorruptible, in the context of a strike. Otherwise he becomes the worst of all possible traitors. This is because those who project onto him have relinquished the most valuable thing they have, their individual subjectivity, to make the leader what he is. The leader is prized (and therefore corruptible by the opposing side) because of the strength or power obtained by the group. The strength of the leader comes from the workers. On his own he is nothing. If the leader's treason was not experienced as the worse possible thing that could happen, it would mean that the others had not given up anything to form part of the group, that they had no subjectivity or personal aspirations to relinquish for the strike:

RhA (Qualified worker, masculine, workers' representative): That person was someone who entered the company as a labourer, but had a lot of ambition (...).

P-E (interviewer): A social climber (...).

RhA (Qualified worker, masculine, workers' representative): Ambition to climb on whatever basis. We had a strike around 1970 and he was the ringleader, the initiator of the strike, the one who drew in the people, the one who gave people the messages to follow the strike. On one occasion he even climbed a platform in the factory and began to shout, "We have to set the company on fire, we have to burn the company down". When someone sets himself up as a ringleader, the company tries to see if they can come to some kind of agreement with them, to get them on their side. If that person doesn't have what it takes, then they change. They offered him a slightly better post, and he soon forgot of the whole fuss.

[Said in the context of the strike for the collective agreement of 7'0]

In short, for those interviewed who participated in solidary subjectivities linked to strikes, these can become somewhat common, normal in their lives, contributing to the formation of their own individual subjectivity:

RhI (Team leader, masculine): I've experienced many strikes at MSA and it's normal, logical.

[Said in the context of strikes in general]

And, at the same time as the strikes, some even define a time in the personal biographies with a strong emotional component:

RmJ (Specialised worker, infrafeminine): for me at least, up to now, apart from having my children, I would point to my experiences with the women's strike at MSA, in other words, the years of struggle, that for us was a goal we had to achieve and, for me, those years were very intense.

[Said in the context of the strikes against women's wage discrimination]

RhS (Specialised worker, inframasculine): Shortly after joining the company, that's what impressed me the most (...) I'd never before been in a strike, and shortly after being employed, I joined in October of seventy-two and in March of seventy-three there was a strike (...) in the company (...), a total strike.

[Said in the context of the strikes for collective agreements of 7'3]

RhI (Team leader, masculine): For example, when I joined the company they had the first strike, and I'd been working there for six months (...) I was employed in November and by February or March they set up the first strike. I was eighteen. The strike was for five hundred pesetas more. And nobody talked of "they're going to give us a raise of five percent and we want eight", no, "we want five hundred pesetas more, and that's it". And that strike lasted one month, and that strike is very present in my mind. "We want five hundred pesetas more and that's it", and everyone out on the street, a big mess, firings on the spot and all, and in the end we went back with five hundred pesetas more. It was the first time I found myself in a strike (...) that I took one in (...) as I was only eighteen years old and I hadn't lived and it was my first strike, (...) but afterwards, as I've been through so many in the thirty years I've been there, I have no idea how many we've had.

[Said in the context of the strikes for collective agreements of 7'3]

### ***The Blacklegs***

Together with this form of subjectivity expressed by the interviewees when they talk of themselves with regards to the strikes, there is another that consists of not going along with this solidary subjectivity. Here the individual is someone whose decision to participate in a strike does not depend on a majority position discussed in an assembly, but rather on his exclusive viewpoint. It is his personal decision. This behaviour, where one's personal criteria prevail over the majority position, leads to not joining a strike even when a majority has voted for it. The result is to not participate in the reiterated processes to constitute a shared subjectivity. Those who decide to not take part in a strike, despite it being approved in an assembly, assert their own individuality and decision before the constitution of a solidary subjectivity. They claim that the reasons are not convincing, that the aims are not appropriate, that the procedures are mistaken, that the majority is not legitimate. But in the end, what is not being shared is something much deeper, the emotional link, or the emotional link is not sufficiently strong to relinquish one's own subjectivity. They do not join the strike, they reject it, they oppose it, they do not recognise it as their own, perhaps because they do not wish to pay the price of being less vulnerable (the group makes you less vulnerable). This assertion of one's individuality is not an easy choice, because it is made from the stance of *me who does not join the strike before them who go on strike*. Going on strike involves individual difficulties, and not doing so also. This is not a case of oppositions between *us who are for the strike* and *them who are against the strike*, but rather *mes* against *thems*, of *mes* who do not participate in a solidary subjectivity. This is the kind of relationship the company wants to establish among the workers: an aggregation of individualities:

RhM (Clerk, neutral): And if I don't want to stop I won't stop [working] and, if not, I'll go in through the sewers or another door. It's all the same to me if the place is full of banners. If I decide to go in, I go in. They can say what they like about me, but I would never deceive people. And I won't be a blackleg. I come in and go to my workplace, I've never gone down to the factory floor to make a piece. Never. Something that many who call themselves trade unionists, and not, have done. But not me, I've gone to my workplace and done my job. If they need pieces let them go down to the shop floor and make them, but I've not gone down there. And if I had work to do I did it and if I had no work I didn't do anything, and that's it. I've never deceived people. I've had fights and rows with people and all that. And I've even told them one or two things in their faces in front of everyone, I don't hide, there's no reason to hide. Did the majority decide on the strike?, no, they're like sheep (...) it's not my problem. I don't give a damn if thirty have decided in an assembly.

[Said in the context of strikes in general]

RhT (Team leader, inframasculine): Yes, because when I don't agree with a strike I'll clearly say, "I won't do it because of this, this and this", I have my own ideas and respect those of others.

[Said in the context of strikes in general]

This unshared subjectivity, however, can have two sides. The most obvious one is insisting on maintaining one's independence despite the tensions with workmates caused by the decision not to join the strike because one does not believe in them, in general, or for some specific reasons. But there is another possibility: the worker though not necessarily being against strikes or class actions in general, he or she is unwilling to get involved in those strike actions when they believe an inappropriate strategy is being used to defend workers' interests.

### ***Management and Their Associates***

In the game of establishing subjectivities in the context of strikes, appealing to one's individuality, to one's freedom to choose, implies the paradox of sidling up (whether actively or passively) to the subjectivity of management, to their way of seeing things. Perhaps the emotional ties are stronger in this other direction, ties that are obviously not between equals, in contrast to the ties between the workers who take part in assemblies, which, despite any differences or discrepancies, are ties between equals. If we accept that there are leaders among *us the workers* and what is followed is the leader, what would be produced in this case is a change of leader. Therefore, the relationship established with the bosses in moments of rest and relaxation, to give one example, can influence in the creation of some emotional tie with the visible personalities of the company. More so if they become your friends. This route, though it may not necessarily be intentional, is useful for the company. Informal ties between bosses and workers can help prevent some workers from entering into the solidary subjectivity and, by extension, antagonistic. There is an example in the following statement:

P-E (interviewer): Returning to the subject of conflicts, in which other conflicts have you had a very clear impression that you should form part of the strike?

RhT (Team leader, inframasculine): (...) To start off with, they tell you things that after a while you realise are not true (...) they've told you something so

you get involved, and then time passes and you see that what you've been told is not true, for political reasons or whatever.

P-E (interviewer): For example?

RhT (Team leader, inframasculine): Whenever we used to go on strike it was political. You couldn't have a fifteen day-long strike for half a point [wage increase], when you'd never recover that half a percentage point in what remained of the year. But you'd look at it and think, "I'm staying out". I'd stay out very convinced, sitting there, or I'd even say, "I'm not going to the factory, why go? To stand at the door, I won't go", and would stay home. Or I've even gone to work somewhere else while I was on strike there, it's true, you have to be realistic. But when you realise that what you've been told is not true, you say, "I'm being a fool" and I'd go back to work. Weighing one thing against another, with what was really so (...) I had a friend here who was a life-long friend, and he would give me such a scolding (...), but not outside, we were friends, and he would explain things and you think, "shit, why don't they explain these things on the shop floor?", "look at it" and I was out. He'd say to me, "I'm not saying you should go in, that's your choice, but think about it".

P-E (interviewer): Can you give me an example of one of these situations, that was very well known, where on one hand they told you white and on the other black?

RhT (Team leader, inframasculine): What I said about percentage points, "we give you three points" [wage increase] "and we want five", and the company says, "not five, we'll give you three, but we'll put on buses to come to work, we'll give you these breaks (...)" and you add it all up and see you make more with buses included. If you add the money you save with the bus, with three points you come out winning. It's things you weigh up and you go back to work. Things like that.

[Said in the context of strikes in general]

Regarding those who take part wholeheartedly in the company subjectivity, the management, who do not give their opinions on strikes. It is not a case of whether one decides to join the strike or not. For the management it is not appropriate to consider going on strike, because they are the direct or indirect object of strike actions.

### ***Those Affected by Strikes***

Finally, those who stay home are directly or indirectly involved in the struggle, especially housewives who are related to the strikers. They may not seem in favour of going on strike, if the decision depended on them, but they must also suffer the consequences if it involves the people they live with, they pay the consequences of actions without having any say, only indirectly. This is not openly discussed, but one can sense that strikes are experienced as a source of troubles, given the financial dependency between the housewife and the breadwinner. It is as if the gender division of labour established the following deal: "You bring in the money, and I'll make sure we make it to pay day":

RmP (Housewife exclusively): Me, with money coming in, without a strike and that, then no (...) I can handle our finances well.

[Said in the context of strikes in general]

## The Gender Configuration of Collective Subjectivity in the Context of Strikes

Subjectivity is subverted by the presence of *others*. If the other is understood as plural, and in terms of social life he is, as well as not being equal, we can perceive class subjectivity as a possible yet precarious and ephemeral subjectivity. This is because it is threatened by the configuration of new collective subjectivities that could supplant it, or because we build other subjectivities around it in a constant, historical and contingent meshing of subjectivities.

The innovating strength of the *me* does not reside so much in its isolated potentiality, as an individual subject facing a specific situation, but in its potentiality as a *me* that is able to interact, to relate to other *mes* to create a common innovative project, to transform social relationships or further perpetuate them. From our point of view, social change, whether it is organised or not, moves more through the “*us*” than through the “*me*”. Here the formulation of the *other* together with *others* plays a fundamental role in the construction of an “*us*” before a “*them*”. When speaking of the other, participating in relations of production implies speaking of differentiated others, as “*them*”, as “*us*”, not equal, exploited or exploiters, dominated or dominators. It is the presence of the *other*, which in this case is “*them*”, that prevents us from being totally ourselves, a totally impossible objective because there is no original *ourselves* to compare oneself to. The relation does not arise from fully-fledged subjectivities, but from the impossibility of constituting them.

To speak of the gender configuration of subjectivities in the case of labour strikes we need to analyse the formation of “*us*” in relation to the role played in the family. In this paper we limit the analysis to the case of male and female company workers. We can distinguish an internal fracture which in terms of capitalist patriarchy would point to “*we*” being made up of two classes and in terms of patriarchal capitalism would indicate that the working class suffers an internal fracture. The two segments that the “*us*” divides into are,

1. “Us the men, who are responsible for supporting the family” (bread winners).
2. “Us the women, who are responsible for looking after the family and contribute a complementary wage” (working housewives).

When they speak of strikes the workers basically define women and men by mentioning the fight against women’s wage discrimination. This struggle saw the construction of two subjectivities, “*us the working women fighting against wage discrimination*”, and “*us the working men who morally support women in their fight*”. An important fracture opens up in the solidary subjectivity that had characterised the workers of both genders at the MSA plant over many years, precisely because the struggle against discrimination is not taken as a personal struggle by all:

RmJ (Specialist worker, infrafeminine): Last week I didn’t get round to insisting on the subject of the women’s strike a bit more, because for me, more than a feminist issue, and there were those who saw it that way, there was a part of the committee that saw it as one worker’s struggle, of a young person (...)It shouldn’t seem like something feminist.

[Said in the context of the strikes against women’s wage discrimination, in general]

But of only one collective, women workers on the plant,

RhB (Clerk, Inframasculine): The women set up the strike, asking for equal wages for men and women.

[Said in the context of the strike against women’s wage discrimination of ‘89]

This is because of the non-participation of male workers in the indefinite strike staged by women in 1989. It would be legitimate to speak of them as blacklegs however much the women's strategy may have been to define them as "*us the working men who morally support women in their fight*".

### ***"Us the Working Women Fighting Against Wage Discrimination"***

The case of fighting wage discrimination against women on the production line at MSA is the context in which the antagonistic subjectivity of "*us the women fighting against wage discrimination*" is formulated before an explicit "*them*"; "*them the company and their representative*", "*the management who discriminate against women in terms of wages*". As well as another more ambiguous one, which according to the interviewees that participated in this antagonistic subjectivity swings between a "*them who partially support*", who partially participate in this subjectivity, and a "*them the working men who do not go on an indefinite strike*". This struggle saw the construction of a politically orientated antagonistic subjectivity that was clearly aimed at containing the construction of a "*them the working men who do not go on an indefinite strike*" as an enemy (in that not being behind the women only reinforced their explicit opponent, "*them the company*") to turn them into a "*them the working men who morally support us*", thereby creating a "*them*" who to some measure is also an "*us*". In this endeavour the role of the leader, a woman leader in this case, is of fundamental importance when it comes to directing the creation of a solidary and antagonistic subjectivity, which only goes to show the inventive dimension of the construction of subjectivities:

P-E (interviewer): In other words you would be in a weak situation if the stoppage were not total.

RmU (Specialist worker, workers' representative): Exactly, that was the other argument and the battles were to ensure that the strike in the company was total and that it made considerable financial damage to the company. Whether we won in the political or economic fields, these were the two major and valuable considerations. And with what methods? The method was to achieve total unity, because you can't win without total unity and the other methods included that everyone who was with us and with what we said, then good, and if they weren't we'd go for them. The proposal was to behave like guerrillas and preventing in the mornings (...)

P-E (interviewer): Setting up pickets and not letting the men in?

RmU (Specialist worker, workers' representative): Seeing as the assembly wouldn't resolve the problem, it's true that when you saw the men go in, the tension in the air, the women would get really angry. So my message was that the men were behind us morally, at least lets pretend (...).

[Said in the context of the strike against women's wage discrimination of '89]

Nevertheless this can be a difficult situation, especially during the indefinite strike of 1989 to combat wage discrimination. If both the subjectivity of "*us the women fighting against wage discrimination*" and "*us the men who morally support them*" form part of the solidary subjectivity of "*us the workers*", the contradiction becomes clearly evident the moment the men decide to not participate in the indefinite strike. If they form part of the shared subjectivity, then they are all blacklegs. But they are not defined in this mode, on the contrary, there is an attempt to present them as supportive, even if only morally. We then see the appearance of a sort of class faction or even another class with which some form of alliance or non-

interference agreement is established. However, this staying on the sidelines at the most decisive moments has the practical effect of supporting management. Also, the faction itself is proof of the implicit concepts that sustain the “*us the workers*” itself; a patriarchal capitalist “*us the workers*”. This solidary subjectivity is configured by the interests of the workers who consider themselves to be chiefly responsible for supporting the family, which means that when strikes that articulate these subjectivities are called, what is being defended or pursued are precisely family interests, or defending the role of heads of family. In this subjectivity the defence of women’s wages is not thought of as an issue of solidarity and therefore common to a generic collective of “*us the female/male workers*”, because women are not conceived as being co-responsible for supporting the family.

Another good example of this fragmentation of the subjectivity of “*us the workers*” is evident in negotiating collective agreements regarding questions that can only be considered from the viewpoint of gender. When measures to combat absenteeism were being discussed during the negotiations for the collective agreement of 1990, the company proposed setting up a bonus to stimulate its reduction, while the Works Committee, which was chaired by a woman at the time, proposed that the company grant two days for personal business. The company opposed this measure, as they saw it as the institutionalisation of absenteeism. It would imply recognising the right of workers to attend to personal problems when they arose. Its practical effect would be a re-internalisation of the costs of production involved in day-to-day life back to the company itself, in the proportion of two-days’ pay for workers to attend to family needs. The major part of female absenteeism is related to these responsibilities of looking after the family that are commonly attributed to women. And when workers request this they are saying that absenteeism serves to resolve problems, that people need to have extra time outside the context of holidays and time off due to illness, so that they can resolve *their* business, which tends to be related to family problems. This is a fracture because it is a demand that never comes to term. In part because, as company management understands, it is institutive of labour relations, but also because it is not a demand shared by other workers. We have to assume that male workers do not find themselves subject to these kinds of needs and, in the end, therefore, they are given a secondary importance in processes of struggle and negotiation.

### **“*Us the Men Who Support Women in Their Fight*”**

The interviewees who expressed the “*us the working men who morally support the women*” do so showing only a partial solidarity with the women, which comes out as intermittent, labour partial stoppages, demonstrations, etc.:

RhA (Skilled worker, masculine, workers’ representative): It’s that at that moment, after the women demanded this subject of equality, when it was won, the company refused to apply it. Then there was a series of actions, but they weren’t indefinite-type actions, rather that a partial strike would be called, we stopped, we went on strike, we downed tools, and when we had a partial strike everyone took part, except in the offices, but the majority took part and gave support.

[Said in the context of the strikes against women’s wage discrimination, in general]

RhI (Team leader, masculine): We even had a three, four day strike and we were all out in the street, men and women.

[Said in the context of the strikes against women's wage discrimination, in general]

The limit to this partial solidarity was the indefinite strike,

RhI (Team leader, masculine): Then we the men said, "alright, very good, you're fighting for this. Do you want to go on strike? [referring to an indefinite strike]. We'll be with you, no matter what, so long as it doesn't involve going on strike, but in a strike you'll be on your own".

[Said in the context of the strike against women's wage discrimination of '89]

The fracture that became clearly evident in the indefinite strike was closely tied to subjectivities and the ways of participating in the production of life in the home. For the workers the typical female worker is a person who is married with a man that works and for that she can go on strike for a long time:

RhT (Team leader, inframasculine): A woman whose husband works elsewhere can give herself the luxury of a month on strike or off work, but someone who has nobody else bringing home a wage, how are they going to last a month? The person who gets paid later, gets paid.

[Said in the context of the strike against women's wage discrimination of '89]

The position of the male gender is clearly expressed in follow quotation: is the position of the male bread winner:

RhG (Specialist worker, inframasculine, workers' representative): Because the judge told us the sentence would be out in a month, and I said we could call a few intermittent stoppages, so the press would pick it up and that. But I didn't think it was a good idea getting involved in an indefinite strike under those conditions because there was an important collective to be considered which was the men. To this they'd say "but you're already earning that", how does a man explain to his family that he's getting involved in an indefinite strike lasting one month without being paid a penny when he's not about to get anything in return. I was already earning that, all right, but family finances are like that.

[Said in the context of the strike against women's wage discrimination of '89]

In the context of the indefinite strike of 1989, to apply the sentences that agreed with the women's position, partial solidarity, showed the limits to the equivalence between a female plant worker who is married to a worker and a male plant worker married to a working housewife or to a simple housewife. The equivalence is realised in terms of wages. A woman's wages are understood as being complementary to a man's wages, whereas a man's wages are understood to be the main contribution. And this equivalence, as a product of an antagonistic subjectivity shared by men and women, had its limits in the strike of 1989 against women's wage discrimination: all the desired support except an indefinite strike by men. In other words, wage demands that, as a minimum, affect men are *worth* an indefinite strike for all workers and all the uncertainties it may involve, but not in the case of women. The men claim that a family cannot withstand an indefinite strike without earnings. True enough. But the same is true when other things are demanded that affect male plant workers. The sexist circumstances in which we live and define any possibility of action by MSA workers, whether a breadwinner or a working housewife or a simple housewife, are

actively reinforced and appropriated by male workers. When they support the women in their specific demands, they bring their role as a breadwinner to a crisis point, also in their actions and their arguments, but when they do not wish to support the women in the indefinite strike, they reinforce what it means to be a breadwinner, in their actions and their arguments. The subject appears fragmented, contradictory and unstable, and the paradox is that this fragmentation operates in the arguments of those who do not support the women in the indefinite strike, appealing, precisely, to the fragmentation between the men who are responsible for the family (which means to support it) and the women who are conceived of as co-responsible for the family (and can therefore get involved in a strike of this kind),

RhG (Skilled worker, inframasculine, workers' representative): We said that we did not agree with an indefinite strike, that the men would not support an indefinite strike as that meant a month-long total stoppage and you weren't going to get paid a penny, which would lead to serious family problems. (...) well, the women came back with factious replies saying, "listen, you don't lose", because it's what the male workers were saying, "you women are going to win, because after this you're going to get back all the back pay, which could come close to one million pesetas, but we're not going to pick up a penny", and they took on a response that was logical but factious, they'd say "you've already earned it", I'd been paid the raise but had already spent it and now I had a problem before me, which was that I had to feed my family, and I no longer had the cash, so how could I justify it (...) Women are very solidary, but also very egotistic.  
[Said in the context of the strike against women's wage discrimination of '89]

## Conclusion

In this paper I have shown that subjectivity can be subverted by the presence of *others*. A discursive presence, that is to say, that the presence of the other is a presence in action, in interaction, and not in contemplation. The relation of interaction is found in the pragmatic context. In this sense, as Glasersfeld (2000[1981]) points out, we need to mesh with *others*, pragmatically in some way. We somehow *run into* the others in the interaction. If we understand the other to be plural, therefore social life is plural, as well as being unequal, then we can perceive the collective subjectivity of class as a possible subjectivity but precarious and ephemeral when it is constantly threatened by the configuration of new subjectivities that supplant it, or when other subjectivities are articulated around it in a constant, historical and contingent meshing of subjectivities.

The idea of analysing social classes in their discursive interaction arises from a concern with understanding the process of social transformation carried out by human beings. We have placed the social interactions that sustain and enable us as subjects in the centre of our analysis, in what helps us contribute, in a more decisive manner, to the closure, the repetition and negation of the subject. It is a question of the context, which is the result, in turn, of historical processes in which we lead our lives. We have focused on contradictions, conflicts and confrontations, not just ones of inter-subjectivity (especially gender-related ones), but in the core of subjectivity itself. For it is these conflicts that help us understand the movements,

recompositions, dissolutions and fragmentations that assign our concept of class its unstable, contradictory and changing nature. The subjectivities we have identified in this analysis are those listed in the following table:

| <b>TABLE 1: KIND OF SUBJECTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF STRIKES</b> |                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Individual subjectivity</b>                                   | <b>Gender collective subjectivity</b>                                                                                     |
| "The strikers"                                                   | "Us the women, who are responsible for looking after the family and contribute a complementary wage" (working housewives) |
| "The leaders"                                                    |                                                                                                                           |
| "The blacklegs"                                                  |                                                                                                                           |
| "Management and their associates"                                | "Us the men, who are responsible for supporting the family" (bread winners)                                               |
| "Those affected by strikes"                                      |                                                                                                                           |

For both workers and the company, confrontation passes through the mutually undermined production of subjectivities. Every day, workers sustain the production of subjectivities based on democratic procedures and ties of affection, where affection for a democratic leader is the catalysing agent. They create common interests and strategies for its achievement. As we have seen, this very act involves defining the workers' subjectivities against the "others". The "others" are those the workers attribute opposing interests, strategies and emotions. *Being with us is being against them*. Workers produce these supportive subjectivities when confronted with company bosses, turning them into antagonists. By appealing to the individuality of each subject, the bosses construct shared subjectivities aimed at the dispersion and disintegration of workers among themselves, and to their agglutination within the company. The latter is taken as a leader for those who take part in a shared subjectivity with the company, through emotional ties. This is an authoritarian leader, under conditions of an economic dictatorship. The production process for these changing subjectivities is created during discursive interaction. Our analysis allows us to show that classes *are not born* but *are made*, in this case, during strikes. And they are made through difficulties, confrontations and struggles where, perhaps, the agglutination of subjectivities may be the ultimate objective in question in the everyday constitution of classes. In defining classes, what we stress is not the *being*, but rather the *making* of the subjects. We are therefore moving in the field of the inter-subjective, and we can see the daily flow involved in the making of the social classes.

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## Appendix

**TABLE A1: THE MOST IMPORTANT STRIKES BY MSA WORKERS**

| Year      | Main motives                                                                                                      | Type                                               |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1973      | Collective agreement (wage increase, reduction in the working day, stability in contracts)                        | Indefinite                                         |
| 1974      | Collective agreement                                                                                              | Labour partial stoppages                           |
| 1973-1974 | Improved working conditions                                                                                       | Labour partial stoppages                           |
| 1976      | Solidarity with county metal workers<br>Solidarity with union organisations and policies                          | Indefinite                                         |
| 1976      | Improved educational conditions and the release of political prisoners                                            | General strike                                     |
| 1978      | Collective agreement (wage increase)                                                                              | Labour partial stoppages                           |
| 1981      | Support for democratic institutions. Against the attempted coup d'état                                            | Strike in support of parliamentarians held hostage |
| 1984      | Collective agreement (wage increases, fifteen minute break)                                                       | Labour partial stoppages and indefinite strike     |
| 1985      | Against pension cuts                                                                                              | General strike                                     |
| 1986      | Collective agreement (wage increases and wage parity for men and women on the production line)                    | Indefinite strikes                                 |
| 1987      | Collective agreement (wage parity for men and women, end of voluntary company remuneration bonus)                 | Indefinite strike                                  |
| 1988      | Against government youth employment programme                                                                     | General strike                                     |
| 1989      | Wage parity for men and women on the production line                                                              | Indefinite strike                                  |
| 1992      | Against the labour market reform                                                                                  | General strike                                     |
| 1994      | Against the labour market reform. Creation of temporary employment companies                                      | General strike                                     |
| 1997      | Maintenance of workplaces. Negotiation of company viability plan (first presentation of job termination dossier)  | Indefinite strike                                  |
| 1997      | Maintenance of workplaces. Negotiation of company viability plan (second presentation of job termination dossier) | Labour partial stoppages and indefinite strike     |

**TABLE A2: LIST OF PROFILES**

The profile refers to a position in the company (work and union) and in the home. The series of profiles employed is listed below:

|                            |                |                         |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| ▪ Specialist female worker | Infrafeminine  |                         |
| ▪ Specialist female worker | Neutral        |                         |
| ▪ Specialist female worker | -              | Workers' representative |
| ▪ Specialist male worker   | Inframasculine |                         |
| ▪ Specialist male worker   | Inframasculine | Workers' representative |
| ▪ Skilled female worker    | Infrafeminine  |                         |
| ▪ Skilled male worker      | Masculine      | Workers' representative |
| ▪ Skilled male worker      | Inframasculine |                         |
| ▪ Team leader              | Infrafeminine  |                         |
| ▪ Team leader              | Masculine      |                         |
| ▪ Team leader              | Inframasculine |                         |
| ▪ Clerk                    | Inframasculine |                         |
| ▪ Clerk                    | Neutral        |                         |
| ▪ Technician               | Masculine      |                         |
| ▪ Management               | Masculine      |                         |
| ▪ Housewife (exclusively)  | Feminine       |                         |

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We list the profiles of the interviewees that we have been able to reach effectively. Insofar as the terminology employed, we need only comment on that which refers to gender. To refer to the plurality of situations that emerge from the simultaneous definition of a profile in patriarchal capitalism we have made an attempt to simplify the terminology by employing (with some modifications and trimming) the gender typology developed by Izquierdo (1998b: 44). Therefore, instead of saying, for example, "skilled worker, breadwinner married to a housewife who works in the home exclusively", we use "skilled worker, masculine". Below we describe each term used to identify gender, from the viewpoint of the conceptual pairing "breadwinner" and "housewife":

Feminine: Someone whose relationship with the *head of the family* is that of *wife/husband* and defines themselves as a housewife (exclusively) when asked about their job. Housewife who works in the home exclusively and is married to a breadwinner.

Infrafeminine: Someone whose relationship with the *head of the family* is that of *wife/husband* and defines themselves as active in the labour force (working or unemployed) or retired and as a housewife when asked about their job and who consider their income as complementary. The term infrafeminine is not employed by Izquierdo (she speaks of superfeminine) and is due to Francisco José León. A female worker and housewife married to a breadwinner.

Masculine: Someone who is the *head of the family*, who lives in a home containing more than one person, and who defines themselves as active in the labour force (working or unemployed) or retired and who considers their income as for the family. Breadwinner married to a housewife who works in the home exclusively.

Inframasculine: Someone who is the *head of the family*, who lives in a home containing more than one person, and who defines themselves as active in the labour force (working or unemployed) or retired and who considers their income as for the family and who are *husband/wife* with someone of the infrafeminine gender. The term inframasculine is not employed by Izquierdo (she speaks of supermasculine) and is due to Francisco José León. Bread winner married to a worker and housewife

Neutra: Someone who lives alone and who defines themselves as active in the labour force (working or unemployed) when asked about their job.

Finally, we do not indicate gender when this typology is not applicable.

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### Intimate Intrusions<sup>32</sup> Revisited: A Case of Intimate Partner Abuse and Violations of the Territories of the Self

#### **Abstract**

Intimate partner abuse is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon, highly situated and “locally-produced” by intimate partners in the domestic interactional milieu. Adopting a symbolic interactionist approach, this article uses a limited topical life-history case study to investigate the interactional experiences of a male victim of female-perpetrated intimate partner abuse. The theoretical analysis utilises Goffman’s conceptualisation of the “territories of the self” and their subjection to various forms of contamination or “modalities of violation”, applied in this case to the contested domestic interactional milieu. The paper seeks to add to a developing qualitative literature on male victims’ experiences of intimate abuse and violence, and to extend Goffman’s conceptual insights into a new domain.

#### **Keywords**

Intimate partner abuse; Abused men; Erving Goffman; Territories of the self; Topical life history

She criticises him for buying a new shirt. He points out that it is a replacement for the one that she ripped to pieces at the weekend. She takes exception to this. First she gags him so he is gasping for air. She then pushes him into a corner. The next action is a new one – she is forcing her fingers into his mouth. It makes him wretch as he tries to pull them out of his mouth. She pushes in the fingers of her other hand. Their son is watching at the bedroom door, silently. Her nail cuts his tongue and he can feel the blood flowing freely. With her fingers still pulling at his mouth... he is choking. He is now spitting blood onto the sheets. She is angry with him for this. He is trying to get his breath back. She bites the knuckle of his index finger with great force. Searing pain. [Diary, 21.10.03]

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<sup>32</sup> Title taken from the book by Elizabeth Stanko (1985)

This instance of female-perpetrated intimate partner violence is taken from the diary of a middle-aged, senior-professional man who, as part of his diary-keeping<sup>33</sup>, systematically charted for a period of just over two years the abuse to which he was frequently subjected by his wife. The physical abuse escalated in both frequency and extent to the point at which the husband was forced to flee his home and children with few clothes and personal possessions, never to return. The diary of abuse, together with transcripts of a series of seven (to-date) in-depth interviews, constitute the topical life-history data upon which this paper is based. The purpose of the article is to examine a case of intimate partner abuse at the micro-level, as a situated interactional activity, “locally-produced” by partners mainly - but not exclusively - in the domestic milieu. To this end, the article is structured as follows. First, as contextualisation of the topical life-history data, some of the general literature on intimate partner abuse and violence (IPA&V) is considered, before discussing the interactionist perspective adopted here. Methodological issues, including ethical concerns, are then addressed, before proceeding to the theorisation and findings of the study, in which Goffman’s (1972) conceptualisation of the “territories of the self” and their modalities of violation are used to explore specific experiences of intimate partner abuse, in this case as recounted by a heterosexual male victim, a perspective under-represented in the research literature.

## **Abuse in the Intimate Context**

As Dutton (2007) highlights, what is deemed to constitute “abuse” varies considerably according to the gender of perpetrator and victim, and at the level of terminology a panoply of terms exists in relation to “domestic violence”. For some researchers, “violence” fails to evoke psychological abuse, and “domestic violence” - like “family violence” - may obscure who actually initiates and/or perpetrates the violence and whether it is uni- or bilateral. Carlson succinctly defines abuse as: “A pattern of behaviours that can be physical, emotional or psychological, verbal, or sexual that is intended to control or demean” (1997). For the purposes of this article, intimate partner abuse (IPA) refers to any abusive act deemed to have the intention, or perceived intention, of generating fear, causing physical injury, intimidation, disorientation, denigration or emotional or psychological pain to an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to any act deemed to have the intention or perceived intention of causing physical injury to an intimate partner. In many cases these forms are perpetrated simultaneously.

As Palin-Davies (2006) notes, domestic violence is extremely complex, not only in terms of its dynamics but also how it is presented, and by/for whom; the “ethics of presentation” (Katz Rothman 2007), and indeed *non*-presentation are key issues here. For there exists a gamut of studies, embracing empirical studies and meta-analyses of empirical research, that indicates IPA&V to be perpetrated by women and girls in heterosexual relationships as frequently, or (in some studies) almost as frequently as they are by men and boys (e.g. Archer 2002; Dutton 2007; George 2003; Hines 2008; Morse 1995; Straus 2006) and for very similar reasons (Medeiros and Straus 2006). Such “gender symmetry” findings have been challenged (Kimmel 2002; Pagelow 1985)

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<sup>33</sup> The diary was written in the third person in order to help reduce the emotional impact; see discussion in the methods section.

on a variety of grounds, including methodological concerns, reporting and recording differences, and lack of identification of whether the violence was unilaterally initiated or responsive/defensive. Further, as Loseke and Kurz (2005) note, much of the research on family violence in general is characterized by a lack of clarity in key concepts. In contrast to the “gender symmetry” findings, other researchers contend that IPV is primarily an asymmetrical problem of men's violence to women, on the dimensions of frequency, severity, consequences, the victim's sense of safety and well-being (Dobash and Dobash 2004), and the greater likelihood of women being injured and repeatedly beaten by male partners (Archer 2002). The gender symmetry/asymmetry debate continues unresolved, however, and the overall picture appears to be that with IPA&V, women and men, heterosexual, bisexual, Lesbian, gay (Island and Letellier 1991; Lockhart et al., 1994; Renzetti and Miley 1996), queer (Leventhal and Lundy 1999), and transsexual/transsexed (Brown 2007), across age, physical ability, socio-economic and ethnic background, find themselves victims of such abuse. Indeed, the prevalence of domestic violence amongst same-sex couples appears to be comparable to that of heterosexual couples (Seelau and Seelau 2005).

As McHugh and Hanson Frieze (2006) note, research demonstrating women to be both victims *and* perpetrators challenges many long-held assumptions and explanations of IPA&V, giving rise to calls for more in-depth, qualitative studies into the experiences of abused men. Writing recently, George (2003) notes specifically that: “case analysis of battered husbands, by virtue of an almost complete absence of academic qualitative study of assaulted men, is limited to just a few sources”. This article seeks to address this research lacuna in a small way, by focusing at the micro-level of a particular case. The contribution of this particular article is then to examine the interactional accomplishment of IPA&V using a limited topical life-history method, and employing some of the insights of Goffman's (1972, 1976) work on the “territories of the self” and their violation. To widen the analysis, research accounts of both abused women and abused men are incorporated where relevant, for as Migliaccio (2002) notes: “The expression of commonalties that are shared between abused males and females can assist researchers in bettering their understanding of the abusive experience” for all. This comparative element, it should be emphasized, in no way minimizes or exculpates the appalling incidence of violence against women, but the use and abuse of power by women in intimate relationships is clearly worthy of rigorous, scholarly investigation by feminist and other scholars. The current lack of empirical research into female-on-male intimate violence limits greatly our understanding of its nature and processes. Although open to debate, De Welde (2003), for example, has argued that “hegemonic discourses of women's powerlessness are not equipped to deal with power from women” (p. 250), and such discourses require our research attention.

## Theoretical Perspective

Symbolic interactionism offers us a powerful analytic lens through which to examine IPA&V, and has been used to investigate the perspective of both the perpetrator (e.g. Goodrum et al. 2001) and the victim (e.g. Lempert 1994). As Goodrum *et al.* (2001) indicate, the symbolic interactionist tradition acknowledges both the free will of the actor, and the interpersonal and social forces shaping and constraining her/his action, so that social agency is theorized as both structurally constrained and actively constructed (Allen-Collinson and Hockey 2007). From an interactionist/phenomenological perspective, Denzin (1984) has analysed “domestic violence” and what he terms *negative symbolic interaction*: interactional structures that

create negative structures of experience. His critical phenomenology advocates that violence be examined at the micro-level, for whilst structural processes, including the ideological, influence and shape interpersonal violence, their meanings are filtered and woven through the embodied lives of individual, interacting social actors.

With its meticulous attention to aspects of meaning-making, in particular the local production of meanings, emergent from and negotiated within situated everyday interaction, symbolic interactionism can offer insights into the experience of IPA&V from both “sides”. Role-taking, one of interactionism’s key concepts, permits us to enter theoretically speaking into a violent or abusive encounter, for as Blumer (1980) himself noted, the study of violent behaviour requires identification of the way in which a social actor her/himself perceives and defines the situation. Analogously, “synesic role-taking” (Scully 1988) involves the imaginative construction of another person’s feelings, attitudes, and the anticipation of their behaviour, for example, in order to avoid or minimize a partner’s physical violence (Goodrum *et al.* 2001), as examined below. Whilst many interactionists have attended to the micro-spatial elements of interactional encounters, Goffman’s work remains particularly apposite and powerful in this domain, and his conceptual framework will be considered below in relation to the theorisation of the data. First, the methodological approach is described.

## Methodological Approach

The life history approach is particularly well-suited to an in-depth examination of the nexus of social structures and personal experiences, particularly those of a sensitive and emotionally-charged nature, such as IPA&V (c.f. Townsend and Smith 2007). Here, it is perhaps more accurate to term the study a limited, topical life history, or an “edited topical life history” (Ward 1999), given the focus on a particular period and element in an individual’s life - intimate abuse. As Plummer (2001) highlights, the life history approach is a *sine qua non* in its ability to reveal the subjective, inner realm of experience. This was one of the primary aims of the pilot stage of a study; the full project will examine lived-body experiences of IPA&V via victims’ accounts. The pilot phase involved a series of in-depth interviews with two male victims of IPA&V, one of whom also offered his own personal diary of abuse, details of which follow below. Although the men were unknown to each other, of different generations (one early 30s, one mid-50s) and nationalities, from very different class and occupational backgrounds, the similarity between their experiences and the congruence between their narratives and those portrayed in the literature on both female and male victims of IPA&V were noteworthy.

In order to provide analytic focus and consistency, this article is based on the series of interviews with just one of the participants, together with his personal diary. The data are thus dual-sourced, from: 1) a series of seven (to-date) in-depth, initially semi-structured and then subsequently unstructured interviews with one of the male participants, subsequent to his having left the abusive relationship; and 2) a copy of a “life document” (Plummer 2001): his personal diary, kept for a period of just over two years towards the end of the relationship (although at the time he was unaware that the relationship would end), and during which time the abuse was actually taking place. Delamont (1992) emphasizes the symbolic significance of pseudonym choice, and the participant, NH, selected his own. NH had lived in a relationship that became increasingly abusive and violent, for over twenty years, and included marriage and the birth of children, before eventually fleeing the family home only at a point when he felt in danger of *permanent* injury from his wife’s violence. In his diary, a prologue recounts salient events before the “real-time” entries begin; an epilogue details some of the

principal events occurring immediately after his departure. In the last year of diary records, the text is supplemented by photos, some taken by NH with his home webcam and others by a close relative; together these provide a photographic record of a range of facial and body injuries. NH eventually left the abusive relationship when he realised that the negative symbolic interaction (Denzin 1984) that had structured his marriage and family life for so long, was unlikely ever to change.

The personal diary and interview transcripts were read and re-read as part of a lengthy and continuing process of “indwelling” (Maykut and Morehouse 1994) that seeks empathic understanding of participants’ lived experiences. The personal diary was first read prior to the interviews with NH. Observations about, and responses to both the diary and the interview process were also noted in analytic memo form (Burgess 1982). This aided efforts at boundary maintenance between empathic understanding and a wish to avoid colonization of, or merger with interviewees, to try and establish a dialogic rather than monologic relationship (Frank 2005; Smith et al. 2009 in press). Using thematic content analysis and sensitising concepts, including those derived from literature, the principal emergent themes were identified, interrogated, compared and contrasted. It should be emphasized that this article is *not* a narrative or discourse analysis *per se*, but an examination of specific interactional instances within one man’s account of intimate abuse. The thematic form of analysis necessarily has the effect of fragmenting the endogenous narrative flow of NH’s diary, but for the purposes of this article it is the interactional exchanges upon which the analysis focuses. It is thus, in terms of the subjectivist/objectivist continuum (Anderson 1999), perhaps more akin to a “realist” account (Van Maanen 1995), or “realist tale”, which Sparkes (2002) describes as a genre with the power to connect theory to data in a way that, “creates spaces for participant voices to be heard in a coherent text, and with specific points in mind ...”

Extracts from the personal diary are reproduced verbatim, and include my explanatory comments in square parentheses. NH originally wrote his diary of abuse in the third person, finding it initially too emotionally difficult and embarrassing to write in the first. Subsequently he considered that the relative “neutrality” afforded by use of the third person also helped bring analytic distance to bear on a very stressful and disempowering situation (c.f. Enosh and Buchbinder 2005). NH commenced his diary-keeping in order systematically to document the abuse to which he was subject, primarily as a means of enabling him temporarily to “bracket” such stressful experiences so that he could “get on with the rest of his life”, as he elucidated in an interview. It is thus NH’s own accounts of his feelings, experiences and perceptions that provide the data. As Ellis and Bochner (2000) note, in telling their stories people make judgments about how best to present self-relevant facts, and this performativity of course applies to NH’s interview and diary narratives, as it does to all account-based research. Indeed, in this form of research, insistence upon an overly-rigid (neo)realist ontological and/or epistemological stance is problematic, for as Gilbert and Abel (1983) remind us: “accounts are all we have to work with”. Questions of “validity” and “reliability” sometimes arise with regard to qualitative research based on participants’ accounts of experiences, which are not “corroborated”, for example via participant observation or other witness accounts. Given the overriding need to maintain the anonymity of victims of IPA&V, it is very often not desirable or possible to seek the account of the abuser. As Warrington (2001) notes in relation to the “truth” of the accounts given by the abused women she studied, the accuracy of such accounts is substantiated by similarities with those of other participants, and within the research literature generally. This was certainly the case with the accounts of the two pilot participants in this study, and questions intra- and inter-interviews produced highly consistent responses. No claims

regarding representativeness or generalisability are, however, made for the study, given that this was not its purpose.

## Ethical Concerns

The ethical challenges raised by sensitive and controversial research topics such as female-perpetrated abuse are substantial, but to borrow from Sieber and Stanley (1988) “shying away from controversial topics simply because they are controversial, is an avoidance of responsibility”; not least our responsibilities as researchers and sociologists. My key ethical concerns here related to confidentiality, the protection of informants’ anonymity and the minimization of any distress during the research process; in sum, an “ethic of care” (Plummer 2001). The research was approved by the relevant University authorities, and it was agreed that all audio/digital recordings of interviews would be transcribed by the researcher herself. Pseudonyms were used throughout and every effort made to remove/conceal identifying characteristics from the accounts. In particular, there were grave concerns about retribution from NH’s ex-wife, who, judging by analogous previous instances would have punished him severely and violently for the disclosure of “private troubles” to any outsider. Although NH had left his wife prior to the interview process, as Pagelow (1985) warns, violence may continue after the abusive relationship has ended. Indeed, NH’s wife had attacked him on several occasions subsequent to their separation, including one occasion at work when security personnel had to be called in by colleagues in fear for his safety.

The courage and openness with which interviewees spoke was notable, as was their willingness to discuss so fully and in such a thoughtful manner such highly personal and sensitive issues. Narrating abuse may be threatening or painful to recount so that the very telling may represent trauma (Owens 2006). As those involved in researching violence have noted, the researcher her/himself can be deeply affected by such research (Skinner et al. 2005), including during the reading of highly disturbing accounts; indeed qualitative research often demands a high level of emotion work (Holland 2007). Encouragingly though, Langford (2000) also notes advantages to research participation, including catharsis, healing, being given a voice, and gaining a sense of purpose. NH indicated that these latter two factors were of particular salience to him. The social agency of “victims” or survivors of IPA&V should also be acknowledged and, as Berns and Schweingruber (2007) note: “victims” of domestic violence do not necessarily make the victim identification themselves. Indeed, NH hardly ever used the term “victim” in the interviews and never in the diary, despite serious physical abuse being perpetrated upon him; “victim” for him connoted negative self-imagery.<sup>34</sup> Further, in relation to survivors of female-perpetrated IPA&V, including Lesbian women, many struggle with the understanding that they *are/were* abused because they believe that only men abuse women (Giorgio 2008). Having portrayed some of the ethical issues, the conceptual framework will now be addressed.

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<sup>34</sup> For an excellent discussion of the gender dimensions of narrative reframing of victimization, see de Welde (2003)

## Goffman's Territories of the Self and their Contamination

As a "third-generation interactionist" (Denzin 1992), Goffman's work can, I contend, offer us conceptual insights applicable to the study of IPA&V. His study of "territories of the self", for example, in *Relations in Public* (1972), together with their potential violation via various modalities such as contaminative acts, extracted from the mortification processes described in *Asylums* (1976) are highly pertinent. In *Relations in Public*, Goffman posits eight different territories of the self, culturally and situationally-contingent. Although there is not the word-space here to consider all eight, five are of particular relevance to the present analysis: 1) personal space; 2) use space; 3) the sheath; 4) possessional territory; and 5) information preserve (a further territory, "conversational preserve" will be examined in another article). These territories of the self are portrayed below and subsequently discussed in relation to their violation via three specific modalities of contamination encountered within the interactional realm of IPA&V: a) violation of informational preserve; b) physical contamination; and c) interpersonal contamination. First then, the "territories of the self" are described.

- 1) **Personal space** Goffman (1972) portrays as: "The space surrounding an individual, anywhere within which an entering other causes the individual to feel encroached upon". It has also been defined as "a kind of spatial envelope surrounding an individual, and it implicates the required distance to other people, whether strangers or intimates alike" (Czarnowski 1978, quoted in Toiskallio 2002: 171). The amount of space required by an individual is culturally and situationally contingent, depending on an array of variables, such as cultural norms, and the degree of intimacy of the co-participants. Hall (1968), in his theory of proxemics, posited four kinds of personal space ranging from the public to the intimate, the latter permitting very close contact. Further, Low (2003) highlights the tacit nature of these spaces, where social actors usually only become aware of the boundaries upon their breaching. As Sommer (1969) notes, the violation of personal space is the violation of society's expectations and an intrusion into a person's self-boundaries. Such intrusion appears to constitute a regular and frequent occurrence for many victims of IPA.
- 2) Linked to personal space, is Goffman's notion of **use space**: "the territory immediately around or in front of an individual, his (sic) claim to which is respected because of apparent instrumental needs" (Goffman 1972). Goffman provides the example of gallery-goers who can expect that when standing close to a picture other people will make efforts to minimise blocking the formers' vision. A shower cubicle would constitute use space, as would kitchen worktops when preparing a meal.
- 3) **The sheath** is Goffman's term (ibidem) for the skin and clothing; different parts of the corporeal sheath being accorded differential degrees of concern and ritual respect. The face and "private parts" of the body are generally accorded greatest concern, the face even more so than the sexual organs in some interactional contexts, for example in prostitutes' prohibition against clients' kissing or handling of their face. Smith and Davidson (2006) highlight that the skin is experienced and conceptualized as the outer boundary of self, so that the touch of an object not actually invited is an intrusion into the most intimate realm of personal space, another salient aspect in many accounts of IPA&V.
- 4) **Possessional territory** Goffman (1972) defines as: "Any set of objects that can be identified with the self and arrayed around the body wherever it is". Victims of IPA often find their possessional territory violated, and possessions damaged or destroyed.

- 5) **Information preserve** Goffman relates to: “The set of facts about himself (sic) to which an individual expects to control access while in the presence of others” (ibidem), under which category Goffman includes a person’s “content of mind”, biographical information, contents of pockets, bags, letters, and to which we might add in contemporary times, email, phone and text messages. The ways in which all these territories may be subjected to violation within IPA&V is discussed below in relation to the data, and along three dimensions of contamination, as originally identified by Goffman (1976) in *Asylums*.

### ***Modalities of Contamination***

In his study, *Asylums*, Goffman (1976) portrays a range of mortification practices imposed upon inmates of total institutions and encompassing contaminative exposure of various kinds. As Goffman notes: “on the outside [of a total institution] the individual can hold objects of self-feeling - such as his (sic) body, his immediate actions, his thoughts, and some possessions - clear of contact with alien and contaminating things” (Goffman 1976: 31-2). Inside total institutions, however, these territories of the self become subject to surveillance, and regular, routine violation; the “embodiments of self [are] profaned” (Goffman ibidem: 32). Goffman posits three different forms of contaminative exposure: a) violation of informational preserve; b) physical contamination; and c) interpersonal contamination. These conceptualisations are discussed below in relation to IPA&V, drawing on data from the current study and also linking this to wider research findings in those areas where commonalities emerged.

### ***Violation of Informational Preserve***

When an inmate is admitted to a total institution such as a prison, facts about her/his personal life, normally disclosed only to chosen individuals, are made freely available to a range of others, including staff and fellow inmates. Similarly, patients admitted to hospitals or other medical settings may find that the healthcare professionals with whom they interact hold detailed, intimate and embodied knowledge of them although they themselves are not intimates (Morgan 2007). Within intimate relationships too, “violation of informational preserve” (Goffman 1976: 32) can occur when one partner deliberately violates the other’s privacy, by for example looking through or destroying private correspondence and confidential documents, as an entry in NH’s diary testifies:

She went into the study after he had gone to bed. He could hear her going through his things. The next morning, the instructions for accessing his work emails from home (which he had hidden) had disappeared. She could now hack into his confidential emails at any time. [01.09.03]

Goffman (1972) also notes how pockets, purses, and letters may be rummaged through. In relation to NH, it emerged that his wife not only regularly violated his informational preserve by accessing personal items and information, but even binned personal and important documents without his permission:

On Monday night he asked if she had seen his Buddhist literature because it had disappeared from the desk. ‘No,’ she said. On Thursday night he had cause to put something in the study bin. The bright yellow paper of one of his Buddhist programmes caught his eye in the bin, under some other

papers. He moved the top set of rubbish to find all of his Buddhist papers. In addition he found the whole contents of his 'personal and private' box file. All of his memories – letters from school chums, student cards, old postcards etc. – all ceremoniously binned. More upsettingly, his parents had given him a copy of their will two years before, and she had binned that as well. [29.11.02]

Having one's possessions and personal papers rifled through in such a manner can leave a deep sense of violation and contamination, as similarly recounted by victims of burglary (Shover 1991) and theft. The unilaterality of informational preserve in NH's marriage was demonstrated, however, when he wanted to discuss his relationship difficulties with a Relate (Marriage Guidance) counsellor. The very idea that "couple informational preserve" might be compromised met with a violent response from his wife:

He said that he had made an appointment at Relate to discuss the mediation of their relationship to a third party. She went to throttle him, cutting his neck with her fingernails. She pushed him against the mantelpiece with some force, cutting his elbow. [10.09.03]

### ***Physical Contamination***

A second, more direct form of contamination pertains to the physical contamination of the self and also the "extended self" (Stephens et al. 2005), as examined below in relation to possessional territory. First though, the physical exposure and contamination of the body itself is highly pertinent to the analysis. The indignities and humiliation of enforced corporeal exposure, for example during medical<sup>35</sup> or security examinations, via communal sleeping and showering arrangements, and enforced use of doorless toilets, have all been vividly illustrated by Goffman (1976). Further, Cover (2003) notes how the frame of the communal shower operates in connection with disciplinary institutions such as schools, gyms, and sporting facilities where, "Nakedness in the shower or locker-room allows an extremity of policing of the body" (Cover *ibidem*: 59). The physical exposure and/or corporeal policing of an abused partner may take a variety of forms, for example insisting that they leave open and accessible spaces usually reserved for private usage (in much contemporary "Western" housing at least), such as bathrooms, showers, and toilets, unless the couple normally shares such spaces amicably. NH's attempts to retain some privacy often met an angry and/or violent response from his wife, as described in the interviews and reflected in many diary entries, including the following:

He goes into the bathroom and puts the catch on the door because their daughter has a 16-year old female friend staying. He does not want any embarrassment when he is in the shower. As he wets his face to shave, his wife is pushing at the door – harder and harder until she manages to sheer the catch completely. She is in. She then proceeds to tell him off for putting the catch on the door. [19.10.03]

He closes the bedroom door slightly in order to get undressed. His wife interprets this as slamming the door in her face even though he did not

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<sup>35</sup> In medical encounters, however, efforts are also made to *limit* such exposure. See for example, Lawler's (1991) study, examining the use of screens during the performance of potentially contaminative tasks of health care

know that she was following him (she sleeps in a separate room). She delivers a full force blow to his face. It is like a thunderstorm: he sees a panorama of fork lightening, somewhat speeded up, followed perceptibly later by a searing pain right across his face and a hissing in his ears. The pain abates, but this hissing does not. His vision becomes blurred. He pleads to her to stop this. She hits him again. He goes down to the kitchen, hoping that she will calm down. She is there immediately. She pushes him into a corner and takes a kitchen knife with an 8" blade from the block. She is now holding this overarm, above him, threatening to stick it in him... [22.04.03]

Physical stripping of clothing to leave a person naked, cold and vulnerable is a "punishment" tactic used both in total institutions, and also within abusive intimate relationships where one partner may use nakedness to increase the vulnerability of her/his victim, as did NH's wife:

She has thrown his dressing gown away (on the basis that it was torn) so that her 'backing him into a corner and taunting him' routine is now done with him naked and cold – and in particular, vulnerable. [6.12.03]

NH explained in the interviews that working full-time, he was unable to go to the shops during his working-day, and so it sometimes took some time before he could replace damaged clothing. As Pence (1987) notes in relation to female victims of IPA&V, such physical exposure and sexual abuse may be combined in various ways, such as attacks upon the sexual parts. Male victims too report attacks to their sexual organs by female abusers, as illustrated by one of the participants in Migliaccio's (2002) study, whose partner would regularly "kick me in the balls or hit me in the balls..."

A highly contaminative form of exposure occurs when one's body is forced into contact (including that of a visual or olfactory nature), with dirty, sullied or defiling objects and substances. More extreme examples cited by Goffman (1976) include prisoners in concentration camps forced to share a bed with a corpse, and Chinese political prisons where inmates were given only two minutes to squat over a filthy, open Chinese latrine under public scrutiny. More common, mundane sources of physical contamination within total institutions such as prisons, hospitals and boarding schools, include exposure to soiled towels, bedding and communal clothing, unhygienic, tainted or poorly prepared food, and dirty cutlery and utensils, as graphically described by interviewees in Smith's (2002) study of female prisoners. Dirty, soiled and stained sinks, baths, showers and toilets constitute further sources of contamination, horror and disgust in total institutions. In less "total" institutions, Fusco (2006) portrays some of the "geographies of abjection" encountered in communal sporting spaces, such as locker rooms, where people are confronted by others' body fluids, hair, and spittle. Forcing a dirty, defiling object or substance - the "abject" (Kristeva 1982) – particularly human or animal waste, upon another human being is not only disgusting for the victim, but physically and symbolically a highly contaminative act, demonstrating disrespect and contempt for the other, and violating her/his territory of the self along various sensory dimensions. Examples abounded in the interviews, and a diary entry vividly portrays such a contaminative act forced upon NH by his wife (dog-care was shared by all members of the family):

This morning, after she had cleaned up three lots of dog shit from the ironing room, she placed them on the kitchen table in a see through bag as

he was finishing breakfast. Still warm, still smelling. He placed it on to the floor to save retching, but she replaced it on the table again ... Five minutes later, when the gesture had run its course, she removed the shit from the kitchen table and put it in the bin. [09.10.02]

The destruction or concealment of one's personal objects, or "possessional territory" (Goffman 1972), can also be experienced as highly disturbing and threatening, for as Stephens et al. (2005) note, a person's possessions form part of self-identity, constituting a component of the "extended self". Thus, if an individual deliberately damages, defiles or destroys another's belongings s/he is in some ways attempting to diminish the other's sense of self, as well as communicating a threat of harm to the owner. S/he may also seek to control a partner and curtail her/his agency in the occupational and public spheres via the removal or concealment of personal items and official identifications. One of the informants in the Stephens et al. (ibidem: 49) study, for example, indicated that her partner either destroyed or concealed her birth certificate and Social Security card, documents essential as proof of identity. As the authors (ibidem: 49) contend, when an abuser systematically destroys possessions that are both a means to, and symbolic of a partner's autonomy, they are destroying proof of social agency and demonstrating complete control of a partner's life. Analogously, NH's diary entries revealed a range of attempts to challenge and constrain his autonomy, agency and self-determination as an adult, including removal of his passport, required regularly for business purposes:

Whilst on holiday, he checks [for] his passport. He always keeps it in his briefcase (because he often has to travel abroad on business) but his wife has always said that she should keep it with the other family passports. It is missing from his briefcase when he goes to look. He asks his wife if she has seen it. She does not say yes or no (as usual) but becomes agitated that he has accused her of stealing it (which he has not done). [23.08.03]

Furthermore, his wife's misappropriation of NH's house keys effectively denied him autonomous access to his own home as, with no spare, he was unable to have a duplicate cut:

Back home – she removed the key to the house from his key ring. He must now knock if he is to enter and clearly will not be in the house on his own. [21.11.02]

In addition to the destruction or concealment of such objects confirmatory of adult status and agency, more personal, cherished possessions may also constitute the target of a perpetrator's attack, for, as Stephens et al. (2005) argue, these possessions can represent interests or talents central to the abused's self-identity and autonomy. Not only are symbolic possessions such as creative artifacts of great sentimental value, but if created by the victim, they are unique and irreplaceable, standing as potent testimony to her/his autonomy, creativity and skill; elements that a perpetrator of IPA may find particularly threatening in her/his attempts to restrict, control, demean and undermine the victim. NH was a musician and had accumulated an extensive collection of songs, written and recorded over several decades, but which vanished from the study, to which only he and his wife had access:

He has about 100 songs that he has written over the years, nearly all recorded on tape or cassette. He finds an old tape recorder and records all

of them on to CDs so that they will no longer deteriorate. There are four full CDs of his songs (which she has always told him are 'crap') dating from the age of 16. He places them in his CD rack in the study. Within four weeks they all have disappeared. He asks her if she has seen them. 'Are you accusing me of stealing them?' is her only reply. [06.08.03]

Goffman's concept of physical contamination has been examined above in relation to both the body of the abused husband, and his possessional territory. The final form of contamination to be considered is that of interpersonal contamination; a salient feature within accounts of both female and male victims of IPA&V (see Lempert 1994, and Migliaccio 2002, respectively).

## Interpersonal Contamination

Goffman (1976) reminds us that when the agent of contamination is another human being, an individual is contaminated not just physically, but also by forced *interpersonal* contact. His account of interpersonal contamination focuses primarily upon the social relationship, however fleeting, consequent upon forced interpersonal contact, such as within prison cells, barrack rooms and convents, where a person is unable to choose with whom s/he shares even the most "private" of spaces. In the wider social world too, unwanted touching and invasion of personal space are signifiers of interpersonal contamination, and have been subject to extensive feminist analysis in the case of gender violence. Extreme examples of interpersonal contamination include rape and sexual assault where the victim involuntarily incorporates the perpetrator into her/his extended self; the depth and enduring nature of the contamination being evidenced by the victim's feelings of violation (Stephens et al. 2005), and in many cases, of disgust, shame, guilt, grief and rage.

The following analysis focuses upon less extreme, but nonetheless highly deleterious contaminative elements of interpersonal abuse within the domestic milieu. The nature of unwanted touching may of course not *necessarily* be violent, as has been noted in relation to physical and sexual harassment in occupational and public settings of various kinds, where touching may take the form of superficially "gentle" or "affectionate" behaviour such as patting and hugging (Giuffre and Williams 1994). If unwanted however, whatever the degree of force applied, it is defined as harassment in many occupational contexts. The complexity of IPA can make particularly difficult the identification and definition of harassment and abuse within an intimate relationship, given that such relationships are generally acknowledged to encompass intercorporeal affection and touching. Definitional complexities are salient in the following extract from NH's diary, where there is seemingly nothing untoward or aggressive in the act *per se* – one of cuddling, usually taken to be an indication of affection. Here though the recipient social actor's definition of the situation is crucial, for the context, intent and lack of reciprocity transform a normally benign act into one of aggression, invasiveness and interpersonal contamination; a regular occurrence, as NH further explained in the interviews. This entry follows the recounting of a bout of violent physical aggression from his wife:

Then, when he is distressed by the aggression, she turns 180 degrees to feign comfort – attempts at stroking and cuddling ... which are really only another form of aggression, invading his space when he needs it to recover. Along with this, dogged insistence on her part - 'I won't leave you

alone until I have had a cuddle' - this can go on for about two hours until he is emotionally drained and unable to sleep because of the invasive behaviour. [13.03.03]

A more overtly hostile tactic favoured by his wife was what NH termed "cornering". In this form of interpersonal contamination, evoking Goffman's notion of "the sheath" (1972: 62) as the most minimal of all possible personal spaces, NH's wife (a tall, strong woman) would roughly hustle him into a corner leaving him no space for manoeuvre, pushing her face so closely up to his that he felt her hot breath upon his skin. Fearing that she would accuse him (to others) of attacking her, should he attempt to push her aside (see Concluding Comments below), NH would often endure such cornering for hours in an attempt to avoid "provoking" violence. Her proximity was so great that he was unable to focus clearly upon her, thus being unsighted and rendered more vulnerable to sudden hits and punches. As relevant to such contamination, Goffman (ibidem: 71-72) portrays a range of modalities of violation, including the intrusion of bodily excreta and their stains. A further category of more ethereal but nevertheless unpleasant "excreta" encompasses odour, including tainted breath and body odour, and also, as Goffman perceptively highlights, body heat. As such cornering might go on for several hours, NH was subject to a prolonged excreta-contaminative experience, often in conjunction with direct physical violence, leaving him feeling abused, defiled and exhausted.

A further form of interpersonal contamination, which emerged from interviews and the diary, was NH's wife's insistence on sleeping in his bed on occasion (they normally slept in separate bedrooms). For NH, this enforced togetherness represented a violation of his space, and an unhappy reversal of the usual happier connotation of sleeping with a partner as being symbolic of togetherness, intimacy and trust:

She allows him to bed at 12:30, insisting that she sleep in the same bed. She wakes him twice in the night by prodding him, and she is awake by 5:30. He has had five hours' broken sleep and he is exhausted. He complains to her about this and she hits him full on the face again. She also tries to suffocate him with a pillow. He goes to the bathroom. He has a sore jaw, a black eye and a large bruise on his leg. [24.04.03]

In addition to the unwanted physical presence of an aggressive and confrontational partner in the intimate space of a bed, disruption and contamination of sleep space can result. Usually, adults in contemporary "Western" society enjoy the right to sleep more or less in a manner of their choosing, unless insomniac, or subject to the demands of young children (see for example, Venn et al. 2008). As Meadows (2005) points out, we usually move from infancy where sleep is open to observation, to adulthood where we attain the right to be left alone whilst sleeping. Infringement of this right may consequently be experienced as infantilising, highly controlling and also threatening, although the categorisation of sleep deprivation as a weapon within IPA&V may not always be made by victims themselves (Berns and Schweingruber 2007). Sleep deprivation was often used by NH's wife as part of her array of control tactics, as illustrated within the interviews and by this diary entry:

She will often come into his bedroom after he has gone to bed (sometimes after he has gone to sleep) for 'a chat'. This is often acrimonious and intrusive and sometimes lasts until gone 2:00 in the morning. His tiredness makes work the next day difficult. He finds this all extremely disorientating... [3.12.02]

Actively depriving one's partner of sleep is a way in which power relations are re/constituted in and through the control of sleep (Williams 2007: 148) and can render the sleep-deprived person disorientated and vulnerable. Williams also observes that this has clear links to the use of sleep deprivation in other contexts as an instrument of interrogation, punishment or torture. The systematic use of sleep deprivation is commonly used in total institutions as a form of punishment, but also constitutes a component of the "intimate terrorism pattern of abuse" identified by Johnson and Ferraro (2000) in relation to IPA&V.

Not only did NH's wife invade and contaminate his sleep space and domestic space more generally, but as the relationship further degenerated over time, he recounted how increasingly she sought to contaminate the previously safe haven of his workplace, by forcing her way into his office, even when he was engaged in meetings. This caused a high degree of social embarrassment to NH, who was in a high profile job where presentation and maintenance of a professional persona was essential. On several occasions NH's wife barged her way in through his office door, and refused to leave:

He's in a meeting. His wife bursts in to his office. He asks if she will wait outside until he has finished. She ignores this and goes to sit at his desk. Whilst he is still in the meeting in the same room, she proceeds to open his emails, and even plays a song on his computer. Many of his emails are sensitive because of the nature of his job... [19.03.03]

Such invasion was not just confined to interpersonal contamination of the material occupational domain but extended to frequent vitriolic, abusive and intrusive telephone calls at work. His wife would also telephone other work colleagues, on occasion senior managers, to discuss him and sometimes to make arrangements regarding meetings and social events without his knowledge. This violated his informational preserve, causing embarrassment and confusion, and undermining his credibility as a competent senior manager. These then were just some of the modalities of violation and contamination that emerged so evocatively from analysis of both the interview and diary data.

## **Concluding Comments**

This article has sought to contribute new insights into the analysis of IPA&V from an interactionist perspective, utilising Goffman's conceptualisations of the "territories of the self" and modalities of their violation, in order to examine data from a case study of a male victim of intimate abuse. The data revealed three specific modalities of contamination to be employed by the female perpetrator: violation of informational preserve, physical contamination, and interpersonal contamination. Whilst far from an exhaustive portrayal, it should be emphasized that the contaminative acts described above constituted only part of an ongoing, long-term strategy, which appeared to be directed at achieving heightened control over the abused husband and systematically wearing down his resistance. This form of sustained and systematic abuse has been termed the "intimate terrorism pattern of abuse" (Johnson and Ferraro 2000), motivated by a desire for coercive control where violence is just one tactic deployed in a more general pattern of control over a partner. Such "coercive control" and "microregulation" (Stark 2006: 1021-1022) of all aspects of a partner's everyday life usually involve

sustained psychological and emotional abuse as well as physical violence, as was revealed in NH's case. His wife's long-standing and frequent abuse, as described in both the diary and interviews, certainly appeared to be directed at the coercive control of her husband, including via the discrediting of both his professional and familial roles, and via systematic attempts at erosion of his sense of self. As NH said: "You're told off and told you're wrong so often that after a while you don't know who you are any more". Also of analytic interest, and addressed in another paper, was NH's steadfast refusal to resort to "hitting back" or even pushing his wife away, in order to halt her violent attacks. He explained in the interviews that this would have violated deeply his own ethical principles, and also been counter-productive in 1) allowing his wife to claim that *he* was the violent one in their relationship; and 2) exacerbating the attack; both factors reflected in other research on female-on-male intimate abuse (Sarantakos 2004; Migliaccio 2002). Many of the processes of mortification and control described systematically by NH, although of course differing in institutional context, resonate strongly with those identified by Goffman as standard practices employed within total institutions to demean and control inmates. Word limit precludes a wider analysis of other associated tactics, such as isolation of the victim from sources of social support, processes of stigmatisation, and identity contestation; addressed in other articles.

Whilst no claims regarding data representativeness or generalisability are made for this study, given that it is based upon a limited topical life-history, some tentative theoretical generalisations have been made in extending Goffman's original conceptual frame to provide new insights into the intimate interactional arena of partner abuse. In the particular case examined here, the victim was a heterosexual man, but many of the forms of contaminative violation he experienced at the hands of his female partner appear to share similarities with studies of both female and male intimate abuse victims and also of same-sex IPA&V. Although it is not possible from this small-scale, qualitative, micro-level project to speculate as to the existence of any gendered patterning in the perpetration of IPA&V using the forms of territorial violation and contamination portrayed here, future research might usefully explore whether male-on-female and same-sex IPA&V share similarities with the forms of contaminative abuse identified in this study, and investigate whether there are any specifically gendered and/or sexuality-related elements of IPA&V.

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## Mobilizing Voices: A Discussion of Leadership in An Environmentally Contaminated Community

### **Abstract**

Leadership is a key factor in successful social movement mobilization. Without a grasp of leadership dynamics in a community, it is difficult to explain how individuals come to occupy leadership roles and what impact this has on the overall success of a movement effort. In this study, I use the qualitative approach to investigate how leadership is framed in a community facing the existence of environmental contamination. I follow the development of leadership among actors and particularly the relationships that they create and maintain with expert environmental activists. Using interview data from 35 community residents and activists, I establish how leadership frames were presented to the community and how these frames impacted mobilization efforts and outcomes.

### **Keywords**

Social movement; Leadership; Environmental activists; Qualitative research design; Framing

Leadership is an aspect of social movement development that has been relatively unexplored in social movement research (Barker, Johnson, and Lavalette 2001). Although many scholars have included leadership when theorizing mobilization, the deeper tenets of leadership development have yet to be observed empirically (Staggenborg and Morris 2004). I add to a small, but growing body of literature that analyzes the particular ways in which grassroots leadership impacts community mobilization. In this research, I address how individuals develop leadership skills through social networking with other activists and how this experience is framed to movement participants. I then address the effects of this activity on movement outcomes. I use a case of an environmentally contaminated community to address how individuals gain prominence to lead a community effort to resolve the contamination issues.

I focus on leadership as a component of an overall social movement mobilization process. I argue this serves as a social movement because community members have mobilized and worked with other social movement organizations to promote a specific aspect of social change. Rather than focusing on the community as a whole, I am analyzing the impact of leadership development within a structured effort towards social change in this community. In order to fully understand the emergence of leadership surrounding the contamination issues, I analyze leadership

in the community separate from what was occurring at the existing neighborhood block club. I focus on the development of leadership through the specific actions of two neighborhood residents and their connections to expert activists as they occurred within the development of this social movement effort. I rely on social movement literature to best situate my argument and ethnographic field methods to measure this phenomenon.

The Hickory Woods community in Buffalo, New York faced uncertainty surrounding the extent and effects of ground water and soil contamination. A detailed history of this community is provided in subsequent sections. Leaders were provoked by uncertainty. They needed to develop a sense of concrete knowledge in order to arm themselves against the “powers that be,” primarily local and state government agencies. Framing theory (Snow and Benford 1988) helps identify the development of leadership and subsequent perceptions that existed in the community. I draw on the framing perspective to trace how leadership was presented to the community and how leadership frames impacted mobilization efforts. Benford and Snow (2000) refer to collective action frames as action-oriented “sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of social movement organizations.” Individuals frame movement objectives and ideas in order to present a certain picture of reality for constituents and participants. Framing is helpful in presenting viewpoints for others to consider, yet it is not sufficient to ensure participation in social movement activities (Weinberg 1997). Leaders hold status positions that give their frames power. Often, these frames are supported by networks of scientific and community experts. In cases of environmental contamination, the role that scientific experts play in framing these problems has been well documented in the research (Gunter and Kroll-Smith 2007; Brown and Mikkelsen 1990; Brown, Kroll-Smith and Gunter 2000; Beck 1995; Allen 2003). In my research, I investigate the role that expert activists play in establishing frameworks of community leadership. A level of trust has been established through face work between activists and experts. Citizens are socialized to believe that what these individuals say about the nature of their community reflects an accurate picture of reality.

This results in leadership frames that have consequences for community organizing. The social constructionist perspective allows us to understand how these frames were created, circulated, accepted and sometimes rejected. As a framing strategy, in connecting with expert, experienced activists, leaders gave the impression that they too were experts in these areas. This had two primary effects. First, it served as a benefit to legitimize their position to outsiders and stakeholders, or those who had a stake in the outcomes of the mobilization effort, such as local and state governments. Second, it created a rift in community relations, between those who felt that the leadership was overstating the issue and those who supported the mobilization effort. Community rapport suffered as a consequence.

The goal of this research is to identify the emergence of grassroots leadership in a contaminated community. Following this, I ask what effects particular leadership strategies had on outcomes of mobilization. These findings contribute to the growing research on leadership in social movements, towards empirical studies that focus on the incorporation of agency on behalf of movement leaders away from the solely organizational models that once dominated social movement literature.

## Influences of Leadership in Social Movement Efforts

The shift away from the individual psychological and collective behavior theories of mobilization towards structural explanations, beginning in the 1970s with resource mobilization and political process, led to leadership being under-theorized in social movement literature. The focus has been on structural variables and less on individual agency. Framing in social movements is an area that has been heavily drawn on and allows us to analyze modes of agency among individuals, yet frames specific to leadership emergence have been under investigated. Leadership in mobilization efforts is a prime place to study this dimension as it bridges structure and agency dimensions of social movement organizations. This key area of investigation serves to explore community relations in grassroots mobilization efforts. Individual agency and structural factors are both relied on for successful movement endeavors, yet the key is to empirically identify these factors as visible in movement efforts. Although there has been much research on mobilization efforts in contaminated communities, few studies empirically investigate leadership processes aside from a brief mention. Usually, characteristics of social movement actors are mentioned, but little attention has been paid to those who emerge in leadership roles (Cable 1992; Levine 1982). It is this call in the literature that I respond to, the need for an empirical investigation of leadership processes in a community social movement organization (Staggenborg and Morris 2004).

Leadership is a critical component of social movement success. It is important to acknowledge that leaders play different roles in social movement organizations. While responsible for agenda setting, they are also accountable for success and failure that the organization endures. Members look towards leaders for guidance and often consider them experts in the issue area. This is not necessarily the case however, and can lead to unrealistic expectations of leaders by members. Leaders often assume positions because they may have more time than other participants or simply because there are few other willing participants. Ethnographies of small groups and communities relay these interactions (Brown-Saracino, Thirk and Fine 2008). Fine's (2003) work in peopled ethnographies allows for micro-sociological processes to be connected to the macro-sociological structures in which they reside. Ethnographies of this type offer a holistic approach to the community, while social movement research offers this in the context of the overall mobilization effort.

Once in leadership positions, leaders must continue to promote the mission of the organization. Without a clear vision of the movement agenda, leaders can unintentionally misrepresent movement goals as personal goals. Members mistakenly assume this as a concerted effort on behalf of leadership, when in reality it may stem from an unclear frame of movement initiatives.

Leaders are ultimately responsible for framing the issue to social movement members and the outside community. They can do this more effectively if working within the given structure of resources- drawing on expertise of groups, willingness to give assistance to other groups, networking with scientists and professional activists. Studies have focused on movement leaders who are organizing mass or national movements. Little attention has been given to grassroots community leaders who are developing leadership skills for the first time and to the networks they connect with to learn these skills. Nepsted and Clifford (2006) acknowledge the importance of building social capital and its connection to successful leadership. Their work reflects the need of social movement scholars to investigate consequences of leadership forms in both national and transnational movements.

Ganz (2000) refers to the importance of strategic capacity for successful mobilization. This study focuses on how leadership developed through networking with expert activists and the impact this had on the course of social movement mobilization in an environmentally contaminated community. Movement success or failure depends to a large extent on leadership presence or absence. Without a strong understanding of leadership, we have yet to fully understand the dynamics of movement organizing. Research on leadership has focused on leadership types, but little empirical evidence has been collected to investigate the development of leadership or its consequences on community relationships. Few studies focus on empirical observations of leadership primarily because leadership development is difficult to capture conceptually (Earle 2007; Campbell 2005; Staggenborg and Morris 2004). Staggenborg and Morris (2004) argue that this is evident due to a lack of integration between agency and structural explanations in social movement theory. Framing offers an agency perspective to the primarily structural explanations for mobilization efforts. In this case, I look at how networking with “expert” activists influenced mobilization. Agency becomes important to consider within the structure of this community effort and framing helps to explain the effectiveness of movement leaders who are defined as “strategic decision makers who inspire and organize others to participate in social movements” (Staggenborg and Morris 2004:171).

Charismatic leadership qualities are often referred to as factors of effective leadership and have been addressed in social movement literature. If a leader has charisma, it is likely that she or he will generate publicity surrounding a given cause. Charisma works towards opposite intentions of structure. The success of a charismatic leader depends on personality, rather than a specified type of formal leadership position. Della Porta and Diani (1999) state that neither traditional nor legal rational charisma is completely viable way of interpreting leadership success, they see this as manipulation of ideological resources by those in leadership positions. Couto (1993) argues that it is the undetected, invisible aspects of community, such as narratives, circulated by people in less visible roles that influence successful mobilization. The development and circulation of these frames or narratives influence social movement actor behavior. Morris (1984) acknowledges the role of free spaces open and encouraging discussion of daily experiences in his work in the civil rights movement. Eichler (1977) points to the overstated nature of charisma- it is not enough to have a charismatic leader, but that leader must have the commitment of their followers in order to be effective. Socio-psychological analyses of charisma consider connections and liaisons that leaders may develop during their tenure. Emphasis on the structure within which these relationships are developed is less emphasized in the literature. It is this connection between charisma and the structure of the organization that also factors in to the circulation of a successful message on behalf of movement actors.

Ganz’s (2000) reference to strategic capacity directs attention to the strength of leadership capacities and influence in a community. He argues that the inclusion of movement insiders and outsiders contributes to stronger strategic capacity and the ability to drive institutional goals. A combination of strong and weak community ties offers a variety of resources to draw on throughout the mobilization process. Purkis (2001) states the importance of cultural capital even in leaderless situations, where members are still reaching out and drawing on social networks and existing cultural resources to strengthen their likelihood of successful organizing.

Tilly (1978) defines mobilization as a process where a group goes from a passive collection of individuals to an active participant in public life. However, leadership is a vital part of this process- leadership creates structure through which

individuals can mobilize in a given framework. In this paper I attempt to assess the dynamics of leadership and discuss how resulting leadership frames potentially impact possibilities for successful mobilization. I pay particular attention to how leaders draw on other outside sources and how this influence impacts success of the movement.

The concept of leadership serves to bridge structure and agency as explanations for social movement emergence. It is in this aspect of mobilization where individuals rely both on agency and how that can be developed within the given structure of a social movement organization. This interplay is interesting because individuals must rely on their existing knowledge and decision making skills within a set of organizational boundaries. Leadership focuses on the development of agency or how people act in a given institutional framework (Staggenborg and Morris 2004).

Using ethnographic field methods, I illustrate how social movement actors framed their notions and definitions of leadership and how this affected the outcome of mobilization. I focus on the strategies used to develop leadership in the community, specifically the close relationship between community leaders and outside expert activists. These relationships bring attention to agency on behalf of individual leaders and the societal structure in which organizational hierarchy exists.

The Western New York community of Hickory Woods serves as an interesting setting to observe leadership development. Various forms of leadership existed in this community and individuals maintained different interpretative frames about leadership. Additionally, some residents even disputed the form of leadership that existed in the community. As community members were introduced to forms of leadership, interpretations or frames changed and other frames developed. Different interpretations of leadership are evident in the analysis of interview data. Residents referred to both informal and formal models of leadership. They also discussed the transformation of leadership presence from a block club focused on neighborhood beautification to a community organization solely interested in resolving the contamination issue. These changes led me to ask: How was leadership developed in Hickory Woods? How was mobilization affected as a consequence of how leadership was framed to community residents?

## **Data and Methods**

My methodological framework is developed around the qualitative measurement process. Primarily, I focus my data collection on in-depth interviewing, participant observation, and document collection and analysis. Using ethnographic processes, I was able to see how issues were framed and reframed over time. I was able to witness community members' interpretations of how information was presented to them and follow up with in-depth interviews. Instead of retrospectively assuming how things unfolded, I was able to observe how frames were interpreted by community members at meetings and community events.

In May 2000 I began carrying out in-depth interviews with neighborhood residents. The director of the Western New York Citizen's Environmental Coalition gave me the name of a leader in the Hickory Woods community and I began my interviewing with this gatekeeper. He made available names of residents in the community from a neighborhood roster, inclusive of the study area. He became an influential gatekeeper for me in this study. Establishing this was crucial to building

strong rapport in the community. This also helped establish lasting contacts in the field and the building of social capital over time (Berg 2007). Initial contact was made with other residents through a letter introducing myself and my research ideas.

I received callbacks from five interested individuals. After these interviews, I followed up with phone calls to the other residents I had solicited. In-depth, semi structured interviews were conducted with 35 neighborhood residents. Of this, four interviews were conducted with individuals who were not community residents. These interviews included: directors of local and national environmental organizations working with the community, a representative from the City of Buffalo Common Council, and a representative from the Western New York regional office of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Thirty interviews were conducted face to face. The remaining five interviews were telephone interviews for convenience to the respondent. I spent on average, one and half-hours interviewing each respondent. All respondents were assigned pseudonyms in order to ensure confidentiality.

Because I wanted to be present during the mobilization process, it was imperative to locate myself as a researcher in the community in the early stages of development of the problem. I began attending meetings and neighborhood events, as well as introducing myself to neighborhood residents and having many informal conversations in order to become familiar with the community and its residents. I also attended numerous press conferences, rallies, and protests that were held by residents.

In addition to in-depth interviewing and participant observation, I began a secondary document collection. This collection includes correspondence, state and city sponsored studies, Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests, and other material collected by residents; publications from the State of New York and the City of Buffalo regarding the history of Hickory Woods, City of Buffalo Common Council meeting transcripts; and television news stories and a newspaper archive that I developed including both mainstream and alternative local print publications. Triangulation or using multiple data collection sources strengthens the core collection of data as well as includes multiple perspectives of the story in the analysis (Berg 2007).

Field research took place over 18 months. I began attending meetings for exploratory information in December 1999, and continued field research in the form of participant observation through May 2001. In-depth interviewing took place from May 2000 to December 2000. My rationale for the timeline of the study is as follows.

This 18-month period encompasses the formation of the problem in the community as well as the formation and growth of the neighborhood association. I was also able to witness the development of the organization as the issue was brought to the attention of media and policymakers.

My objective was to interview residents prior to the release of the "official" United States Environmental Protection Agency results. My reasoning for this was twofold. First, I did not want residents to give me their interpretation of EPA results. I wanted to understand their perception of the issues apart from any influence that a published government document may have. Secondly, I began my research while the Homeowners' Association was in formation and organization plans were being formed. This gave me a unique window in the mobilization process in that residents had already constructed their early notions of the problem, but those notions were not yet legitimized or denied by any official means. I wanted to become informed of how that original construction of the problem arose, therefore leading to the emergence of mobilization in the community.

Data was analyzed using NUDIST, QSR software for qualitative analysis. Interviews were analyzed by open coding according to thematic categories based on frames of mobilization. Data were analyzed based on themes and how they serve to explain the aspects of mobilization. For this paper, I focus on the data that led me to an understanding of leadership in Hickory Woods. Data from interviews and other sources such as participant observations, local news articles and television newscasts, meeting minutes, and historical documents were organized by leadership theme and analyzed according to emergent patterns.

## **Hickory Woods: A History**

The brief history of Hickory Woods provides a backdrop for understanding the sequence of events and how the events affect one another. The selective history is better described as my story of Hickory Woods. History often implies a comprehensive, agreed upon notion of events. In my story, groups see the history of how things came to be differently. This chronology of events has been drawn from interviews and major events publicized through media such as local print media. Because my point of analysis is social movement organization development, not neighborhood development, I am interested in the challenges of understanding social movement processes of leadership and mobilization--what happened, how it happened, and why.

Before I tell the story of Hickory Woods, I want to situate myself in the history itself and explain my perspective. Writing the history of a community, or even a single issue or event is a complicated process. Because it is nearly impossible to recreate the full story of a specific time or event, most history that is written is selective history. Therefore, most written histories focus on limited aspects of the more complete story. I do not propose to write a comprehensive history of Hickory Woods. Instead, I provide a slice of community history guided by my involvement with the community. Perspectives on leadership development are discussed in the analysis section.

Different histories may exist regarding the same subject. The history of a community can be perceived differently according to different groups. I encountered this early in my interviews. Constructions of community history differed greatly among residents. Historical methodologists often encounter this problem when trying to represent a historical time or place. For example, validity of the account may be affected because individuals' memories of events may change over time. In addition, people may have different versions of the history to tell based on their placement or role in the story. Foucault (1970) discusses the near impossibility of comprehensive history. His solution to this is the method of genealogy. Through this, he calls for tracing the problem to its source and then comprehensively analyzing all possible influences and circumstances through time. My attempt at a partial genealogy begins with a discussion of the Hickory Woods neighborhood just prior to contamination discovery and social movement development. I provide information pertaining to the demographics of the community as well as a brief description of the community before contamination was discovered. The story of Hickory Woods begins in 1998 as a neighborhood of families in newly built homes and other established homes discovered a possible danger existing among them.

In 1986, the City of Buffalo acquired land from the Republic Steel Corporation for the newly created South Buffalo Redevelopment Plan. Republic Steel, now known as LTV Steel Corporation, sold the parcels of vacant industrial land to the city for \$30,000. Under this plan, subsidized loans were offered to potential buyers willing to

purchase homes in this area. As a result of the plan, groupings of new homes were built in this neighborhood beginning in 1986.

The Hickory Woods subdivision, comprised of primarily lower-middle and middle class homes, provided comfortable living space for about 80 families. Census 2000 zip code data for the Hickory Woods area reveals that household income ranged from \$20,000- \$50,000, with currently employed and retired families resided in the area. Racial characteristics reveal that 95% of the area identify as White (non-Hispanic), 1% African American, and 4% consider themselves Hispanic (of any race). Census housing tenure data reveals that 65% of the residents own their homes and 35% rent.

In 1998 concerns about the safety of the properties emerged as the last four homes were being constructed. Construction was halted when contractors hit a large metal object while digging the foundation of the first of the four homes. After excavating the object, contractors realized it was a gasoline tank. Further tests, performed by a testing service hired by the City of Buffalo, indicated traces of benzene and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) on the tank and in the surrounding soil. Both chemicals are documented carcinogens. Contractors for the city explained at block club meetings that traces of benzene were natural by-products of gasoline; therefore it was not usual that benzene was detected in the neighborhood.

The City of Buffalo circulated results to these four homeowners separately, acknowledging the potential seriousness of the contamination and allocated \$800,000 for remediation of the four lots. Hearing this, block club members requested that further testing be done in the neighborhood, fearing that if the parcels were developed atop former industrial land, they may contain dangerous chemical pollution. The city hired a separate environmental testing firm to complete soil sampling for other residential property in the neighborhood.

Following testing, Hickory Woods residents received a letter from the City informing them that although polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons were present, "In no instance has any level of PAH or other contaminant been discovered in the extensive Abby Street residential yard testing program that poses any immediate danger to any individual" (Letter from City of Buffalo Department of Environment, August 30, 1999). Furthermore, "we advised residents [in the original four lots] that such concentrations if touched repeatedly over the very long term, might cause an elevated risk of disease." With this notification, concerned residents contacted the city through phone calls and letters to ask what the city Department of Environment considered "very long term" and "elevated risk." Initial concerns were propelled by these vague determinants of safety and risk.

An organized effort began in the community in October 1999 when two homeowners who lived only few houses away from the affected lots called a meeting. To notify residents, they canvassed the neighborhood with flyers. At this meeting, residents created the Hickory Woods Concerned Homeowners Association (HWCHA). Throughout the following months, group members met with representatives of the City of Buffalo Common Council to discuss the contamination problems.

In December 1999, the Common Council agreed to hold a special session of the council solely to discuss Hickory Woods. The following is the resolution that was passed at this meeting.

This Common Council recognizes that some residents of the Abby Street/Hickory Woods neighborhood have suffered financial losses as a result of purchasing homes in the City-sponsored development; and also recognizes that the

health concerns of the residents of this area are legitimate and need to be fully addressed in a way that satisfies the residents, and requests that the Mayor propose a plan to provide justice for the residents of Abby Street/Hickory Woods that addresses the following issues:

- Relocating the residents who would like to leave
- Remediating the contamination in a comprehensive fashion
- Developing a formula for making up financial losses of the residents with resources provided by LTV, Inc., and various levels of government, including the City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York State (perhaps through the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act) and the Federal Government
- Providing adequate avenues for full public input on this issue (Press Release for December 8, 1999 Common Council Meeting)

In response to these resolutions, the Common Council President called a public hearing because “[he] believe[d] a full public airing of the issues involved is an important first step in deciding an intelligent course of action.” At this meeting, residents were invited to speak on public record about specific concerns regarding the issues of soil testing and contamination. About 50 residents gave public testimony of their concerns. Many residents voiced concerns about family health and illness in the neighborhood. Others were concerned about rumors of redlined real estate in the community and plummeting home values.

The Common Council ended the meeting assuring the residents that more public hearings would follow and the problem would stay on the priority list to be resolved. With resolutions passed, the Common Council could present the information to the Mayor’s office and ask that he support the relocation of Hickory Woods residents. However, resolutions only have the power of suggestion. Until the Mayor agrees to the suggestions posed by the resolutions, the resolution simply sits, inactive.

The Citizen’s Environmental Coalition in Buffalo (CEC) became involved in the issue by providing members of the Homeowners Association with documentation and supporting information about the potential risks associated with PAH contamination. The CEC is a statewide coalition with offices in three districts in New York. They have access to resources and a staff of organizers (including lobbyists and canvassing) to promote local environmental issues in their respective districts. They began working closely with the group in spring 2000. At the request of CEC and association members, Lois Gibbs visited the site in March 2000. A renowned environmental activist, Lois Gibbs publicly announced her support for the relocation of the people of Hickory Woods. Her presence became even more important as a strategic action on behalf of the homeowners’ association because of her history of achieving relocation for the residents of the nearby Love Canal community<sup>36</sup>.

Beginning in spring 2000, at the request of the Mayor of Buffalo, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH)

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<sup>36</sup> Lois Gibbs was the president of the Love Canal Homeowners Association in Niagara Falls, New York. Niagara Falls is located about 20 miles upriver from Buffalo, NY. She is currently the director of the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice. The goal of this organization is to provide communities faced with environmental contamination with the strategic tools necessary to resolve the problems.

officials undertook a full investigation of the public health concerns. Specifically, the EPA developed a soil sampling plan that would cover about 40–60 houses in the neighborhood. The houses were chosen based on proximity to LTV parcels.

Soil sampling took place during May and June 2000. While this was taking place, EPA officials acknowledged that some of the properties tested in the earlier 1999 city-contracted study contained “hot spots” of PAH. Hot spots were defined as areas containing concentrations of PAH that were significantly higher than the average throughout the community. The EPA arranged a remediation plan with LTV Steel. LTV/Republic Steel agreed to pay \$500,000.00 to clean up the hot spots, but only if they were located on vacant property. Residents did not accept this plan. They did not think that it was fair to clean only the vacant areas. They felt it was irresponsible that LTV would not provide cleanup funds for the areas where people actually lived. Remediation was scheduled to take place July 2000.

LTV would not provide funds for the cleanup in these areas—to do so would be admitting responsibility for any physical harm that people living on the lots endured including any future effects of the pollution, (for example, thirty years in the future for children born after their parents moved to Hickory Woods). Residents proposed that the EPA wait until the broader soil sample results were compiled, rather than approaching a piece-meal remediation. These complaints stopped the cleanup plan for the vacant lots in the proposal stage.

Results from the June 2000 EPA soil samples were finally released in December 2000. The results were not made public, but instead each individual homeowner was given a confidential report of their soil/contamination level readings. Residents called for full disclosure of the results. Most residents shared their information with neighbors, those at City Hall, and the media, in an effort to further publicize their cause. The EPA study concluded that even though chemical hot spots did exist throughout the community, the level of contamination did not constitute a public health threat and did not warrant remediation of occupied lots.

In February 2001, the Common Council held another full session solely devoted the soil results in Hickory Woods. Community environmental leaders, politicians, and concerned residents from Hickory Woods came to the meeting with agenda items that included evidence of chemical contamination and relocation plans. They argued that more contamination existed throughout the neighborhood, but might have been overlooked. They also demanded that action be taken on the relocation resolution that was passed at the December 2000 Common Council meeting.

A New York State Department of Health study undertaken at the same time as the EPA soil study concluded that even though health problems existed in the community, they were not statistically significantly different from other Western New York communities. Health officials offered the meeting as an opportunity for public comment on the study. However, because residents were only given the results four hours prior to the meeting, they boycotted the comment period and the evening began with a protest rally and a march to the meeting site. Once at the meeting site, residents refused to cooperate with health officials. The remainder of the evening consisted of residents yelling and shouting at health department officials. Nonetheless, little was resolved.

In a review of the NYS Department of Health study, University of Buffalo’s Environment and Society Institute (ESI) concluded that serious problems existed in the methodology and research construction of the NYSDOH study. Furthermore they stated that the conclusions drawn in the study could not be valid based on the information that was collected for the study. For example (ESI Review of NYSDOH Health Consultation 2001)

Through the Health Consultation, the term “average” is frequently used to refer to soil concentrations and exposure to contaminants. Relevant aspects of the report should be reworked to clarify the meaning of this term in a particular context, and discuss the magnitude and significance of any difference between “average” and “maximum” exposure scenarios. Effort should be directed toward assessing the geographic distribution of both contamination and calculated health risk. (p.2)

Because ESI representatives had been working with HWCHA in the past, the City of Buffalo felt that they were not neutral in giving their assessment of the exposure study. This banter back and forth resulted in City officials finally agreeing on an outside neutral party to review both the original and the peer review of the exposure study. The results of this second peer review were released in February 2002. They contradicted the ESI report and concluded that despite minor methodological confusion, the NYSDOH report was both accurate and valid based on the measures they used in the study.

From 2002 through 2007, homeowners were waiting to hear whether the Mayor would approve the Common Council resolution for relocation. Many homeowners filed suit with the city privately to ensure some settlement. In January 2008, the city announced a \$7.2 million settlement for homeowners. The chronology of this mobilization effort, from initial claim to filing for settlement, serves as an empirical tool I use to identify the relationship between how leadership was developed and how leadership frames affected social movement mobilization.

## **Emergence of Organized Leadership in Hickory Woods: Findings and Analysis**

Leadership forms differ among different social movement organizations. Leadership has also been defined in numerous ways, making conceptualization of the idea difficult to capture let alone compare across empirical studies (Earl 2007). Most often, community based social movements have informal leadership networks with leaders who may not have been visible or have little experience in past mobilization efforts (Russell 2007). Leadership may also be highly unstable with high burnout rates. Tactical choices that leaders make are essential to cycles and types of activism (Reger and Staggenborg 2006). Here I analyze particular patterns of leadership development from initial emergence to the connections made with expert activists.

Leadership in Hickory Woods consisted of residents who initially knew very little about environmental problems and organizing in general and had no prior community organizing experience. Short of participants reading Alinsky's (1971) strategy for activism laid out in *Rules for Radicals*, much of what transpired in the early days of organizing was based on instinct and uncertainty. Often established community movement organizations will lend their expertise to those they see struggling with neighborhood injustices (Russell 2007). Leaders were not certain of the impacts of their leadership strategies, nor did they have a full understanding of the extent of the problem they were addressing. They did not know the outcome of their actions, but still proceeded to learn about leadership styles through networks of professional activists. Much of their initial strategy came in the form of outreach to other environmental activists. In order to understand the story of leadership, I discuss

examples of leadership frames in Hickory Woods, focusing on the emergence of leadership and tracing the changes in leadership form through connections with expert activists. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of how these processes influenced mobilization.

The emergence of leadership in a community is a vital piece of the mobilization process. As with the emergence of an issue or grievance, there are instances through time that affect and change the mode of leadership and its development. In most grassroots social movements, some individuals are more likely than others to gravitate towards leadership positions. Leadership can be determined by who is willing to take charge of a situation, who has knowledge about the situation, who has the time and necessary resources to devote to the cause, and who has the incentive to address the problem (Barker et al. 2001). Leadership can also be measured by observing who makes decisions on behalf of the larger group, who acts as a contact for the media, and literally, who is elected to an office in the group, such as president. Many of these qualities were evident in the leadership in Hickory Woods.

In Hickory Woods, most residents were familiar with each other, or at least recognized each other by name or face. Still, like any other neighborhood, not everyone knew each other personally. At first, residents were not even aware that an organized effort existed to address the environmental problems. Leadership was not immediately evident in the community, even though the issues were publicized through print articles and television news stories.

Leadership did exist in the block club, but the block club president decided not to pursue taking charge of the contamination problems. He felt that it was too big of an issue for the block club to handle and that a different leader should investigate the community environmental problems. This decision left a void in community discussion concerning the contamination issues. It opened the door to a new form of community leadership. Residents were used to neighborhood block club leadership, concerned with Neighborhood Watch and beautification issues, but knew little of this new organized effort.

The first sign of leadership, though informal, was evident soon after the City of Buffalo notified residents of the contamination problems. Two male neighbors, Robert Jones and John Anderton, decided to spread information they had received from the City of Buffalo regarding chemical levels in the soil. Because they were unaware of what others knew of the extent of information, they launched an informal door-to-door campaign. One resident, Nora, later an active movement participant, describes how she learned that someone was taking charge in the neighborhood.

It was the second paper we had got from him, but we didn't know who he was. I see this guy walking down the sidewalk. I said, "Do you want to know if I am coming to the meeting?" He said, "Yes." I said, "My husband will be there, I am going into the hospital." (Interview with Nora, Hickory Woods resident and movement participant)

Nora was actually heading to the hospital with an asthma attack. The tone in her interview was one of relief that someone was taking up this effort. Her family was committed, even though she was obviously dealing with a serious health issue. She expressed feeling anxious to see the direction that the community would take after this first meeting.

Residents who attended the meeting expressed that the community needed an organized effort, separate from the block club, to address the contamination problems. By forming the Hickory Woods Concerned Homeowners' Association, the group felt unified in their effort. They could also address city officials under a unified

title. Through what seemed like a small effort on their part, in a short period of time Anderton and Jones became official spokesmen for the community.

### **Leadership Liaisons with Expert Activists**

Although unclear about their overall strategy, Anderton and Jones immediately took charge in their leadership roles. Neither had previous leadership experience and neither had been politically active in the past. They began by collecting documentation to develop a history about the contamination issue. However, it was truly the relationships that leaders formed with expert activists from the beginning that contributed to their progress in Hickory Woods.

### ***Influences from Activist Networking***

After publicizing their story in the local newspaper and television news, Hickory Woods leaders were able to draw on support from outside the immediate community. Gunter and Kroll-Smith (2007) refer to this as bridging capital, a strategy to build meaningful relationships with other community groups and individuals. Citizen's Environmental Coalition of Western New York, (CEC), was aware of the problems facing the community and offered to help leaders develop the skills needed in social movement organizing. The regional director of the CEC became a close mentor to the leaders in Hickory Woods. She made her objectives clear in an interview with me when I asked her about the CEC's role in Hickory Woods.

They were very well organized. But I came in and gave them more of the grassroots organizing. I also gave them a little information about the neighborhood. That was the first time that a lot of them had learned through me and the work that CEC did that they were living across the street from a Superfund site. There was some alarm in that regard, but I think after that time it became really clear that they appreciated what I had to say and were really welcoming of that information. They were clear that my agenda was simply to empower them to do what they wanted to do, not to drive an agenda that my organization had. And from then till now, I and my office, our office, has been really closely involved. (Interview with CEC Western New York Director, Jane F.)

CEC was ready and willing to directly assist and support mobilization efforts Hickory Woods. This relationship was mutually beneficial. Hickory Woods residents were able to learn direct action practices and CEC activists were able to direct their efforts towards a local community in need. Leaders needed more history about the problem and the community in general to become well-versed and state their claims to the city. Jane and other CEC volunteers trained association officers and participants from the community in leadership skills such as letter writing, meeting facilitation, organizing protest marches and rallies, and how to contact government officials. Skill workshops were held with small groups of participants at a time. Soon after their involvement with the CEC, movement participants were able to put their skills into practice. In March, 2000, together with the CEC, HWCHA hosted a neighborhood rally. Lois Gibbs was invited because of her background at Love Canal in Niagara Falls, NY and her current involvement in

contaminated communities with her Center for Health, Environment, and Justice. Love Canal served as an infamous case in the environmental history of Western New York. Still fresh in the minds of WNY residents, Love Canal represented the worst of environmental tragedies, one in which public and corporate officials were held responsible for contaminating a local community. Gibbs and Anderton led neighborhood residents on a march to the various hot spots in the community, while showcasing the 219-acre Superfund site, which lay only 20 feet from some residents' front doors. Even though the afternoon was a success in that the local press was present and aired the event on the 5:00, 6:00 and 11:00 news, members felt that the real reward was the opportunity to meet with Gibbs. After the rally, Anderton and a small group of members met privately with Gibbs to discuss strategy and leadership skills.

It was a shot in the arm just the fact that she came down here. Just the fact that she was here. That she made the press hit for one and she was here in my house, and we sat and spoke with her on her ideas on what would work here and it was pretty much the same idea. . . So yea, Lois Gibbs's real advice to us was to be as obstinate as stubborn, and remember the government lies all the time and you have to be real militant. They took pride in the fact that they took hostages, EPA hostages. I mean, if this thing, if something doesn't break, I'm sure people will become that militant, I don't know that it has gotten that bad yet. I know that there are a lot of angry people, but ... (Interview with John Anderton, HWCHA President).

Those poor people had steaming bubbles coming up out of the ground and they were told, oh, there is nothing to worry about. Lois told us they would take this stance. She told us what to expect—what they would try to pull. The thing that really upsets me and hurts my feelings is that we saved for a long time to get this house. (Interview with June, Hickory Woods resident, movement participant)

Hickory Woods activists used the momentum and excitement from Gibbs's visit to stay motivated to move towards a plan of direct action. They based their hope for success on Gibbs's successful organizing efforts in Love Canal and other communities across the country. Activists started promoting Hickory Woods as "Love Canal 2" to draw on the emotional appeal from a previous time in Western New York's environmental history. Even though the issues at Love Canal had been front page news nearly 20 years prior to Hickory Woods, the memory of one of the most infamous toxic waste sites was still fresh in the minds of most Western New Yorkers. Local media began to refer to Hickory Woods as "Love Canal 2" as well which promoted the serious of the discussion. Love Canal residents were offered a voluntary relocation plan in 1980 and Hickory Woods residents hoped that this would inevitably be their fate as well.

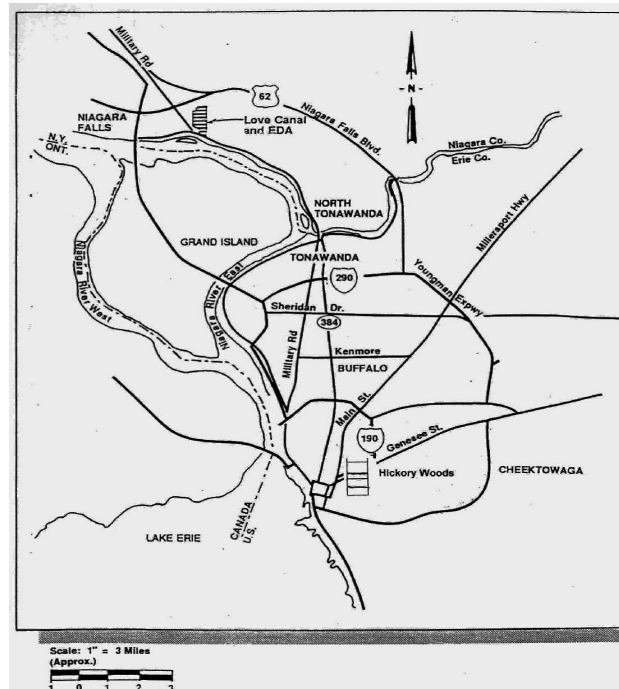


Figure 1. Map of Western New York: Proximity Between Love Canal and Hickory Woods  
Source: Love Canal EDA Habitability Study, September 1988, USEPA and NYSDOH.



## I WANT TO GROW UP HEALTHY

*BUT I LIVE IN HICKORY WOODS*

**WHAT IS HICKORY WOODS?**  
HICKORY WOODS IS A NEIGHBORHOOD IN SOUTH BUFFALO THAT RECEIVED A MAJOR INFLUX OF STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING FOR SUBSIDIZED HOUSING. STARTING IN THE LATE EIGHTIES DEVELOPMENT OF NEW HOMES BEGAN. THE CITY OF BUFFALO'S URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY ADMINISTERED THE BUILDING OF SOME 60 NEW HOMES OVER A PERIOD OF 9 YEARS. ALL SEEMED IDYLIC FOR THE BUYERS AND CITY PLANNERS ALIKE. THERE WAS A HIDDEN PROBLEM HOWEVER- **THE HOMES WERE BUILT ON TOP OF CONTAMINATED LAND!** THIS WAS A MISTAKE THAT NEVER THAT NEVER SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED.

**TODAY, FAMILIES ARE TRAPPED**  
IN THE HICKORY WOODS BY SUBSIDY AGREEMENTS, DROPPING PROPERTY VALUES, ILLEGAL BANK REDLINING AND A CITY GOVERNMENT THAT WILL NOT, OR CANNOT CORRECT IT'S MISTAKES. **NO APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTAL TESTING WAS COMPLETED PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION!!!**

NEIGHBORHOOD SICKNESSES INCLUDE LACK OF ENERGY, SKIN PROBLEMS, MULTI-SENSITIVITY DISORDERS, RESPIRATORY AILMENTS, **CANCER AND BIRTH DEFECTS !!!**  
RESIDENTS FEEL THAT THEY ARE PART OF SOME SICK URBAN EXPERIMENT! WHEN WILL IT ALL END?

THE EFFECT OF THE CITY'S MISMANAGEMENT OF THIS HOUSING PROGRAM IS MUCH FURTHER REACHING THAN JUST THE NEW HOMES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. THE SUBSEQUENT DISCOVERY OF TOXINS HAS STIGMATIZED THE WHOLE AREA. WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR LONG TERM RESIDENTS WHO HAVE LOST NEARLY ALL VALUE OF THEIR HOMES? WHAT ABOUT THE CONTAMINATION THEY WERE EXPOSED TO NEEDLESSLY DURING CONSTRUCTION? AS CITY OFFICIALS SPEAK ABOUT DOLLARS, FAMILIES CRY FOR JUSTICE! WHO WILL STEP UP TO THE PLATE?

**PLEASE HELP US!**  
**GOVERNOR PATAKI**  
FUND RELOCATION  
PROSECUTE THE POLLUTERS!

Figure 2. Flyer Circulated by Hickory Woods Homeowners Association Leaders.  
Source: Hickory Woods Homeowners Association



Figure 3. Social movement activity during the March 2000 Lois Gibbs rally and protest.  
Source: Researcher's field work collection of photographs.

Gibbs impressed upon community members that strong leadership skills would convey to the general public that residents were in control of the situation. She told participants that they needed the support of the greater surrounding community. She felt that having strong leadership presence in the area provided publicity and legitimacy that the community needed to be listened to by those that lived outside of the Hickory Woods neighborhood. From her experience in Love Canal, she learned the more pressure that the government received from those supporting the affected residents; the more legitimate the issue became.

### ***Similarities in Leadership Development***

Anderton's leadership skills developed similarly to how Gibbs's began in Love Canal. Through her door-to-door campaign, alone at first and then accompanied by a few neighbors, she spread the word of the possible chemical contamination throughout her community. She was also elected president of the community homeowners' association soon after her initial quest for neighborhood input.

Gibbs did not have prior organizing experience. She was driven by her desire to gather information about a chemical contamination problem. Lois Gibbs has stated on numerous press and public occasions that her priority was her children's health and safety. Adopting a modern day precautionary principle (Brown 2007; Brown, Kroll-Smith and Gunter 2000), if there was something in the soil, or at that school that could make her children sick, she wanted them removed from the situation to avoid any potential exposure. In the introduction to *Love Canal: The Story Continues*, Murray Levine writes, "Lois Gibbs once described herself as a housewife who went to Washington" (Levine 1998:13). She recognized that the everyday person can stand up for and affect social change. It was no coincidence that she became the leader of the homeowners' association in her community and later went on to become the founder of a national grassroots environmental organization, Center for Health, Environment, and Justice. She was driven to find the truth behind what was happening in her community. To this end, she developed the necessary skills and understanding of how to navigate the political system. She developed these skills through practice, not by referring to a handbook or attending a class. She continues to teach these skills to members of impacted communities across the country. Members of HWCHA benefited from this experience. Here, she explains her reasons for getting involved and her first steps towards organizing in the community.

I was disappointed and angry. School would open again in two months and I wasn't going to let my child go back to that school. I didn't care what I had to do to prevent it. I wasn't going to send him to a private school, either. First of all, we couldn't afford it; and second, I thought parents had the right to send their children to schools that were safe.

I decided to go door-to-door with a petition. It seemed like a good idea to start near the school, to talk to the mothers nearest it. I had never done anything like this, however, and I was frightened. I was afraid a lot of doors would be slammed in my face, that people would think I was some crazy fanatic. But I decided to do it anyway. I went to 99<sup>th</sup> and Wheatfield and knocked on my first door. There was no answer. I just stood there, not knowing what to do. I thought: What am I doing here? I must be crazy. People are going to think I am. Go home, you fool! And that's just what I did. . . I decided to wait until the next day—partly to figure out exactly how I was going to do this, but more, I think to build my self-confidence. The next day, I went out on my own street to talk to people I knew. It was a little easier to be brave with them. If I could convince people I knew—friends—maybe it would be less difficult to convince others. (Gibbs 1998:30–31)

This is the strategy Anderton wanted to employ in Hickory Woods— a way to motivate people by engaging them directly. It was thought that face to face interaction about the environmental realities in the neighborhood encourages individuals to seek information and answers about potential problems. Gibbs and Anderton were both moved to action because of a desire to seek answers to questions about health and safety of their family and friends. They sought out information and approached others to assist in their efforts. Gibbs was able to garner support from others inside and outside of her immediate community. Due to the intense national media coverage of Love Canal, actor-activists and politicians, such as Jane Fonda and Ed Begley Jr. and then Congressman Al Gore, visited Love Canal and assisted in mobilizing efforts.

Though the Hickory Woods homeowners worked with Gibbs and the CEC for leadership development, the initial development of mobilization in the community was also a solo effort. Anderton was later able to approach Gibbs and her organization, Center for Health, Environment, and Justice, in order to ask for her expertise. She brought intense publicity to the area with her presence. This publicity initially helped Hickory Woods get noticed in the news, but later became a point of contention in the community. On a talk radio program, Gibbs shared her opinions about organizing and Hickory Woods.

It's over 20 years since Love Canal, we should have known better. Now we have brownfields, and the people are not wealthy, they are starter homes for first time buyers. [They are] crawling up the American dream only by having it devastated by falling apart. We all grow up with the belief that if there is a problem, especially a public health problem, that the government will respond with public health response—which is to remove the problem and save the health of the people. It's really hard for people to jump from the sense of how the government is supposed to work—to if you want to get out and you want to be relocated, as the people in South Buffalo should be. I've walked that neighborhood. They are going to have to get in their [government officials] faces and they are going to have to behave in ways that they wouldn't normally feel proud of. (WBEN Talk Radio 930, July 2000)

As evidenced in this selection of interview, Lois Gibbs's presence and visible support of the Hickory Woods homeowners legitimated the problem to the media and to some in the community. I do not generalize that all in Hickory Woods felt her presence was positive and empowering, though. Some expressed concern that her presence was just another strategy to focus media attention on the contamination problem that they felt didn't even exist. These were the residents who felt the chemical contamination problem was not the primary problem in the community, but instead the real problem was over exaggerated media claims of contamination. Their position was as follows: scientific experts could not verify the presence of widespread chemical waste in the community. Where it was present, scientists could not verify that it would cause any harm to nearby residents. Therefore, they held that the claims by Anderton and Gibbs were not based on verifiable evidence, but hearsay. Gibbs reflects on the differences among community members.

There are some people who clearly don't want to move, maybe the elderly. Or there are those who clearly don't believe there is a problem. They will work against you unless you find a way to include them in your overall goals. We talked a little about what that would look like, as far as people who wanted to be relocated, people who wanted to remain behind would have some governance policy on the table about future land use, and house taxes, property taxes. (Interview with Lois Gibbs, December 2001).

She along with other activists acknowledged differences in the community, but also saw that the division could serve as a distraction from the overall mobilization effort. To social movement activists though, Gibbs herself represented a victory in a chemically contaminated community. They saw their plight as very similar to what occurred at Love Canal twenty years prior, and twenty miles north. They also felt that if relocation occurred in the case of Love Canal, by following her advice and adopting similar strategies, relocation would be possible in Hickory Woods too. Gibbs's very presence gave reassurance that they would be relocated. They believed this and it motivated them towards some resolve.

The connection between the homeowners and Citizen's Environmental Coalition and Lois Gibbs helped HWCHA gain more public and community support for their cause. Although she warned of the effects of her presence, Gibbs felt her involvement served as a positive step towards relocation of community members.

It doesn't have the heavy weight of; well Lois Gibbs said this so it is godlike. That is often the response that people take. Even when I offer ideas, they are really open brainstorming. The ideas become *the idea*, without a whole lot of thought, because I said it. (Interview with Lois Gibbs, December 2001).

She warned of the expert effect her presence could bring, yet activists continued to take her advice. They were proud of her connection to Western New York and overwhelmingly felt her presence to be a positive impact on mobilization efforts. The effectiveness of leadership strategies increased due to a close relationship with CEC and especially Gibbs. In a very short time, everyday residents of a community, with little knowledge of grassroots organizing or environmental problems, were speaking at public meetings and to the press—they became lay experts.

## **Effects of Leadership Development**

In general, more community residents began coming to meetings and participating in events. Therefore, mobilization was positively affected by the presence of leadership in the community. Although some residents did withdraw from participation, overall the group gained members and moved forward towards their goal of relocation. Specifically, three primary mobilization effects emerged: Anderton was viewed by the community as a lay expert, membership withdrawal led to new leadership, and community strife emerged in reaction to further political decisions in the community.

### ***Developing Lay Expertise***

The March 2000 meeting with Gibbs represented a turning point. Some members withdrew from participation while others were committed to moving forward. HCWHA members met monthly to discuss strategy and continued to frame the issue through periodic press releases to local media. Leadership did a good job of publicizing meetings and recruiting an ever-growing membership base even though Jones, as the vice president, had not been able to be actively involved with the group. He was less visible at organizational meetings and had discussed possibly stepping down from his position to take a backseat from his leadership role. Anderton expressed concerns about being able to keep up the current level of organizing, even though they were meeting their organizational goals of publicizing the issue and increasing membership successfully.

In April 2000, only months after Anderton had been elected as association president, his leadership experience was called on. He was asked to testify to a congressional sub panel on brownfield development by a national environmental group to discuss his situation in Hickory Woods. Having only recently learned about the impacts of chemical waste, Anderton was not considered a scientific professional expert by any means. Instead, he was framed as a community expert because he knew what was happening in his neighborhood better than any other residents.

Brownfields are known as vacant land, formerly used for industrial purposes. The toxicity of the land varies, in that brownfields can range from highly toxic, to containing very little chemical waste. Anderton discussed how his community was built on top of and next to former industrial land. He told the story of Hickory Woods, including the factors that allowed for the community to be built in this specific area. He went on to discuss the fear and anxiety that residents felt because of the uncertainty associated with chemical health risks. Other representatives of communities across the country such as Midway Village, California, where testifying on the nature of urban environmental contamination as well. Here, Anderton expressed his concern about the similarities among Hickory Woods and other communities.

When I was in Washington, we meet a group of people from Section 8 housing development, a place called Midway Village. They were dealing with the same self-toxins. There was a coal gas plant run by Pacific Gas and Electric. And they have PAHs and other chemicals in abundance in their soil. They still haven't moved anyone. Now they've lived, and it kind of mimics this, but they have lived there another 10–15 years compared to the people living here. And the amount of sickness there... you wouldn't believe. What do we know? Anyway, we think of Midway village and how it seems to have matured in that community. We are talking

stillbirths, birth defects, cancer upon cancer, and sudden infant death syndrome. Is this process maturing in this neighborhood? Are we going to be another Midway Village? (Interview with John Anderton, Hickory Woods Homeowners' Association President).

The very act of testifying before Congress elevated Anderton's status as a leader in the eyes of his peers. Other social movement participants began to contact him with questions and concerns and relied on him for information. Having no prior organizing experience, Anderton was called on to speak about his situation only shortly after entering into a leadership role in the community. In my interview with him, he discussed the fact that he had really never been political in his life. It was the seriousness of the issue and his desire to find out information about how to protect his family that propelled him into a leadership position.

Anderton rose to the occasion. He was quickly able to clearly articulate to others the problem the community was facing. He was able to express his concern using language similar to that of the scientific and government officials who had initially informed him of the problem. This experience is known as lay expertise in community organizing. By being able to communicate using the same language as the experts, he increased the legitimacy of his leadership position, as well as the awareness about the seriousness of the problem in the community. Anderton discussed the importance of being on the same "level" as those in charge politically.

To be honest with you, of all the entities we've dealt with EPA has probably been the most forthcoming and open with what they're doing. That's what we want. We have the right to have that. So anyway we have this call and I know I am going to be talked into the ground by a bunch of PhD's (no offense) but I am going to be talked under the ground by a couple of PhD's because what do I know about this stuff after all, but what I want is something in writing. If you can't give me levels, give me a formula. Tell me what you do, how do you do it. They are going to tell me I can't understand. Well, I can't understand if you won't tell me. I'm not the brightest, but I'm not the dumbest either. There's people here that would like to see what your plans are (Interview with John Anderton, HWCHA President).

These statements represent a strong sentiment in the community that residents felt intimidated by EPA "expert" officials. This standing presented a social status barrier and a feeling that activists were working against, not with officials who held the potential solution to their problems. Anderton used his newly found confidence to prepare the June 2000 meeting with the EPA. This meeting was to cover the proposed remediation of selected, nonresidential contaminated hot-spots in the community. Participants met during May and the beginning of June to review strategy for the meeting and discuss possible responses to the EPA.

## **New Leadership Forms**

At this meeting, one resident in particular stood out because he clearly and forcefully stated his concerns about remediating the vacant lot hot spots. I had not recognized him at many other community events and he did not seem to know many of the other residents at the meeting. He was extremely well spoken about the specifics of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons contamination. The media descended

on him when the meeting ended and his words dominated the local news coverage. Anderton was unaware of this man's presence in the community prior to hearing him that evening, but quickly recruited him to fill the much needed leadership role that Jones had emotionally vacated months earlier. Steve Emmet joined the leadership ranks in Hickory Woods and worked closely to fulfill the goals Anderton and Gibbs had set forth.

However, not all Hickory Woods residents supported the new leadership. Membership constituted active social movement participants in the community, but not all residents were members of the organization. Leadership was continually framed by this group as strong, resilient to government pressure, expert, and moving ahead toward resolution of the problem. However, when Anderton decided to run for Common Council, the leadership frame shifted to one of uneasiness. It was at this point that social movement participants began to reframe leadership based on Anderton's decision.

### ***Division After Unity***

Anderton decided to run for the South District Common Council seat in 2001. His skills as a leader were developed over time, from someone with no grassroots organizing experience, to someone testifying before Congress and taking on the incumbent for his district's Common Council seat. His decision to run for Common Council affected mobilization outcomes due to the divisiveness of the political campaign. Specifically, a close relative of an active social movement participant also planned on running for the council seat. After discussions among the candidates, they agreed that the community would be split in whom to support if they both ran in the election. Even though the two men had an informal agreement that one candidate would step down, both continued their bids for Common Council. Because there were two candidates with similar platforms, the association felt split between whom they should support. Loyalties were tested and the community became more clearly divided.

The division in support, on the surface, had nothing to do with the problems of contamination. A closer look revealed that residents began to use the Common Council run as an excuse to support the current president or not. Those who chose not to support Anderton did so because they felt he was using the publicity of running for office to further the cause for Hickory Woods and not addressing the wider community he would be representing. They also felt that with his recent congressional testimony, he was preparing for bigger and better opportunities. Running for political office was a means to meet what they thought were self-centered goals.

However, those who supported him as a candidate were excited about the prospect of having a direct link to City Hall. They felt that this could only help their cause in the end. Primarily, the division in support was based in community politics. Support by activists came down to whomever was more willing to use the contamination problems in Hickory Woods as the main campaign issue. Anderton won the primary as the Republican candidate, though in this victory, he lost the support of those who backed the other candidate. This group of activists withdrew from the homeowners' association and no longer participated in community events. The development of his leadership skill that gave him the confidence to run for office had a direct effect on the mode and path of mobilization.

In the end, Anderton lost the election to the incumbent with 25% to her 75% of the popular vote. After the election, however, the homeowners' group remained

divided, though no official leader emerged from the group that broke away. Anderton remained the president of the original group and restructured the organization. Prior to the Common Council campaign, some of the participants felt that the leadership was no longer looking out for their needs. Some felt the group was too radical, while others felt they weren't doing enough. It was as if the election gave residents an excuse to drop support for the current leadership altogether. To many, the election justified their withdrawal and dislike of how things were being handled in the community.

That was the conflict. You can't do this; one of you has got to back down. You are splitting the group. There were real arguments as it relates to outside politics. That was [what was] stalling them on internal their strategies from moving the relocation forward. It just shut off, and people were so busy and angry in some cases that they couldn't focus on the business at hand that was how do we get relocated. (Interview with Lois Gibbs, December 2001)

Gibbs acknowledges the main problem with this campaign. Attention was shifted from the relocation effort towards an angry political campaign that served to divide rather than unite the community. Mobilization was affected in that former participants withdrew support from the leadership and organization in an effort to create a separate group. Even though the media and government did not officially recognize the group, they existed in the community. In the following section, I discuss the influence that leadership frames had on mobilization.

## **Discussion: Influencing Mobilization**

Because the development of leadership is important to the process of mobilization, the ways in which leadership is framed in the community affect mobilization (Staggenborg and Morris 2004; Aminzade, Goldstone and Perry 2001). Mobilization efforts can hinge on whether leadership is present and how it is constructed among groups in the community. Status perception of the leader also has implications to the development of leadership in the community, along with the type and intensity of leadership. Leadership in the form of a committee chairperson brings with it different interpretations than leadership in the form of the president of an organization. Most often, the president of a group will be seen to have more power than someone labeled a committee chairperson.

Outcomes in this mobilization effort took a few different primary forms. First, support grew and second, dissent and withdrawal from participation occurred. Leadership roles were legitimized through bridged capital opportunities and connections with prominent local and national experts. Many rallied behind these leaders. Because the two men were the first to initiate an organized response to the city, supporters came to see them as leading a charismatic effort to find out more information about the chemical issues and save their community. Yet, those who disagreed with the leaders were sometimes ridiculed in their community.

Second, in an initial effort to mobilize the community, some began to join by participating in events and actions planned in the community, but in the end withdrew from participation. Those who withdrew felt that attention given to contamination claims was not warranted. They did not, however, organize against the other group. No leader had emerged from this group, yet many of the nonparticipants were former

leaders of the community block club. Some were questioned about their decisions to withdraw from the group and not support the current leadership. One woman recalled being heckled as she went grocery shopping in a neighborhood store. While placing her order at the deli counter, she was questioned about her stance on the issues. She expressed feeling embarrassed, but mostly angry that she couldn't even go to the store without facing this issue. She simply did not agree with the way the leaders were emphasizing the contamination issues in Hickory Woods. She felt that attention to the problem was unwarranted and the leaders were acting out of self-promotion. The stance she took affected her everyday actions and interactions with others.

Further divides were present in the community as well. The notion that leadership was self-selected drove possible participants from the group. Even given Gibbs's connection, nonparticipants questioned the leaders' authority to pursue the problems of contamination, since the community already had an active block club. The block club had been successful in developing a neighborhood watch program and provided residents with updates on neighborhood news. These residents questioned the legitimacy of the HWCHA leaders, telling themselves, "If what the city said is true, the problem is already being addressed." In their minds, there was no need to devote community effort to this problem. They felt that the leaders were creating more of a problem by devoting so much time to the chemical waste issue. Therefore, intense attention to the chemical contamination issue allowed the very issue to snowball out of control.

Leadership was initially framed as two men, with help from expert environmental activists in outside the community, making decisions for the larger community. To further explain the initial divide in the community, nonparticipants began to resent the idea that the community had a leader to guide them towards some goal that not everyone agreed upon. A resident who held this belief shared how she resented the development of leadership in the community.

There are maybe three different opinions that contradict the other, no yes, no yes. You are not finding anything concrete. I hold him [the president of the homeowners' group] solely responsible for this whole mess, the whole negativity. I think you get more done if you sat and talked [versus] attacked, that [attacked] is what he has done. I don't think he has the right to put fear in people. There is an emergency meeting. You better get here. When I call my council member, she doesn't know anything about it. He doesn't have that right. No one person has that right. They shouldn't have that much power to put fear in anybody. He's got people convinced two blocks down that they are going to be bought out. (Interview with Fran, nonparticipant)

Residents who shared this view blamed the negative publicity that the neighborhood was receiving on the leaders. They hated the idea that this form of leadership put a few people in charge of an entire neighborhood's fate. These residents expressed that they wished the problem would just disappear. They felt that the leaders were uninformed of the facts, therefore leading the community in the wrong direction. However, they had few facts of their own that they could use to dispute the leadership publicly. They also expressed dismay at the divisions that were appearing in a community that was once very close-knit. Emmet, the second vice president, explained the impacts of the division in the community.

There are still some people in the neighborhood while they agree that something probably ought to be done, they don't agree with the way we

are doing it. Fair enough. I can understand that. My contention there would be maybe the association has not done a good enough job transmitting the proper information to those people. Because it, perhaps if those people knew a little more about the minutia about what is going on, maybe they would understand that the only way to get what we have gotten so far is to open your mouth and speak and talk to the media. Those folks will say and I know that they do say, well you are bringing the property values down in the area. Instead, I would say no. We didn't bring the property values down; the responsible parties brought the property values down. (Interview with Steve Emmet, vice president)

Leaders were generally self-proclaimed in that they took the initiative to run a meeting and decided to formally appoint nominees for officers of a group that was barely in formation. Those attending the meeting elected them, appointing them to lead the effort towards some solution. Bill and June, two social movement participants, spoke of the role of the leaders.

Some of the residents, beginning with Anderton and his next door neighbor started to get together and talked about what they should do about this. They started talking about what they ought to do and started to quietly make some inquiries and not raise too much of a raucous, but let's find out what is going on. It became readily apparent that no one wanted to talk about it. No one was going to give them any information and their only recourse was to take it to the public. Which is a gutsy move because while you want to make sure that your family is safe, you don't have enough information to really point any fingers, and really have anything solid to go on. You got neighbors who are going to be nearby saying "hey you are lowering the property values talking about this." (Interview with June, a social movement participant)

Anderton and Jones started the Homeowners' group. Everybody was kind of on their own at first. Then the meetings were just to keep everybody informed, when there are meetings. He is good at it. He puts a lot of time into it, I give him credit. It's not easy. (Interview with Bill, a social movement participant)

All of the residents in Hickory Woods started out with the same base knowledge of the problem. They all received the same infamous letter from the city vaguely describing the contamination issues, dated August 30, 1999. It wasn't that some had more information than others that would have enabled them to become leaders. Instead, it was a drive towards more and better knowledge about the problem that propelled Anderton and Jones into leadership roles. Gibbs's involvement intended to make their tasks easier, but in the end, led to a series of divisiveness and unexpected consequences. It was the combination of individual initiative and the structural realities of the community that contributed to the consequences experienced by community residents, activists and non-activists alike.

## Conclusion

The case of Hickory Woods provides a backdrop for the exploration of classic social movement themes. For instance, sometimes, an unwanted condition or physical problem may exist in a community, yet no one in the community acknowledges it by mobilizing to resolve the condition. Until the problem is identified through claims-making activities, it may exist as a problem yet no one labels it as a grievance to acknowledge the conditions and take responsibility to resolve it (Tesh 2000). Once actors do engage in claims-making people may begin to mobilize and strategize their next steps. Many times problems are only defined as such when they are noticed and cause negative consequences in the community. However, there have been many instances in social movement research where communities fail to mobilize in the presence of an unwanted condition. Someone needs to voice these complaints and without the development of leadership in a community it is even more likely that the problem will remain unaddressed. When a community is engaged in a grassroots campaign, leadership is a vital factor in the early stages and throughout mobilizing efforts.

Previous research has identified Weberian explanations for successful leadership including charisma and its role in effective leadership. This quality is important in the beginning stages of mobilization, but seems to have less overall impact on the long term success of a movement. Gender, social class and other variables have also been correlated with leadership strength, but little evidence supports why these variables may be correlated with the exception of those connected to social networking. Unless individuals have connections and draw on broad base community support, movement initiatives are not as likely to succeed.

Leaders must also frame their positions to the community. It is in this effort that they draw on resources to legitimize their positions. Often leaders will look towards similar cases of success from which to learn “tricks of the trade.” Brown and Mikkelsen (1990) address this with community activists tracing the source of childhood leukemia in Woburn, MA. Levine (1982) addresses this in Love Canal. Kroll-Smith and Couch (2000) argue that citizens can become experts by training with others already active in the field. From this research, it is evident that this occurred in Hickory Woods as well. Bridging capital (Gunter and Kroll-Smith 2007) techniques serve to benefit movement effort. In this research I was able to follow leadership development from a firsthand account as the movement was growing and gaining momentum. Leaders’ reliance on “expert” activists provided a particular legitimacy for mobilization efforts. By enlisting the help of Lois Gibbs, movement leaders drew on a local hero to build the case for hopeful legal settlements and eventual relocation.

Leadership frames affect mobilizing efforts. In this case, the progression of a “two-man” effort to a combined effort with well-known environmental experts helped formalize their roles as leaders. The dimension of individual agency that leaders exert must not be overlooked. It is not only the form of leadership present in a community, but also how that frame is viewed among social movement actors that influences mobilization. Actors’ impressions of leadership change throughout the life of a social movement. It is equally important to acknowledge not just that the frames change, but how these frames affect mobilization outcomes. The frames of leadership addressed in this paper illustrate a piece of the complex mobilization picture.

Leadership affected the path of mobilization in the end by causing a division in the main organization. Yet, among those who continued to support the leaders, by

framing them as experts, the support they received continued to increase. Leadership in and of itself does not guide the path or guarantee mobilization in a community. Frames that residents held of leadership affected how they acted and whether they participated in the mobilization effort.

Limitations of this study stem from the overall scope of this study and leadership being but one component of a much broader view of social movement mobilization. The research design focused on leadership as but one component of how mobilization is conceptualized. As with many qualitative studies, I relied on a grounded theory approach and found leadership to be a theoretically motivating idea to explore. Other empirical studies focusing on leadership processes are called for to test the "expert effect" and lead to a better understanding of leadership dynamics in grassroots community social movement organizations.

This research documents the outcomes of a particular leadership strategy-connecting with experienced activists. Although one cannot state Gibbs's involvement was the only factor affecting mobilization, the evidence in my data reflects the influence of her presence. As in Love Canal, individuals interpret leaders' goals and motivations differently. In the end it is the relationship that leaders have with community members that truly influences mobilization outcomes.

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## The Absurdities of Mental Illness – A Narrative Inquiry Into Psychiatric Diagnosis

### **Abstract**

This text examines three life stories about becoming mentally ill and Albert Camus' fictive narrative "The Stranger". The main concern is how the social and psychiatry intervenes in the narrative that the interviewees give. Drawing from a reasoning in Michel Foucault's monograph *Madness and Civilization* and Dorothy Smith's work on relations of ruling the argument in this article is that when becoming mentally ill one is involved in a process of losing agency in one's own life story. Illustratively with Camus' novel the analysis unravels that the interviewees become strangers in their own life story.

### **Keywords**

Narrative; Estrangement; Psychiatry; Life Stories

*Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don't know. I had a telegram from the home: 'Mother passed away. Funeral tomorrow. Yours sincerely.' That doesn't mean anything. It may have happened yesterday.*

Albert Camus, *The Stranger*

The opening passage of Camus' novel "The Stranger" describes how the ordinary Mersault reflects on the death of his mother. These reflections, and his later participation in her funeral ceremony, are the first events that steer him towards his fate of becoming a murderer. Or, rather, how others come to interpret these happenings in a way that make them look upon him as a murderer. That is how they make sense of Mersault and his actions. Accordingly, in this narrative, the character Mersault is the hero, or anti-hero. He tries to make progress in the society of which he is part; he orients himself among the accounts others have of him, and struggles to make sense of them. Camus shows how Mersault becomes involved in, and works through, different situations. Later, only a few days after his mother's ceremony, also by mere chance or not, he shoots a man on a beach. Even though he makes sense of these situations, they are later used and turned against him. The "social", rather than

he himself, becomes a Dark Continent that influences how his future life will turn out. His fate is determined as though he has nothing to do with it; others decisions intervene in his story and he becomes a stranger for himself. This characterizes the complexity of his future life, neither that his mother is dead nor that he killed a man, but his indifference to these facts, and not showing any grief. It seems as if everything is the same for him, the whole situation, as well as following events, become absurd to him.

In this text I am interested about how this absurdity may be illustrated from the position of a person with experiences from the field of psychiatry. The point of departure for my text is an examination of what the intersection between psychiatry and everyday life brings to the life story of the person who has been diagnosed with a mental disorder. By analysing how an interviewee narrates the experiences of this intersection, it is possible to say what role mental disorder plays in the life stories of my interviewees. On the one hand, in the epistemology of psychiatry and medicine, the diagnosis is presented and exists as the product of what is mutually considered to be a disease. There has been a wide discussion about that among psychiatrists the individual's behaviour is evaluated with the written description of a disease found in the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM). That the psychiatric description is reified (Mirowsky and Ross 1989) and from this reification of a diagnosis the person is caught in a limbo between the logic of medicine (Schleifer and Vannatta 2006) and the own experienced standpoint (Frank 2000). Mental illness is subtle in its form behind the doors of psychiatry, but has real, concrete consequences in the particular life courses of those diagnosed. The diagnosis is located on a social landscape (Foucault 1988). But as Scheff (1969: 505) wrote, "if the symptoms of mental illness are to be construed as violations of social norms, it is necessary to specify the type of norms involved". When mental illness is located on a social landscape, there are also social norms involved. Norms that often are put in brackets behind the doors of psychiatry and, also, reduced from the clinically language of DSM.

The relations on the field of psychiatry can easily be mismatched from the standpoint of the patient and how others make sense of that person (Frank 2000). On this field, to briefly use a metaphor from Pierre Bourdieu, psychiatry is not only involved alone. The social intervenes in the stories the interviewee gives. Through the narratives examined here it has gradually become apparent that the consequences of the process of becoming mentally ill are absurd and difficult to make sense of because the life story takes a new turn that is implemented by others. In this phase of becoming mentally ill ones own mental state is observed in others and from this observation oneself appears as baseless, as absurd (Foucault 1988: 88). So, the story is wrecked because its present is not what the past formerly was supposed to lead up to (Frank 1995). The absurdities involved in the told story seem to be about losing agency in one's own story, similar to the absurdities that Camus illustrated with Mersault's life.

Even though an identical clinical diagnosis may exist for various individuals, it will be palpable and concrete in different ways due to where it is experienced and who experiences it. The same diagnosis exists, but calls for different meanings, accounts, and interpretations. With accounts I mean here verbalised explanations of what is experienced as a turning point in a life story, and by turning point, I mean the moment when a narrative takes on a new course towards a new future end. It is a significant event in an autobiography, if you so want. Such a turning point is usually explained by features outside the "self"; hence, the core of my data is the sequence of the accounts and the consequences of them (Riessman and Quinney 2005).

According to Hannah Arendt (Arendt and Persson 2004) stories refer to events, maybe arbitrary and irrational in the time when they occurred, but they lead to a sequence that construe a meaning when they in retrospect are narrated. Put differently, in a narrative, a mental disorder occurs according to how significant events are accounted for, and how it in retrospect is made sense of. In the current text I endeavour to discover significant events in the interviewees' narratives that are related to their lives as being "mentally ill". With the help of the character Mersault and the fictive narrative Camus has constructed I want to unfold the absurdities involved in becoming mentally ill and, more accurate, what these absurdities may be.

## **Institutional Narratives**

The material for this study is drawn from a total of ten deep interviews with persons who have experiences with the field of psychiatry as "patients". For this text, three cases were chosen to illustrate the consequence of psychiatry in a narrative, who I call in this text Ip I, Ip II and Ip III. They are all born in Sweden, but are of different ages, Ip I and Ip II are men. These interviewees I met with in late October and early November 2005, at a meeting point for people who have a mental disorder. This meeting point is not directly connected to the practice of psychiatry. The reason why I choose this was that I wanted them to reflect around their lives as members of society rather than patients under psychiatry.

The interviews lasted two to three hours; they were tape-recorded and later transcribed into text. My first question was always "Do you want to tell me about your everyday life". By doing this, I wanted to provide a space for them in which they could tell their stories. This approach offers me an opportunity to analyse their paths to the positions in which they are located at the present moment. Each interviewee got an opportunity to structure a life story in a way that made sense for him or herself, and in a way each thought it made sense to me. They were the witnesses of their lives and indicated themselves as objects of their own descriptions. Each became the narrator of his or her own story in which he or she played the leading part as first person singular.

In order to make an analysis of this data, the stories were extended to include an institutional dimension, which means that the narratives are considered as a part of a social totality rather than as only referring to an individual narrator. The interviews reveal, then, the material environment, and his or her cultural and subjective experiences. Everyone has a "story", but these go beyond the "self" (Riessman and Quinney 2005). Hence, this study becomes what Dorothy Smith (2005, 2006) defines as an inquiry about the social by means of explorations of institutional relations and organisations. This exploration starts from a position in the local activities of everyday life and is in this text illustrated by the fictive character Mersaults life as it becomes estranging for himself.

## **Reframing History**

In this text I work with different accounts of mental illness by studying how mental illness creates different trajectories in the narratives of the interviewees. The narrative is intertwined with medical judgements made by others. The story-teller loose agency in their life course and becomes an object of medical knowledge

(Rendell 2004). But they are still the first person of their narrative, they are able to unfold psychiatry and its intervention in their life story. Ip I, a white man around forty-five years of age, said:

When I came back [from military service] to my job they probably thought that I was in good shape. And they burdened me with a huge load of work. A nasty load. But when I glanced at that blueprint, I felt that it was too much for me. And I just couldn't concentrate anymore... Everything started to spin around inside my head and the situation became untenable... And I started to cry. And all the others, the supervisors, saw me. So they sent me to the company doctor who wrote a letter that he put in a sealed envelope. He told me to go to the psychiatric clinic. But I hesitated, because I had never been in contact with psychiatry. On my way to the clinic I stopped, opened the envelope and looked at the letter. "Schizophrenia" was written there, but with a question mark at the end...

*Interviewer:* Did you continue?

*Ip I:* Yeah, yeah. I went to the psychiatric clinic because I thought that, how should I put it, that it was humane. I had a picture of it as that. And when I arrived they did tell me that I was going to be there for a while, and that I was going to receive medication. Medication that was horrible, as I experienced it. My head started to shake like this [he shake his head] and even more than that...

This is an account of Ip I's first meeting with psychiatry. The blueprint made him feel that it "...was too much... the situation became untenable" and he "...just couldn't concentrate anymore". But his first steps toward the field of psychiatry begin by way of his supervisor, who sent him to the company doctor with a written letter. It is a short account but summarizes how medicine gets into his life story. Then he ends with his personal experiences of psychiatric practices. In this excerpt "others" are present and influence how the course of events turn out: Ip I said "...all the others, the supervisors, saw me...". Ip I is still the point of reference, he is the narrator, but he makes sense of his own position by referring to the other in a social system (Hydén 1997; Scheff 1999). His narrative as a former draftee and construction worker in good shape got interrupted when the company doctor had written "schizophrenia?" on a note in a sealed envelope. Social processes shed light on the narrator's own perspective and illustrate how the narrative is gradually transformed into an account of being mentally ill. After this event his life will not be the same as before

Illustratively, Mersault is the subject of various stories in which he is not able to intervene, and where the interpretations of his own past are beyond his control. A world comes into being through the actions and judgements of peers and other key-persons who contribute to a story far from his own control, the social *happens* (Smith 1999: 75). Hence, Mersault becomes categorized and narrated as a murderer, he thinks not of himself as such. Instead, this condition is an aspect of a larger social system, and the circumstances under which he lives is coupled to this categorization.

In the social sciences and health studies there is a growing concern about how people convey these stories and how they make sense of their own positions as a patients (Haglund 2004; Hydén 1997; Loseke 2003; Riessman and Quinney 2005). Dorothy Smith (1990) identified that describing a person as mentally ill includes a social organization of accounts. These accounts involve claims about both the context the person is situated in, and also about the actions performed, but they do not involve the person's own explanations of these factors. There are, therefore, different narratives, but also discrepancies among them. These narratives are

structured as a series of related positions in which psychiatry is located, but this is merely a trace, although it is almost taken for given.

Arthur Frank (1995) wrote, when a patient arrives at a psychiatric clinic, there is a medical explanation for the problems. The individual problems are incorporated into an abstract and a clinical evidence based terminology (Hallerstedt 2006; Horwitz 2002; Loseke 2003; Wakefield 1997). As Michel Foucault (1977) observed, the disciplinary functions of knowledge are everywhere in society, even in individual life stories. When a person is diagnosed as a psychiatric patient, she or he becomes a story-teller telling a story, but that story is deciphered in terms of a dominant knowledge of the other, who is also there and occupies the sphere (Aneshensel 2006; Cavarero 2000). In the sociology of mental health and illness, there has been wide discussion, drawing upon Thomas Scheff's writings, about whether these psychiatric diagnoses make claims about dysfunctions of the mind, or whether they refer to socially disapproved living. Scheff (1969) writes:

Apparently under some conditions societal reaction to deviance is to seek out signs of abnormality in the deviant's history to show that he was always essentially a deviant. (p. 512)

Similar to Scheff but still far from him also APA (2000) asserts in the preface to DSM IV:

The diagnostic categories, criteria, and textual descriptions are meant to be employed by individuals with appropriate clinical training and experience in diagnosis...the exercise of clinical judgment may justify giving a certain diagnosis to an individual even though the clinical presentation falls just short in meeting the full criteria for the diagnosis as long as the symptoms that are present are persistent and severe. (p. xxxii)

The categories of psychiatry are retrospectively inscribed in a personal biography to show that "he [!] was always essentially a deviant". In DSM, it can be read that a psychiatric diagnosis must be a clinical judgement of a psychopathological dysfunction in the mind and not about contextualised behaviour (APA 2000: xxxi). This dysfunction must, then, be identified by "...individuals with appropriate clinical training...". A psychiatrically trained person that "seeks out signs of abnormality" deciphers mental illness and, as a consequence, the individual who is diagnosed loses agency in the own life story. Scheff (1999) later wrote that a societal reaction to deviance is associated with systems of social control found in the role-taking part of the "looking glass self", control comes from seeing oneself from the point of view of the other and as a part of a social system. In order to make sense of a contextualised event, it needs also to be intertwined with social, political, public, and economic factors (Brante 2006). To understand someone's personal history, bits and pieces of different claims concerning one's own character are reinterpreted and responded to at the present moment, from the position in which one is currently located (Aneshensel 2006; Goffman 1963).

A clinical diagnosis involves a reconstruction of past events, which reframes history and describes it using psychiatric terminology. Personal biography is then narrated interpreted in a particular way to fit the psychiatric terminology. Ip II, a young man in his twenties who I met in his one-room apartment, said...

*Ip II:* After a while I passed one year in high school almost half psychotic. Don't ask me how this was possible [laughs]. Then during the second year this was no longer possible. I continued to visit the doctor. But we should talk about everything. I brought forward lots of things. I was going to talk

about my father. It was often about petty details, but I wanted to talk about it. I was stuck; I should talk all the time about the strangest things... We talked a lot about sexual things that make you feel filthy sexually. That I felt filthy... But I got it all out. It was the bravest thing I have ever done and today I feel clean. It took a long time to make me feel clean but it can ruin a whole life...

For Ip II there were no impending problems with the therapists; he talked about his past, about his father, and about “petty details”. All in all, these things made him “feel filthy.” But his goal was to frame these experiences so that he could, in the future, feel clean, “...and today I feel clean”, he said, “but it can ruin a whole life”. An account like this is composed by a totality of judgments that cannot distinctively stand on its own. The Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero (2000) wrote that, in the myth of Oedipus, his life-story was a result of the stories that others told him about himself. In their stories he realized what he has done, and who he was. Oedipus’ action toward his father is, and will always be, the same, but his action is reinterpreted when it becomes known who Oedipus is; that is to say, who his mother and father were. The frames that differentiate this event from other events in the narrative are set, which means that the narrator (Ip II) then becomes aware of himself in a particular way.

### **Framed Contemporary Positions**

Sociologists taking their cue from Emile Durkheim assume that social categories are to be treated as objects as such. But illustrative with Mersault, he may think of his relationships to others as rational and appropriate according to his own position, whereas others may see his relationship as highly inappropriate. When these disparate views are brought together, they collide and constitute an unfamiliar and uncomfortable situation for the participants. These divergent and mismatched relations between two or more positions that Mersault experience; bring something absurd to his situation. Erving Goffman (1963) would say that his subjective version becomes alienated from the knowledge of the ‘other’ have about him. Or, as Cavarero (2000) puts it, universal knowledge excludes uniqueness from its epistemology. Accordingly, there is a discrepancy between the views a participant has about the field and his or her position in that field.

Experiences of the relationships among own thoughts, social positions, and frames are what constitute a biography and, also, a standpoint constituting ones self (Frank 2000: 356; Rustin 2000). In this sense, this is one kind of activity involved in the processes of becoming conscious of oneself and realizing one’s position in the world. There are various ways of finding strategies to attain this position, from such a position it becomes possible to reframe and reflect upon one’s self. Ip II, again, had a technique for doing this:

*Ip II:* But then I started to think that now I am a disgusting fellow, because I think this thought. But this disappears when I read the newspaper.

*Interviewer:* Is it reading the paper that helps you, or what it says?

*Ip II:* Well. It is more like you can choose, y’know. That’s the finest thing about it. You choose for yourself. That’s the ultimate.

While reading the newspaper, Ip II is able to choose which story he is included in, how he frames his position. He feels “disgusting”, that is a concrete feeling he starts with. If he feels like “...a disgusting fellow”, he is able to experience this from a new position, and to see himself from a new standpoint. The text encounter Ip II’s

actual present site, the text is a constituent of social relations and becomes more than it's meaning, it help Ip II to reframe and change his image of him self (Smith 1999). Still, he is not the full author of this story; his narrative is mediated through the "other" he finds in the newspaper. The textual "other" helps Ip II to pick up the pieces and to narrate his story. Similar to Scheff's (1999) version of Cooley's looking glass, he experiences his "self" as he believes how it is seen and by the other. One necessarily needs to be located with respect to the other (Scheff 1999). As Cooley (1998) suggest that the "I" has a meaning which includes some set of reference to other people. The account in the newspaper and Ip II's own story are what he currently chooses between. Ip II is able to reframe and associate himself with categories found in a newspaper. He is still ill but, by fitting in with a narrative related to something specific, he can reframe his future project and career (Murphy 2001):

*Ip II:* The last summer holiday. That's when it really started to get off track. Dad and I often watched football together, y'know. And I got nervous that I could effect the players and so.

*Interviewer:* It got to you...

*Ip II:* Yeah, sure. I didn't dare to watch table tennis because I thought I messed it up for Waldner and so... But I thought if I sent positive thoughts. I was watching the TV Four News quite a lot and I thought: now I am thinking good things about you, he looks good. He's nice and so. And I heard that he got happy. But if I force positive thoughts then it comes out the other way, it gets negative and you notice that the person gets depressed and sad. I got terrified at what I did to them. Yeah, it was delusions... And I have to add that my social phobia was sky high... Extremely shy and unsociable. But I got pills for that. I was dead scared for people. And I thought that I was dirty and disgusting, I was ugly, y'know... that was me.

*Interviewer:* Do you think that others thought about you in this way?

*Ip II:* Yeah and I felt disgusting and all. But no one ever said anything like that to me.

After the point when he felt that it started to get of the track Ip II became "extremely shy and unsociable", and had a hard time in controlling what was happening to him. The process underlying his feelings is located between him and other persons and, even though the process is not possible to observe, it comes into being and exists concretely. In the relations between Ip II and the people he was dead scared about, something is absurd; Ip II cannot watch table tennis because he believes that he will mess up the game. No one needs to say anything to Ip II, he feels "disgusting and all" due to the position he gets by reflecting upon others. Ip II frames his narrative as a consequence or maybe as a response of the image that inscribed through socialization with others.

## The Others

*But what I in the beginning of my time in prison suffered from most was that I still thought as a free man [...] But that only lasted for some months. Then all my thoughts became a prisoner's thoughts.*

Albert Camus, The Stranger

Once in jail, when Mersault reflects upon his position, he comes into being as a prisoner. He becomes conscious of himself, or more accurately, from his reflections he builds an image of himself - his "...thoughts became a prisoners' thoughts". But, his thoughts were still not murderers' thoughts; nevertheless his narrative as a free man is wrecked. In the construction of a life story, he relate to the institutional order in which the story is involved. The order makes them conscious of him self in a certain way. From Jean-Paul Sartre (Sartre, Löfgren, and Nygren 1988) reading of *The Stranger*, it can be concluded that the absurdity Camus illustrated with the character Mersault is a common feature of all social interaction. The novel is more concerned with the breaking of a reciprocal consensus between a social structure and an actor therein, than it is about a criminal. In adjusting to the new context and relationships, the actor gains insight about who he or she is. Whether this insight is satisfying or not, it is conformed to when it is realised that this is how they are seen in the eyes of others (Cavarero 2000; Mead and Morris 1962; Waldrum 2007). Mersault is an example of the relations between the self and the social world in which he is intertwined, but the unifying bonds are dissolved. There is a rift between his presumption and the social reality that others represent. That crack is masked in the subject but recognised in the absurdities of madness (Foucault 1988).

In the interview with Ip II, I stress the process of being categorized and how this is made sense of by him and how the he start to think thoughts from a new position:

*Interviewer:* But. If it [the newspaper] says something stupid. If there are any horrors in the paper then?

*Ip II:* It is very important to feel what others feel. Yes. What others feel. Because it is what happens outside you. It's when you start to think everything works out fine, y'know. That's what the whole thing's about, it's not only about yourself it's about. If I should only be alone in my apartment I would turn into a loner, a complete outsider, y'know. It is like when I can relate to reality and to others and use them as a sounding board, see. Yes, you know a sounding board and me and that's when I can experience that I am a part of reality in reality.

Ip II achieved insights when he used some version of the other as a "sounding board"; he becomes defined as a category by this sounding board. He knows himself through his conception of the "other" he gets from a morning paper, television and social encounters. In this quote he finds an orientation for situations and experiences himself by relating "to reality and to others" as it is embodied in the text. He observes himself and uses the "sounding board" as a mirror of recognition, his solid sovereignty as a subject dissolves in the image he gets from the mirror (Foucault 1988). When his conception of him self bounces back from the mirror it is turned into history and embedded in a narrative structure that makes sense.

In a social situation the dividing line between a subjective life and a social position becomes blurred (Aneshensel 2006). So, as Goffman (1967) points out, the situation is more important than the person, the "self" is settled according to the appropriate rhetoric for the moment. In Camus story Mersault starts to think a prisoner's thoughts, which becomes concrete when he looks out the window over the walls from inside the prison and sees a tree. For Ip II it is important to experience him self in a setting, to realise that he is "a part of reality", he said. Without this context he is not recognized. In this passage, Ip II emphasises that it is "important to feel what others feel" and "what happens outside you". If this were absent, he "would turn into a loner, a complete outsider".

The stories the interviewees told frequently referred to what others had done in particular situations. These others made the interviewees realise that there were problems with themselves. Ip III, a young woman about the same age as Ip II, often kept to turning points in her narrative when “others” were active in the story; often more active than she herself:

*Ip III:* My life changed when I was twelve. And when they recognized. It began when I started to have headaches, not everyday or so. But then they tested the usual, glasses and so. There was a lot of popping in and out of the hospital because they thought it was migraine. This was around 1998, back then I was eleven, due to turn twelve in the autumn. Midsummer day, at that time everything broke out.

In this quotation Ip III referred to events that involved objects such as the hospital, herself, and glasses as well as persons, “they recognized”, “they tested”, “they thought”. All these elements are significant to her story; the different components drive it forward and help her structure her experiences in a way that makes sense to her. Even though she plays the leading part, she structures the events as though she does not possess agency. Despite the fact that it is she who gives me a short version of her life that it is “I” who has a headache, nevertheless, it is “they” who “tested the usual”, “who thought it was migraine”. It is they who from the beginning “recognized” the state Ip III was in. She is no longer the actor in her own story; but she is the narrator, representing the first person’s voice telling where and when it took place and who did what. She evaluates the components from her point of view, putting them in relation to one another and these components together make up an autobiography in which mental illness is located. From this comprehension she tells a story about herself and how she got sick. Simultaneously, she places herself in the world using the terminology of those in a dominant position – who are the anonymous, but still influential, “they”. In the moment that others, or Ip III herself for that matter, became aware that there was something wrong, she (or they) got in touch with a psychiatrist and she “popped” into the hospital. From this point on Ip III became an element in a patient’s story, even though she is actually in the same story as before, together with the same persons, objects, and illness as previously. The major difference is that her future is now framed in a new way, and her history has also been reframed. This is her turning point.

Ip III’s “I”, as Oliver Sacks (1994) wrote, is pushed forward in a direction determined by a terminology far from what she was used to. The relational order in her biography is changed. Now she also participates in a field structured by a psychiatric ontology. In Ip II’s metaphor, she uses the field of psychiatry as a “sounding board” to script her version of her life. The experiences she has had in the psychiatric field have consequences for how she sees herself. She becomes aware of herself in terms of the categories of the field of psychiatry, which changes her social position.

The interview starts with Ip III saying, “...I shall try to give you a short version of my life”. This is when Ip III ascribes to herself the narrator’s voice and, as narrator, picks those components she thinks are relevant for me to hear. Together, these fragments will make up her life story, showing how she makes sense of herself. In both the social and psychiatric fields she has received specific knowledge about herself that is deduced and generalized from both interactions and what she believes other persons think about her. As George Herbert Mead (1962) wrote in a supplementary essay to his book *Mind, Self and Society*; self-development and social development turn out to be correlated and interdependent. As in the quotation from Ip

II, in which he speaks of developing a self using “the other” as a “sounding board”. The boundaries between social structure and the “self” are established by the means of reflections upon oneself and society.

### **Conflicting Narratives**

In the story about Mersault, Camus portrays him as a stranger and refers to the incommensurability between his subjective story and others’ interpretations of the same. It is difficult to say what is actually going on by analyzing a single position. When making sense of a biography events that took place elsewhere, in other contexts are reach out for; a totality is needed to make the experiences concrete. It is not enough to only focus upon the individual. Social interactions here and now are framed with events happened elsewhere (Goffman 1990). The categories that a person uses in defining one self are a part of a world and these categories are derived from happenings in that world, then applied to one’s own autobiography. Back to Ip III’s story; when she got home from the hospital she returned to school a new trajectory were found. She was now not only a girl/pupil - she was now a girl/pupil/patient:

*Ip III:* Then I should return and tell everything and so I thought it should be so exciting... Meet old friends. I felt like an UFO when I arrived [at school]. And, well. I was... I didn’t have a single friend left. This was my first shock. To get punished because I got so sick. I got bullied instead, the whole sixth grade, sometimes I went there and sometimes I just simply couldn’t. And without any contact with persons my age in my spare time when I started seventh grade, we split up even more and then I manage to go. That worked and I could continue. But I had been detached from my friends for a long time in some way. So I had both matured faster but during the same time I couldn’t keep up with them, didn’t have the same laughs, same language.

Ip III’s life had changed, she “felt like a UFO” and “didn’t have a single friend left”, that was her “first shock”. But what is more important is that she was in a new position. The understanding of her self that she received in school made her conscious about herself as having experienced something others have interpreted differently. After she had been away, others’ perceptions of her and what she had been subjected to differed from her own perception of the same event. As a result, Ip III is able to take on the views of others and reflect upon them. From this self-reflecting activity she structured her narrative. She said, “...I got punished because I got so sick”, and as a consequence of this she “...didn’t have a single friend left”. She got bullied, and she started to skip school, she “...felt like an UFO.”

IpIII includes the views of “others” as a contrast to her own story. In this account, she explains that it is the “others” who pushed her into an alternative career. This produces a secondary socialisation and this new social role is more or less reified as a standard of objective reality (Berger and Pullberg 1965). Therefore, it is the role her classmates associate with her, and the staging of this role that becomes a primary framework for Ip III. The results of this situation set her on the road to becoming a deviant, a role of which she was unaware before her classmates treated her as such. Even though Ip III experienced herself as “sick”, it was her friends and peers who forced her to act as an outcast. She gained insight about herself from others’ definitions, and deduced her role from their opinions, unable to “follow up with them”. She entered on a path not recognised by the generalised other, and this path

demanding a certain understanding of her herself. Nevertheless, she "...felt like an UFO".

Husserl (Husserl et al. 1992) once stated that subjective reflections are the claims that make up a structure by which the persons involved orient themselves. In the same moment that the structure of a situation is settled, the "self" is also determined. By discerning the structure, or at least having a notion about it, the meaning of a situation emerges and the situation is recognized (Goffman 1986). This is like Ip II's "sounding board", which allowed him to recognize himself via his peers, or like Ip III when she developed an understanding of her position as a patient after she discovered a structure in school. In this sense, interaction becomes a mixture and jumble of events, experiences, trajectories, and knowledge taken from disparate locations, mutually constructing a common ground for each particular situation. As Ip III said, "So I had both matured faster" and "I didn't follow up with them, didn't have the same laughs, same talk". She broke the frames and walked lines that lead her away from her friends, away from the common ground — the situation in school became absurd. Even though she was linked to the same context as before, she moved outside of that context and experienced herself in a new position. The connections between Ip III's person and her role were shattered, in order to establish the relations she needed to adopt another role (Goffman 1986).

## Discussion

Michael Foucault (1988) wrote that madness is a familiar silhouette in the social landscape. When madness is contextualized in a social landscape it, then, becomes a thing to look at and it is no longer a part of the individual. But rather a feature of society with own mechanisms derived from the social circumstances. What I have done in this text is to stretch out the narratives and treat them as a part of the social landscape to unfold how the social intervenes in the provided story. In this sense, their life stories become wrecked not because they have been diagnosed with a mental illness, but because they lose agency in their own story. So, similar to Camus' novel about Mersault, this wreckage brings an absurdity to their lives that they have hard times to make sense of.

By talking about own experiences one is giving the story uniqueness with the own voice. The voice always puts forward the "who" of saying (Cavarero 2005). Using the voice of the narrative's first person puts a face behind the experiences, a subject. But what is said is grounded in stories of the anonymous social "Other". By locating the story on a social landscape it bounces back from the social sounding board and makes that part reified. The story becomes an object when its events in retrospect are put into a narrative structure (Arendt and Persson 2004). Even though I have listened to life stories, they have come out as if someone else told them. Something intervenes in the story that they themselves cannot master. The dilemma here is that the life course as a "normal" is wrecked and becomes the narrative of someone who has broken some kind of norms. The patient is constructed through the terminology of psychiatric knowledge when the person who is showing the symptoms and the social actors surrounding him accept it. One side here is that the patient belongs to residual categories originating from the constituents of the social structure (Parsons 1964; Parsons 1968). But on the other, the existing structure will construe and determine these residual categories and, as a result, the dichotomy between normal and deviant is once again frozen and static. Foucault would probably say that history of the "insane" is still the history of the 'sane'. As

Mersault, he was no criminal until others' recognised him as such. According to others he had violated some norms and laws, but he himself could not agree to this. He then became conscious of himself – or, more accurately - from his reflections he formed an image of himself. But still, it did not occur to him what norms he had violated. During the novel he made a career that was out of his control, he did a career to become a criminal.

Mersault and the interviewees for this text have nothing in common more than that their stories are illustrations of the same social phenomena of becoming something that they themselves must make an effort to make sense of. Which bring us back to what Scheff suggested that it is necessary to specify which norms have been violated. But, also, on which level the violations have taken place (Brante 2001). Diagnostic psychiatry determines with which illness category a patient is to be associated and do this clinically. However, the excessive inclusiveness of the obtuse DSM criteria brings consequences on other levels than the one to which it originally refers (Wakefield 1997). Diagnostic psychiatry usually proposes that the identification of a certain cluster of symptoms indicates the presence of a particular disease (Horwitz 2002). But the norms these symptoms are associated with are also valid on the social level; the social is intertwined with the mental. Both psyche and social are part of the parcel of mental illness. The stories the interviewees give are very much about the social and how this part intervene in their careers to become mentally ill. The "Others" acts them, only by having the interviewees describe and talk about it. That's what turns the narratives into being absurd.

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### The Politics of Authenticity in a National Heritage Site in Israel

#### **Abstract**

This paper offers a multifaceted appreciation of the political roles played by authenticity in modern tourism. The study, located at a national heritage and commemoration site in Jerusalem, Israel, traces authentic occurrences—manifestations and representations—that culminate in an ideological ecology of authenticity. Through this depiction, the active and often veiled role authenticity, understood as a social structure, plays is foregrounded. A special place within this ecology is reserved for the role performed by the site's visitor book. The paper conceptualizes the commemorative visitor book as an ideological and institutional interface, which serves as an authenticating device. This device allows a transformation of visitors unto ideological social agents who partake in the structure of national commemoration in Israel.

#### **Keywords**

Authenticity; Discourse; Nationalism; Heritage tourism; Commemoration; Israeli society.

### **10 Ideas That Are Changing The World**

The March, 2008, edition of Time magazine, presented a cover report titled, "10 Ideas That Are Changing The World." Under this promising head, the magazine proposed "forces" that are "more than money, more than politics," which amount to "the secret power that this planet runs on." One of these contemporary "secret powers" is "Synthetic Authenticity." The article goes on to argue, in the practical, neo-liberal and neo-capitalist tone that is characteristic of the magazine, that "Today you are authentic when you acknowledge just how fake you really are" (Cloud 2008).

Time magazine evokes a list of seemingly hybrid and sophisticated concepts (Geoengineering, Reverse Radicalism), which play on the popular appreciation of the notion of "postmodernity." Specifically, the article on authenticity perpetuates the disjoining between power, money and politics, on the one hand, and the politics of representation and authenticity, on the other. It does so by affirming the common appreciation of authenticity as a given and not a construct, for the sake of

maintaining the position that authenticity is an object and not an agent. It thus preserves the veil by which “postmodern” discourses cleverly hide the politics of identities and fortunes.

The article’s second effect concerns the juxtaposing of authenticity and identity, locating the former squarely in the center of the latter. Time magazine gives the reader an idea of what contemporary identity supposedly is, or what it should be (Giddens 1991; Taylor 1989). In this way the article taps on “postmodern” notions of selves and identities, and on the anxiety involved in the notions of authenticity/inauthenticity of self in social life.

One of the global institutions, where these two notions undoubtedly play a formative role, is the industry of tourism. Indeed, authenticity, with its myriad manifestations, occurrences and guises, has been influentially argued as the leading motivation and experience of modern tourists (MacCannell 1999 [1976]). This should not be surprising if we consider the nature of the tourism industry. Tourism’s essential charter engulfs transporting people from one place—their home, to another—the destination. This corporeal travel holds a promise, which is to transcend mediation processes and short-circuit representational imagery, through *actual* arrival at the desired scenes. Postmodernity’s notions of hyper-reality and the surreal aside, for nearly a billion international tourists per year, tourism fulfills the contemporary promise of a corporeal encounter with the genuine attraction, be it a site, place or artifact. To those who can afford it, tourism institutions offer one of the dearest commodities that are available under Western-modern ontology, namely immediate, unmediated accesses to the Real.

This article seeks to examine the formative role authenticity plays in modern tourism, in terms of granting authenticity or bestowing it on people, an authenticity which is at once corporeal and symbolic. If mass transportation means actual travel, then the weight of the authenticity question shifts to how people know whether they have arrived at the *actual place*. Consider Appadurai’s (1986) historical discussion of authenticity, correctly delimiting the concept to the modern era. Following Benjamin, on the one hand, and Baudrillard, on the other, Appadurai argues that during periods when long distance travel was hazardous and difficult, there was no need for commodities to be valued or even marked in terms of authenticity. Merely possessing them meant one had the resources of purchasing and physically delivering these commodities. This condition changed with modernity, and where reproduction is possible and geographical access has been largely democratized, and other means are needed for conferring value. People arrive at various destinations, in this case at a national memorial site, but the question now shifts as to where is it that they have arrived at. What is the meaning, or the story, that the place tells, and in what ways can visitors partake in this story?

I pursue this question by attending to a case study in the form of a national heritage site located in West Jerusalem, Israel. Through attending closely to a number of what I shall call “occurrences of authenticity,” this research promotes a conceptual discussion of the functions authenticity plays in tourism. The exploration works its way empirically from representations of the outdoor site as a whole, to the exhibits inside the museum, culminating in the unique artifact of the visitor book, which supplies a stage for visitors’ authentic performances (Macdonald 2005; Noy 2008). By attending to authentic occurrences, the paper traces instances and representations of authenticity, which are conceptualized in terms of “voices” that articulate and establish validity and a narrative of identity. In the ecology of authenticity evinced by these occurrences in the commemorative site under examination, the visitor book uniquely serves as an authenticated/authenticating

device. In the conclusions, the role of the visitor book will be discussed in Giddens' (1979, 1984) terms of the agent/structure duality, bringing authenticity into the sociology of institutional and ideological power relations.

The choice of a heritage site as an empirical field of study for this research rests on the unprecedented growth of heritage tourism (Timothy 2003). This growth is not a matter of quantity alone, as presently heritage tourism is arguably the most emblematic form of late-modern tourism. Through the exploration of heritage tourism one can learn much about what contemporary tourism industry in general is about, including tourists' quests. This is the case because heritage, by definition, concerns something that *does not tangibly exist anymore*, and is therefore inaccessible in any immediate way to tourists' bodily senses. Heritage lies in the "land of the past," and accessing it requires—or demands—something that exceeds physical transportation, i.e. excessive efforts in terms of mediation and representation of ideas, symbols, and identities. For this reason, heritage sites amount to sites of authenticity. They account for the resurrection of authenticity, and have supplied particularly rich soil for exploring it, and its framing and construction processes (Bruner 1994; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998).

Finally, heritage plays an important role in the contemporary, heated scenes of identity politics, which aim, as the Time's article has it, at shaping and informing "who you really are." Heritage sites aim at producing persuasive historic narrative, on which collective identities and related political demands can be validly asserted at the present (Anderson 1983; Zerubavel 1995). Indeed, heritage sites typically evoke the collective's "true" cultural history, and are sites at which identities are fervently negotiated (see Breathnach 2006; Chhabra, Healy and Sills 2003, and various publications in the Journal of Heritage Tourism).

## The Authenticity Paradigm in Tourism Studies

Authenticity is a notoriously slippery concept, at least (if not more) as much as the condition which has gave it birth—modernity. According to Benjamin's (2008 [1936]) oft quoted definition, when reproduction and representation are frequent, originality is a prerequisite for authenticity. Specifically in tourism studies, where reproduction and representation are ubiquitous, authenticity arguably amounts to a paradigm, beginning with the influential works of Dean MacCannell (1973, 1999 [1976]).

MacCannell argued that, since modernity is largely characterized by alienation and superficiality, tourism supplies the much sought after *experience of authenticity*. In this sense, tourism is essentially a modern industry, charging individual lives with meaning, on the micro level, and a large social structure, on the macro level, as did religion in pre-industrial societies. For that reason tourist attractions are the present-day equivalents of sacred sites and sites of worship in traditional societies. Attractions supply a structure, both social and experiential, in a world where such structures are diminishing. "The touristic consciousness is motivated by its desire for authentic experience," MacCannell (1999: 101) typically argued, pointing to a direct link between the state and status of being a tourist, on the one hand, and a particular type of sense or "consciousness" (the tourist's), on the other.

MacCannell's percepts have been widely expanded upon and his contribution was taken to be "as pervasive as it was radical" (Dann 1996. See Cohen 1974, 1979, 1988; Pearce and Moscardo 1986, to mention a few). These elaboration suggest a

conceptual complication of the notion of authenticity, extending MacCannellian insights into other sub-domains in tourism, and furthering the notion that authenticity is not (only) about objects but about experiences and processes. Authenticity gradually comes to be viewed as an infrastructural element in the tourism industry. As Wang (2000: 71) observes, tourism is an “industry of authenticity,” wherein “existential authenticity becomes a commodity.”

MacCannell’s view of authenticity has also been criticized, as alternative reconceptualizations attempted to deconstruct the dichotomous pairing of authenticity versus inauthenticity, suggesting a more complex and diverse notion. Bruner (1994), for instance, suggested a number of definitions (to which I will return), where the notion of originally (Benjamin 2008 [1936]) plays only a secondary role. Katriel’s (1997) work, adds a cultural dimension, suggesting that authenticity is culturally negotiated. Both Bruner’s and Katriel’s works are relevant to the present study because they too are founded on research conducted in heritage sites and museums. These and other contributions have complicated not only the material world of tourism (artifacts, sites, etc.), but had also projected onto the tourists themselves, and their heterogeneous experiences, motivations, meanings which concern authenticity. These extensions and gradations of the concept of authenticity, and its multiplicity have prevented from arriving at one, clear definition, and have also moved the discussion of authenticity from its structural foundation to post-structural appreciations. For the present purpose, the notion of authenticity as a commodity is helpful. Hence authenticity is not viewed as ends but as means. We are less interested in whether something is “authentic” or not, and more in understanding what are the *effects of authenticity*, or *what for* is this or that rendered “authentic.” Hence, there is more focus on processes of authenticates and their aims, than on authenticity as an adjective.

In this regard, a number of works have shed light on the role of authenticity in the construction of both individual and collective identities in tourism (Bruner 1991 2005; Noy and Cohen 2005; Taylor 2001). In Noy’s works on Israeli backpackers’ narratives (Noy 2007), authenticity is employed as a *rhetoric and a semiotic resource*. More than simply as a commodity, authenticity serves to constitute objects and people as worthy, a worth that can be appreciated socially, culturally and materially. Tourists’ explicit evocations of authenticity during their storytelling, served to validate and enhance their narrative performances. In these performances, tourists transposed authenticity from the spaces they consumed at the destinations, to the performance of their travel story at home, after returning from their trips. As a result, the occasion of the interview itself became charged with the semiotics of tourism: the tourists told of consuming authentic places, and their performances served to authenticate who they are, and to bestow the aura of authenticity on their selves. “Importing” authenticity into their performances made their claims regarding identity and cultural capital all the more persuasive and effective (Noy 2007).

## Site and Method

This study took place at the Ammunition Hill National Memorial Site (AHNMS), which is a war commemoration complex located in the northern parts of West Jerusalem. Inaugurated in 1975, the site honors Israeli soldiers who died in the battle on Ammunition Hill during the 1967 War. The site also celebrates the victory of the Israeli Army over the Jordanian Legion, and the “liberation” of East Jerusalem and the “unification” of the city. The complex comprises two main spaces: an outdoor site

that includes commemorative monuments and the original trenches in which the fighting took place, as well as an indoor museum.

The museum presents exhibits and information about the battle on Ammunition Hill and the overall campaign for Jerusalem. Most of the features are commemorative devices, such as the Golden Wall of Commemoration, engraved with the names of the 182 soldiers who fell in the battle for Jerusalem and a short film about the Ammunition Hill Battle. In addition, many maps and pictures are employed to illustrate the battles for Jerusalem, and a variety of discursive artifacts, such as the soldiers' letters and personal journals, serve to enhance the display's authenticity and to personalize the soldiers.

Most of my research at the AHNMS was conducted over four weeks of ethnography, which took place during the summer and autumn of 2006. During this period I conducted observations of visitors and tour guides, and thirty-seven informal (unstructured) interviews, which addressed visitors' overall impressions of and activities in the site, and specifically their views of the commemorative visitor book and their practices of writing in it. These observations and interviews indicated that the majority of the visitors were either (local) Jewish Israelis, or Ultra-Orthodox Jewish tourists, mostly from North America, and that both populations identify with Israel's national Zionist ideology, and support the nationalist and military ideologies promoted by the site. Additionally, twelve formal interviews were conducted with the site's management and staff, in order to provide a picture of the ideological approaches to national commemoration, heritage tourism, and the means by which the two are jointly exhibited.

In addition to observations and interviews, a study of the entries that were written in the site's commemorative visitor book was conducted. A single volume filled just before my ethnography supplies the case study of this examination. It was chosen because it was the most recent volume to be completed, and because it is typical of the AHNMS visitor books in all respects (cf. Noy 2008). Containing 100 pages, the book took about one year to fill (between July 2005 and August 2006), and contains approximately sixteen hundred entries. Given that it includes a considerable number of entries that were written over a long period of time, and is located at a National Commemoration Site, the book arguably provides a representative sample of inscribers' actions at a symbolic site. The entries in the book vary in length, ranging from one-word inscriptions to short paragraphs, with the majority written in Hebrew (50%) and the rest written mostly in English (45%). The entries were examined in light of the performative appreciation of the book and its function, whereby it is viewed as a stage for visitors (inscribed) performances (see below). In the interpretation of these texts I avoided employing rigorous and systematic procedures, and preferred a contextualized reading that enjoys sensitivities from (critical) discourse analysis and multimodality studies (Fairclough 1995; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2001, respectively). Hence the methods used in this research were suited to record the "ecology of authenticity," which refers to various media through which different occurrences of authenticity are manifested.

## Locations and Lyrics: Two Authentic Occurrences in The Site

As part of the site and of the economy of authenticity within which the visitor book functions meaningfully, two aspects demand initial attention. These aspects are presently conceptualized as two occurrences of authenticity. The first occurrence concerns the physical location of the AHNMS, which is right where the historic battle took place. The fact is readily mentioned by tour guides, and in the site's webpage and brochures. The museum's director stressed this point in our first meeting, as he was showing me the spacious premises: "You've got a place here where there's *something* you can actually *feel* with your own feet. [You can] move through the trenches. [You can] touch the bunkers. [You can] hear the stories. And people cling to that. 'This guy fell *here*, that occurred *here*.'"<sup>37</sup> With these words, the director addressed the significance of the site's singular location. The repeated appeal to bodily senses and the indications of proximity and immediacy (which sociolinguists call proximal demonstratives, such as "here"), qualify his comments as an example of the discourse of authenticity. The director's description of the site's location, in response to my question regarding its power to attract visitors, suggests that he is pointing out not (only) a condition, namely originality, but also a resource: in the site's authenticity lies its uniqueness.

Indeed, because the site is not particularly impressive (and has not been seriously renovated since its construction), its location is perhaps the most vital resource it possess in terms of its attractiveness. With the impressive expansion of tourism, and the concomitant growing competition between sites and attractions, there is a strong demand, which is met by consistent efforts, at creating distinctions between otherwise indistinguishable attractions. In this symbolic economy, an "authentic" location is a particularly invaluable resource (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998).

The term "authentic" is bracketed because in its capacity as a resource in the symbolic economy of tourism, authenticity is socially constructed and often manipulated. It is only partially faithful to the original reality which it describes, and represents thus a type of "front stage reality" (MacCannell 1999 [1976]). The fact is that the historic battleground actually extends *beyond* the premises presently occupied by the AHNMS. A large United Nation (UNRWA) complex is situated to the southwest, and a couple of pre-1967 Palestinian houses still stand to the east. Thus, some of the historic spaces documented in the museum and symbolically appropriated by it are de facto inaccessible to visitors. They lie outside the premises of the AHNMS, and in many ways outside the sovereignty of the State of Israel. Paradoxically, these spaces, which include the ex-territorial UN complex (which, to be accurate, serves as The West Bank Office for Palestinian Refugees in the Middle East), and the Palestinian houses, represent the type of multinational occupation of spaces in Jerusalem/Al-Quds which is precisely what the ideology of the AHNMS seeks to deny. These are what Bruner (1994) calls "compromises to authenticity," which are "the little white lies of historical reconstruction." Yet here they are perhaps not so white not are they little.

The second occurrence of authenticity is more abstract, and concerns a well-known Hebrew song that celebrates the Israeli victory in the battle on the Ammunition Hill. The "Ammunition Hill" song was written and composed by two prominent figures in the Israeli music scene (Yoram Tehar-Lev and Yair Rosenblum, respectively) in 1968, and has since been recorded repeatedly. The song, which is described by its lyricist as a "documentary song," depicts the battle from the

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with C. Nir'el (August 2, 2006)

perspective of the soldiers who fought there, and is voiced throughout in the first person (plural), and is performed solely by men.<sup>38</sup> The rhythmic verses are interspersed with narrative sections during which only an accordion accompanies the male singer's voice. The narratives describe specific scenes of heroic face-to-face combat, in a low and machismo tone, and in the present tense. These qualities jointly grant the song an aura of authenticity. It sounds as though the soldiers themselves are performing the song.<sup>39</sup>

In a television interview, the lyricist revealed that some of the lyrics are in fact "authentic" quotes taken from an issue of an army journal which was published shortly after the war.<sup>40</sup> The magazine included interviews with soldiers who received the army's medal of honor for their part in the battle. Several of the song's most memorable lines actually appeared first in this issue. Here again, the notion of originality is called for, in order to establish authenticity. In the television program, the lyricist and a few of the soldiers are pictured strolling on the grounds of the site. One of the soldiers notes that there are "a few technical inaccuracies" in the song, and continues, "They really didn't have 120mm mortars, you know" (which is what the song describes). Nonetheless, the soldier readily agrees that "if it's good for the rhyme, and if that's the price for the success of such a popular song, which is a melodic memorial for the battle, then that's ok." Here again, "white lies" are exposed as authenticity correlates only partly with the historic reality from which it derives its unique value.

## **Flag and Post: Two Authentic Occurrences in The Museum**

Upon entering the partly sunken structure of the museum, which is designed so as to resemble an underground bunker, the visitor encounters a plethora of discursive artifacts. These are mainly comprised of handwritten documents and representations thereof, spanning a variety of genres: personal letters and war journals, poems, autographs, statements and declarations of sorts, and the like. Most of the exhibits were written by soldiers who fought and fell in the battle, and contribute to the ideological context of authenticity, within which visitors' inscriptions in the visitor book should be appreciated. These artifacts and exhibits are not merely instances of inscribed discourse, but entail specific instances of handwriting, which illustrate the relationship between authenticity, on the one hand, and handwriting, as an embodied mode of communication, on the other. The significance of this relationship cannot be overestimated in a heritage site dedicated to commemoration.

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<sup>38</sup> The song was performed by the Israeli Army's Central Command Band, 1972. It is accessible at the AHNMS's website: [www.givathatachmosht.org.il/songs.php](http://www.givathatachmosht.org.il/songs.php). The original animated clip is available through YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GnTDHvWhxA>. Accessed March 25, 2008.

The expression "documentary song," is taken from an interview with the Tehar-Lev, the lyricist. See <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3405485,00.html> (accessed August 8, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> In a recent television interview with one of the musicians involved in the original production of the song's performance (Izhar Ashdot), the description of the tension that accompanied the production was so intense that it actually got me confused whether it is a musician (reminiscing about the production of a soundtrack) or a soldiers (recalling the intensity of combat). On such occurrences, authenticity is not simply represented but rather enacted.

<sup>40</sup> "The most Beautiful Moments of the Army Bands in Forty Years of Television Broadcasting," broadcasted on Channel 1 (Israeli National TV), February 8, 2008.

For this reason, two additional occurrences of authenticity are discussed, which, again, shed light on economy of authenticity within which the visitor book functions.

The first occurrence inside the museum is an Israeli flag exhibited in a glass frame (Figure 1). This is the acclaimed original flag hung by paratroopers above the Western Wall on the morning of June 7, 1967. A short text, inscribed at the time, appears on the flag's upper right corner:

The Flag of Israel  
hung above the Western Wall  
at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem  
by soldiers of Pl. A. of Regiment 71 of the 55<sup>th</sup> Paratrooper Division  
today, Wednesday, June 7, at 10:15  
The "Jerusalem Liberators" Paratroop Division



Figure 1: Original 1967 flag

The inscription celebrates the triumphant moment, when Israeli soldiers reached the Western Wall. It does so with an awareness of the occasion's historic dimension. In her discussion of graffiti, Susan Stewart (1991) addresses two conceptions of spontaneous, embodied writing, according to which inscriptions can be viewed as either corrupting or cherished, "[r]adically taken as both crime and art." This is true of the preceding occurrence and of many other occurrences of handwriting at Ammunition Hill. The handwritten mode is either against the law or above it. In the former case it is a matter of vandalism (writing on national symbols is illegal in Israel and in many other countries), and, in the latter, as evinced in the inscription on the national flag, it is an instance to be venerated, belonging in a museum. Handwriting traces and indexes the body of those who wrote it at the moment of inscription. It is presented and perceived as a highly authentic occurrence not because we are asked to believe that the object of the flag itself carries authenticity, but because the handwriting on the flag *authenticates it* by positioning it right at the heart of celebrated historic (i.e. original) events.<sup>41</sup> Handwriting on the surface of the national flag dramatically brings together binaries: the collective (symbol) with the personal (inscription), the abstract (sign) with the embodied (act).

<sup>41</sup> In a recent television interview, one of the paratroopers who inscribed on the flag recollected the historic events. His story was incongruent with the text that appears on the flag. It might be that the decades have dimmed the paratrooper's memory of the occasion, or that there were more than one original flag. The point is that authentic artifacts are a problematical category of things.

The second occurrence concerns a photograph which is not actually located inside the museum, but rather in the Ammunition Hill offices (Figure 2). The photograph hangs in the main conference room, where VIPs, donors, and other exclusive visitors are received. The director referred to it specifically during our meeting (it has since been posted on the museum's new website). The center of the frame is filled by a handwritten, English text inscribed on cardboard, fastened to the butt of a rifle, which is stuck into the ground upside down. The post marks the location of the collective grave of 17 Jordanian soldiers killed in the battle. The text reads: "Army of Israel/Zahal/Buried here are/17 ~~Brave~~ Jordanian/Soldiers. June 7 1967." A copy of the picture (dated July 1994), was ceremoniously presented to a Jordanian Army delegation which visited the Ammunition Hill compound after the signing of the peace accord between Jordan and Israel.



Figure 2: Improvised memorial post

Like the inscription on the flag above, here too a handwritten text is superimposed on a historic artifact and gives it meaning and value in terms of originality and authenticity. The handwritten text evinces proximity to the "bare" historic events, and thus acquires the precious quality of authentic representation. The physical and functional proximity of rifle to writing additionally embodies the ideology that the activities of fighting and writing are enmeshed. The unused rifle functions concretely, but also symbolically, as a necessary precondition for a cultured existence, embodied in the appearance of the inscription. This notion is common in Republican ideologies and pervasive in Israeli highly militarized political and public sphere, whereby intellectualism is viewed as secondary to and reliant upon military might (Kimmerling 1993).

Note that the word "brave" was crossed out of the inscription. This illustrates how different views may compete over interpretations of conflicted events, even immediately after these events occur. More importantly, the deletion further

augments the authenticity of the sign. Now it is doubly authentic, both *hand-written*, and *hand-erased*.

These markers of authenticity are of a type highly characteristic to occurrences of authenticity at the AHNMS. They offer a glimpse into the profusion of handwritten documents, which direct visitors to look not so much at the contents, as at the modalities through which authenticity is established and validated (van Leewen 2001). These modes of communication suggest both authenticity and authentication. Writing, unlike talking, is a durable mode of communication, and thus ideally serves the purposes of authentication. In this context, writing is an ideal tool for engendering an awe of the authentic in the visitors (Stewart 1993).

This is all the more poignant with regards to *performing commemoration*. Since the museum is part of a commemorative complex, its institutional charter is precisely to mobilize authenticity—in the form of handwritten documents—in order to intensify national commitment and re-inscribe collective memory. In terms of commemorative hermeneutics, these documents can be construed as discursive monuments; they are corporeal and of texture (Macdonald 2006).

In tourism, handwritten products fall into the larger valued category of authenticity in tourism, namely “handmade artifacts” (Littrell, Anderson and Brown 1993). According to Cohen (1988), tourists accept objects as authentic, even if they are commercialized and presented in institutional settings, as long as they have been handmade by members of a particular group—in this case the venerated paratroopers—or, more generally, people who acted in the epoch being commemorated. Authenticity, however, can also be constructed via culturally specific means. In Sabra (native Israeli) culture, the relations between handwriting and body are inspired by Romantic ideology, and create a much admired informality, familiarity and intimacy, which mass-printed documents cannot achieve. Handwriting in itself conveys an ideology which ascribes to handwriting—perceived as a non-commodified/commodifiable mode of expression—a uniquely esteemed, authentic, and personalized evocation (Katriel 1986; Noy 2005).

### **Authenticating Tourists: The Visitor Book as an Authentic Occurrence**

The final occurrence of authenticity to be discussed, to which the remaining space of this paper is dedicated is that of the visitor book. Earlier I noted that the occurrences of authenticity culminate in the artifact of the visitor book, and in the socio-cultural functions that it performs. This culmination is both empirical and conceptual. Empirically, when visitors arrive at the visitor book, which, I will show, is located in one of the museum’s innermost halls, they have already been exposed to and socialized into a particular type of authentic ideology and discursive authentic environment. Hence the visitor book is not merely an additional occurrence, but one at which earlier authentic occurrences culminate. Conceptually, the book offers a compelling stage on which authenticity can be actively performed by the visitors. I will show that it is not so much an authentic occurrence, as it is a device through which other authentic occurrences are generated, namely commemorative entries. I will discuss this in the remaining space, but first, the particular qualities of the visitor book need to be examined.

When approaching the visitor book, one observes that it is framed in significant ways, which grant it a status of a unique artifact. First, rather atypically, this visitor book is *not* located near the site’s exit. While visitor books are commonly located

where visitors can write their impressions at the conclusion of their visit, this visitor book is located in one of the museum's innermost halls. It is placed near the Golden Wall of Commemoration, where an eternal flame flickers constantly, and where a somber voice is heard, monotonously reciting the names, ranks, and military affiliations of the soldiers who died in the battles. In this way, this visitor book is not meant to capture reflective comments or encapsulate how the visitors "signal their passing" through the site (Stamou and Paraskevolpoulos 2004). Instead, it is part of the museum's ideological arsenal of commemorative devices, which is meant to induce emotional involvement and provide an opportunity to partake in the national(ist) rite of commemoration.

Second, the visitor book supplies the main attraction in the hall where it is located. It is positioned within a structure that is made of a large and impressive formation, consisting of two cylindrical columns of black steel, each about one meter in diameter. The shorter column is about one meter high, and functions as a kind of table on which the book rests. Near it rises another pillar, which is about four meters tall. The entire composition rests on a base that is slightly elevated from the floor, so that those visitors that wish to read (or write) in the book must step up and enter a designated zone. In its overall design, the structure resembles a monument or a memorial, lending the book a solemn and dignified character and designating it as a unique exhibit, perhaps even as a monument in itself.

When attempting to appreciate authenticity with regards to this device, i.e. the visitor book, one should bear in mind this thick symbolicist framing. In light of this environment, the book offers surfaces for writing that are effectively part of the museum's commemorative space. In fact, these surfaces offer a *physical extension of the commemorative and symbolic spaces of the museum*. In this respect, the space provided in the book is unique because whatever is registered in/on it instantly becomes part of the exhibit: anything and everything that is inscribed on them by visitors is transformed into an exhibit, and thus becomes a (temporary) permanent element of the museum's interior.

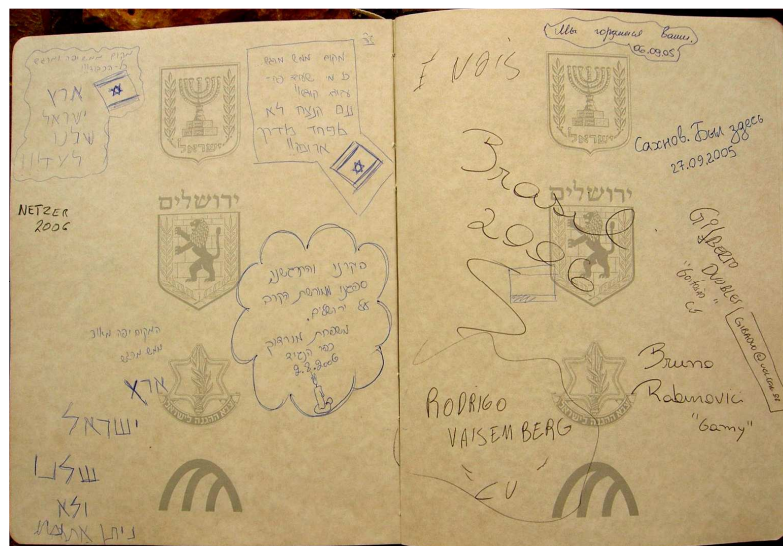


Figure 3: Visitor Book: Authenticating tourists

Figure 3 illustrates a typical visitor book opening (a set of two adjacent pages), which shows a rather lively and crowded assortment of inscriptions. Openings in this book typically contain anywhere between ten and twenty entries, which include short and long texts as well as aesthetic decorations. These assume the forms of stylized

handwriting, surplus of punctuation marks and underlying and encircling lines, and complete graphic symbols and drawings.

Visually, the openings in the book resemble the images that are frequent in the museum. Such is the case with the opening depicted in the figure above. Its similarities lie in the handwritten mode of inscription and the combination of verbal inscriptions with the unique symbolic surfaces, on which they are inscribed. As shown in Figure 3, every page in the visitor book displays a vertical line made of four printed symbols. These are the symbols of the State of Israel, the City of Jerusalem, the Israel Defense Forces and the logo of the AHNMS. They correspond with the flags hanging nearby, and with the profusion of national and military symbols exhibited throughout the halls. These symbols serve to mark the book as a device that provides additional surfaces that are available for consumption at the AHNMS. They suggest that the pages of the book are themselves symbolic. Writing upon them is therefore, already confined by and in dialogue with the semiotics and aesthetics of nationalist-militaristic commemoration.

The book's animated pages present spontaneous inscriptions, produced *in situ* by the visitors. These inscriptions are authentic in the capacity that they record a bottom-up type of production. Here, again, the collective quality of the record, i.e. the various inscriptions occupying a shared space, together with its handwritten mode, endow the book with an authenticity of a type that is particularly cherished in local Sabra culture. As Noy (2007) recently indicated, in relation to the statues of texts among an Israeli tourist community, "these handwritten compilations constitute the travelers' alternative to commercialized forms of tourist publications. The travelers' books are often mentioned in comparison to commercial touristic publications; in such comparisons, the former are of a unique genre, valued for their 'authenticity' and for their up-to-date nature." Such spontaneous expressions are highly sought after in Israeli culture, because they index a culturally esteemed notion of authenticity.

In what follows, two typical entries are examined closely. They are characteristic of the two main populations of visitors: local (Jewish) Israelis and international Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish tourists, mostly from North America international. The entries are represented in their original layout (the first example is translated from Hebrew):

Example 1:

29.8.05

We were very impressed and moved  
by this place.

It's very pretty here and well preserved.

Well done [*kol hakavod*] to those who preserve  
the place and the memory of  
the soldiers who brought us  
the freedom we enjoy today.

With hope that there will be peace  
among our people  
eternally.

Gonen, Zohar and Ayelet  
Kampf

This inscription is typical of entries written by local visitors (Israeli sightseers in Jerusalem) because it is written in Hebrew, because it mainly addresses the AHNMS, and because it expresses respect and gratitude both to the commemorative efforts of the AHNMS and to those who gave their lives during the War. In accordance with the norm of book entries, the inscription also includes the date and the names of its inscribers. While this information would have sufficed, the majority of

visitors prefer to produce more verbally elaborate entries. Through these expressive inscriptions, the authors are made present or “presenced” at the site. Through the act of inscribing on these symbolically framed surfaces, the inscribers are *transformed from passive visitors to active producers*: they are now agents participating in the national narrative of commemoration as told at the site.

The discursive structure of this example is also typical of local visitors’ entries. The first few sentences address the site’s management, and note the positive impression that the visit has made. In the next section, Gonen, Zohar and Ayelet take part in the commemorative narrative and perform what they find to be appropriate at this ritualistic site. In other words, after the writers thank the management, they proceed to evince what they have learned during the visit, which is their way of participating in the rite of commemoration. They evoke the site’s narrative, which connects the historic sacrifice with the state of the present, and conclude with a hope that extends into the (mythic) future.

Observe that neither the word “authentic” nor any similar term appears anywhere in the inscription (or in any other of the 1,000 entries in the book). The reading suggested above explains why this and other texts lack any indication of authenticity. There is simply *no need* for such indications. Inscribing in the book, in terms of both its physical location and the voice of its authors, guarantees that what is written is authentic(ated). The visitors need not mention where they are writing, or the site they are writing about. This information is considered trivial in the context of this commemorative visitor book, which is physically stationary and symbolically framed as part of the original (authentic) grounds of the AHNMS.

In example 2, authenticity is performed differently than in the previous example, yet here too, not explicit markers of authenticity can be found. The writer of the following entry comes from a different population of visitors: Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish tourists/pilgrims from North America. Unlike the first example, this entry is written mostly in English (words originally in Hebrew are italicized and translated in square brackets).

Example 2:

*Basad* [abbreviation for With God’s Help]

Thank you for giving your lives to

*Yerushalayim*

Without you I would  
not be standing here  
today.

Motti Neigerstein

Canada

This inscription is typical of entries written by orthodox Jewish tourists. Most of it is in English, with a few (special) words written in Hebrew, i.e. the Holy Language (these shifts between languages are “code switches”). Beyond the matter of language, the difference between the entries is evident at first glance. While the previous example basically addresses the site and its management, this entry directly and explicitly addresses the fallen soldiers. If the entry by Gonen, Zohar and Ayelet has the AHNMS at its topic, Noam Brickman’s entry has the historic sacrifice at its main topic. It is almost as though Brickman does not see the site, but rather sees *through* the site.

There are of course similarities between the entries as well. In both cases, the visitors demonstrate their understanding of the narrative unfolded at the site, and they do so through participation, i.e. by choosing to engage and inscribe in the visitor

book. Typical of commemoration sites, the visitors tell, or retell, the narrative that ties past to present via a causal link. This link suggests a justification of past events and sacrifices by what the past has granted the present-day condition (“the soldiers who brought us the freedom we enjoy today”/“Without you I would not be standing here today”).

This and similar entries, which address the fallen soldiers directly, establish a sense of authenticity through the unique structure of their address. Directly invoking the dead positions the visitor in the *same realm* as those being addressed. The verses, “Thank you for giving your lives,” and “Without you,” suggest continuity and homology between those making the address and those being addressed. This homology blurs the ontic divide between signifier and signified, reproduction and original, and serves to place the author within the spotlight of authenticity. There is more at stake here than becoming an exhibit via inscription in public space of the visitor book. Here the visitors talk *through* the site, and connect with the historical events and people commemorated by the site, all of which are viewed as objectively authentic.

In other words, the way the book is framed grants the visitors the unique possibility of performing authentically. Authenticity here is not primarily a matter of originality or verisimilitude, but more an issue of directness and lack of mediation, and concerns what Katriel (1997) termed “testimonial authenticity” in the context of historical museums. And again, accomplishing a spontaneous performance of this kind is highly appreciated in the local (Sabra) culture. Thus, different entries are able to perform authentically without explicitly mentioning authenticity. From this platform, visitors are invited to communicate directly with the nation, with the grieving families and with the soldiers, living or dead. When this option is actualized, authentic communication results. There is no need for those writing in the book to indicate that the experience is real, spontaneous, or authentic. Indeed, as ethnomethodologists have taught us, society sanctions people who say (or write) trivial things (Sacks 1992). Doing so suggests incompetence in maintaining one’s face, a bit like having to explain a joke. The very act of inscribing and the structure of their expressions establish the writers-visitors as authentic participants.

## Conclusions

This paper examines five empirical occurrences of authenticity at a tourist heritage site which shed light on the roles played by authenticity in (heritage) tourism. These occurrences do not qualify, perhaps, as instances of the exotic (“postmodern”) Synthetic Authenticity promoted by *Time* magazine, but together, they affectively create an authentic and authenticating environment. Four of these occurrences exemplify authenticity in the singular. That is, they comply with only one definition of authenticity, namely the one based on originality (in contrast with the notions of believability and accuracy-of-reproduction which underlie Bruner’s [1994] two other definitions, respectively).

Owing to the ideological ecology at the AHNMS, the fifth occurrence of authenticity there—namely the visitor book—accomplishes a unique function. Framed as it is, the book serves to grant the inscriptions in it a special aura. The book is an esteemed object, and the act of inscribing in it satisfies various definitions of authenticity, both symbolically and physically. First, these acts of inscription are actual, and in this sense they produce inscriptions that are original. Second, these

acts are “spontaneous,” i.e., not manipulated, at least from the point of view of Sabra culture, and the way it perceives acts of writing by hand (Katriel 1997). While the institution bestows, through the book, an aura of national symbolism on the visitors, in the contract between the two sides, the visitors also validate the institution. The visitors’ entries confirm the vitality and relevance of the site, for without the visitors’ lively and spontaneous inscriptions, the book would remain a blank document, an empty space. It is the visitors who validate the book—by choosing to engage it, to interact with it, and to leave their traces therein (in the form of aesthetized and genred commemorative entries). The traces they leave through their actual, physical, presence grant the site the status of an esteemed, relevant and vibrant institution of national commemoration.

Thus, there is mutual benefit to be gained in this interaction—the site bestows authority upon the visitors, while the visitors validate the site. This exchange can be productively conceptualized in terms of authenticity: by engaging the visitor book and producing commemorative discourse, visitors produce originality in situ. The visitors are also *reproducing* commemorative discourse that *resembles* what they have learned in their visit to the site. These aspects involve authenticity based on the notions of both originality and believability (Bruner’s first and second definitions).

Furthermore, authenticity and authentication are closely related to authority. This has been shown with respect to the first four occurrences, which demonstrate how, through its capability to produce original facts and spaces, the AHNMS exhibits authority and sovereignty as a formally acknowledged national memorial site. As Bruner (1994: 400) notes in discussing this notion of authenticity, “[t]he more fundamental question to ask here is not if an object or site is authentic, but rather who has the authority to authenticate, which is a matter of power, or, to put it another way, who has the right to tell the story of the site.” The AHNMS establishes its authority via a type of authenticity based on the immediate association between the site and the Ammunition Hill battle, and, more generally, between the site and the larger events of the 1967’ war (and their sweeping consequences). This is an indexical connection, where the former—the site—indexes the latter—the war (as well as the “unification” of Jerusalem, etc.).

This is true for the first four occurrences of authenticity at the AHNMS. The visitor book, on the other hand, accomplishes a different goal, albeit also in an indexical manner. The book does not validate the association between the site and the historic events, but rather the association between the visitors and the state, *through* the site, and specifically through the device of the visitor book.

This double bind movement between visitors and institution recalls Giddens’ (1979, 1984) well-known concept of agent/structure duality. The visitors who choose to engage with the device of the visitor book *become agents* in terms of their active role within the macro socio-ideological structure of national commemoration. Here is a transformatory interface that engages individuals with a macro social structure. The inscriptions in the visitor book are precisely objects that “explicate how the limitations of individual ‘presence’ are transcended by the stretching of social relations across time-space” (Giddens 1984: 35, 282), a process essential to the construction of the agent/structure duality. The book serves as a portal, an interface that literally (double meaning intended) *connects the micro to the micro*, and allows the enmeshment of the agent—namely the visitor who is mobilized into becoming an agent—with the structure, which is one of national commemoration. From this perceptive, it is hard to overestimate the uniqueness of the role performed by the visitor book at the AHNMS.

MacCannell (1999: 102) argues that “[t]here is no serious or functional role in the production awaiting the tourist in the places they visit. Tourists are not made

personally responsible for anything that happens in the establishment they visit...” While this is true in some cases, observations at the AHNMS demonstrate that it is not always so. These observations indicate that, as inscriptions materialize, tourists become ideological agents, who partake in and perform the macro-social structure of commemoration.

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### “Turning Points” For Aging Genealogists: Claiming Identities and Histories in Time

#### **Abstract**

Based on qualitative in-depth interviews, I examine the use of genealogy with regard to the current historical moment for identities rooted in kin, race, class, gender, nation—and age. Drawing on the concept of “turning points” coined by Anselm Strauss, I explore moments that motivate the doing of family genealogy. First, I suggest that Strauss’s turning points may occur simultaneously and converge like vectors across time. Second, I argue that late middle-age lends itself to “identity extensions”, which I define as a reevaluation of self that acknowledges one or more of the following: the significance of extended kin to one’s identity; reverence for ancestors; a social responsibility to the future. Finally, I analyze how the current era informs a particular generation’s genealogical endeavors. I conceive of U.S. baby boomers’ genealogical projects as an expression of longing for connections in family lives and for a place in social history across the generations.

#### **Keywords**

Genealogy; Family history; Identity; Turning point; Aging; Generation; Race; Class; Gender; Baby boomers

*Identities imply not merely personal histories but also social histories.[...] Individuals hold memberships in groups that themselves are products of a past*

Anselm Strauss 1957: 166

#### **Claiming Identities and Histories via Genealogy**

Claiming identities based on heritage is no longer just the preserve of those who have been historically privileged in the United States. Family history or genealogy is a meaningful discourse across stratified inequalities in the U.S., such as class, race, or gender. For example, presidential candidate, Barak Obama, delivered a speech on

race relations and forming a “more perfect union” in America that he anchored in his “own American story” or genealogy (New York Times, March 18, 2008)<sup>42</sup>:

I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in Patton's Army during World War II and a white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. I've gone to some of the best schools in America and lived in one of the world's poorest nations. I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slaveowners – an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue, scattered across three continents, and for as long as I live, I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible.

It's a story that hasn't made me the most conventional candidate. But it is a story that has seared into my genetic makeup the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts – that out of many, we are truly one.

Obama's genealogical account contains essential ingredients found in today's genealogical narrative, where the language of family, ethnicity, race, nation and genes converge to narrate one's place on Earth and to claim key identities anchored in history. His various claims to identities are complex— favoring neither nature nor nurture in a passage that lays as much claim to his own and others' experiences as to “genetic makeup” (Nash 2002; Wade 2002). Indeed, as Obama constructs his “story,” he selects and collects vicarious experiences of different eras—from his grandfather's experience during World War II to his wife's bloodlines linked to slavery. All these threads inform his idea of himself, his candidacy, and above all, his nation. Indeed, he claims to embody America. Obama's genealogical construction derives from a memoir he published in 1995, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*; this book was motivated by hearing of his father's death and traveling to Kenya to learn more about this mostly absent father, and himself.

President Obama's story highlights the intricate relations between the personal and political, the biological and cultural, past and present, and how a parental death can function not only as a “turning point” for an individual, but must also be understood within a larger socio-historical context. While he highlights that “place” is central to his story by his claim “in no other country on Earth is my story even possible,” elsewhere he also has made the case that “time” is equally vital—that this is “our moment” implying that at no other moment has this story been possible. Above all, he draws upon an increasingly common discourse for constituting identity: genealogy. Thus, this anecdote introduces a cluster of questions relevant to my research: Under what conditions and for what purposes are people moved to research their family history? What motivates people to link biography and history (Mills 1959; Strauss 1959)? How do ethnoracial, class, and gender structures inform these endeavors? How do these motivations and identities relate to and constitute the current era?

Given the proclivity to wax nostalgic about a “golden era” in family relations in the U.S., I examined the accounts of everyday genealogists and initially wondered

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<sup>42</sup> This speech aimed to address a crisis in his presidential candidacy when his association with a Pastor Wright who was perceived as a far left, political black radical ultimately led him to “disown” the pastor who had married him

how present concerns guide re-collections of the past and the reconstruction of identities. Similar to the ways a loss triggered Obama's desire to narrate identities in relationship, "turning points" or "epiphanies" in participants' lives prompted an interest in ancestors (Strauss 1959; Denzin 1989). Yet those life course events are also used to search for meanings that transcend the individual—from the spiritual to the political—and that are conditioned by the current era, as once silenced voices and viewpoints are increasingly heard and seen. Today, genealogy might be understood as a resource for identity constructions in increasingly uncertain, yet potentially pliable times for individuals and society.

## **Background Literature: The Growth of Genealogy**

Genealogical endeavors have a long history both within and beyond the West—indeed Islam, Judaism and Christianity all sanctify lineage. My focus, however, is on the West. The Bible's first ten chapters of Genesis represent an early expression of "genealogical thinking" in the West (Bouquet 2000). The anthropologist Bouquet argues that visual representation, in other words, the genealogical diagram developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has been crucial for constituting kin and that the genealogical method in anthropology "fixed birth as the defining moment of kinship" (ibidem:186-7). Bouquet goes on to suggest that the diagram or "visualization undoubtedly facilitated winnowing the social from the biological in kinship studies, and holding the biological referent steady" (ibidem: 187).

American rules for ascertaining biological relations depend, first of all, on how procreation is linked to family; as Schneider (1967/1980) has argued, sexual intercourse symbolically links the domain of blood relations to the domain of legal relations—specifically marriage. Of course, marriage has never been required for procreation—and now sexual intercourse isn't either. Beyond rules for determining marital and parental relations, amateur genealogists rely on rules associated with historical, legal and social science research. Documentation requires triangulating data, or finding more than one certificate or document (usually three), to legitimate a relationship. To follow these rules, one can claim ancestors as one's own. Rules of family formation have never been simply "natural" or "biological"; these categories are not only Western, but indeterminate, complex, and power-driven (Edwards and Strathern 2000; Wade 2002). Bouquet (ibidem: 187) rightfully observes that the "the genealogical method" has been "anything but [a] neutral instrument". This is forcefully illustrated when it comes to ethnoracial, gender, and class relations.

For example, in the U.S., ethnoracial identities have been engineered to sustain Anglo power—a process that DaCosta (2000) notes results in "the racialization of families," that is, the belief that all family members must be of one race. Key policies reinforcing this belief and Anglo supremacy in U.S. history include how European Americans 1) constrained African slaves from sustaining family relations, 2) outlawed "miscegenation" or the mixing of the races and framed it as "unnatural"<sup>43</sup>, 3) ensured

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<sup>43</sup> Discriminating terms like "mulatto" or "quadroon" had been recognized and appropriated during slavery but fell into disuse as the one drop rule replaced the institution of slavery in fixing racial bounded hierarchies and whites secured borders with violence (Washington 2000, cited by DaCosta 2000: 61). Also racial borders were secured with the rise of Social Darwinism, and concerns with "racial purity" by "scientists" in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Azoulay 1997)

interracial marriage was made widely illegal<sup>44</sup>, and 4) established birth and marriage certificates, rather than oral traditions, to procure and store established relational legitimacy<sup>45</sup>. Anglo hegemony has, of course, been sustained by countless other policies that sustain ethnoracial boundaries, such as the reservation policies for Indigenous populations and the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Such history means that multiple genealogical associations are organized by racial, ethnic, national identities. Yet when genealogical researchers pursue these identities, are they reifying, reproducing or perhaps deconstructing such racial formations<sup>46</sup>?

Patriarchy has clearly curtailed an ample telling of family histories. In spite of the advances in mitochondrial DNA, matrilineal lines remain more obscure as a result of patrilineal naming practices. Implicit in the genealogic template, the patriarchal structure manifest in U.S. history facilitates the identities and relations associated with a father's family line—and are rooted in religious traditions. All the Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Islam, and Christianity – constructed genealogy as central to family, religion, and national identities. Delaney (2001) argues that Genesis, and in particular the Abraham story, was not only about launching monotheism, but also monogenetics—that these were correlative constructions. While there is a difference in scale, she observes:

[...]both have to do with origins, or with notions of coming-into-being more generally. Men became symbolically allied with God the Creator, while women became symbolically associated with what was created—namely, the earth. The very notion of paternity, therefore, already embodied authority and power. Creative power is divinity.” (p. 454-5)

Zerubavel suggests that nearly half of all human societies aren't just simply enhancing “fathers’ progenitorial legitimacy,” but are “officially promoting absolute female-line genealogical amnesia” (Zerubavel 2003: 68). Consequently, which identities and associated histories are lost, found, claimed and abandoned?

Finally, as indicated in the introduction, class relations, or more precisely elite interests, have been embedded in genealogical practice. According to the anthropologist Auslander (2002), since kinship is foundational to all social relations, descent-based societies have a nearly universal interest in genealogy. Auslander notes that with the emergence of dynastic societies and states, genealogy was monopolized by elites; and finally with the rise of bourgeois democratic society, we have seen a re-democratization of genealogy. He argues that it has been “a pervasive middle class habit for at least a century and a half” (ibidem: 5). While Auslander's pointed claim seems right, so too does Strauss's observation about the class continuum made about 50 years ago: “Kinship is so entwined with social class that a deficiency of kinship memories means also deficiency of class memories” (1959/2007: 168). Although such memories remain difficult to retain, reconstruct or resurrect for those with less than elite histories, and without comparable resources,

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<sup>44</sup> Virginia was the first colony to ban Black and white intermarriage in 1705; even in 1957, 30 states had laws against intermarriage—ten years before the Supreme Court overruled state laws against interracial marriage, in the case of *Loving v. Virginia* (Azoulay 1997).

<sup>45</sup> In the Jefferson-Hemings debates, the “white” descendants of Thomas Jefferson rely primarily on the social, rather than biological side of the divide (even rejecting DNA evidence to the contrary), including the legal framework and associated documentation that has served to construct racial and familial categories in our nation's formative years.

<sup>46</sup> See Hackstaff (forthcoming); see Parham 2008, “Race, Memory and Family History” for more on the politics of ethnoracial identities in genealogy.

there is no question that genealogical activity across class accelerated for the post-World War II “baby boom generation” that was born from 1946 to 1964, and came of age in the 1960s and 1970s.

### ***The US Baby Boom Generation and Social Changes***

There has been a genealogical explosion in the United States during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the one hand, it isn't hard to target technological developments that have made genealogy a much easier endeavor for all. Since the 1970s, the genealogical diagram has been fueled by the tools of the internet—including databases, discussion lists, and software programs that assist individuals with organizing the construction of their “family trees.” The genealogical websites are among the most frequented sites on the net (Auslander 2001); the number of associations, as well as their memberships continues to grow (Worchel 1999). These developments assuredly augment the explosion in activity, yet are less central in my view than the shift in cultural meaning.

What does the flurry of genealogical activity say about U.S. identities and social relations among this “baby boom” generation? This slice of history, and the generation I analyze, reflects a transformative moment in the cultural symbolism of the American nation partially engendered in the 1970s by Alex Haley's book and televised production, *Roots* (1976). This was a narrative that begins with Kunte Kinte—an African captured and enslaved by Europeans—but whose life and the life of his descendants is ultimately a story of struggle, triumph and freedom. Probably no other public event promoted genealogy more than its publication and the subsequent 13-part television series of *Roots*—particularly for the now aging baby boom generation, which constitute most of my sample. This was not a genealogy merely in search of aristocracy, but democracy. Most of the participants in my research mentioned the book or the series, and several respondents mentioned the series as initially motivating them to do genealogy.

Many scholars note that genealogy has become popular because of Haley's text. However, this assertion does not answer a more fundamental question, suggested by Auslander (2002: 7): “Why, after all, were these texts so enormously popular at a particular moment?” Auslander (ibidem) argues that the “mass explosion” of interest in genealogy since the 1970s may be traced to the changing structures and functions of families, such that a ‘cultural imaginary’ that transcends individual experience and symbolizes unity, sameness, and continuity is crucial as families have become increasingly discontinuous, tenuous, fragile, and shorn of material interdependence. Plainly, the changing structure and function of families informs the genealogical practice of the participants in this study. There are, however, additional reasons for why the texts of *Roots* resonated and stimulated many of the baby boomer generation at this “moment” in the U.S.

In *Roots Too*, Jacobson's (2006) analysis of this “particular moment” is suggestive:

*Roots* is important as a national phenomenon not only because the book and the miniseries were so eagerly devoured by millions across the country, but because, over time, the roots idiom revised the vernacular imagery of the nation itself. (p. 42)

Jacobson proceeds to point out the simultaneous cultural production of the 1976 U.S. bicentennial when “Ellis Island” displaced “Plymouth Rock” as the iconic

narrative of the hyphenated American. This also reflects Mary Waters' foundational argument in *Ethnic Options* (1990). Even as the practice of family history drew on the enormous genealogical success of *Roots*, the post-*Roots* phenomenon among ethnic whites increasingly erased notions of privilege (Jacobson *ibidem*); early "immigrants" were increasingly invested with whiteness and the struggles of whites and people of color were, disturbingly, depicted as equivalent, rather than decidedly unequal (Jacobson *ibidem*).

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that "heritage is best understood not as memory but as 'a mode of cultural production in the present'" (cited in Jacobson *ibidem*: 56). Among the baby boom generation, this cultural production encompasses contested meanings of American identities at the national level, situated in the post-Civil Rights era, as African Americans, and subsequently, Chicanos, Native Americans, and women and sexual minorities claimed their rights to produce their own heritage, even as others resisted the claims. So, there is both action and reaction to be deciphered in the motives of genealogists. Indeed, we might conceive of their endeavors as renegotiating the histories marked by the politics of class, gender, race, and other inequalities.

## **Method: How Interviews Produce Turning Points in Life Stories**

This research is based upon in-depth interviews conducted in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2002. I have relied upon snowball sampling (with no more than three links from any one reference) by joining genealogical associations and interviewing member of those organizations. The eleven long interviews averaged three hours each, and a few lasted as long as five hours. I have also conducted five short, informal interviews, generally while hanging out at genealogical libraries.

Yuval-Davis (2006: 201) asserts: "Identities are narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)." Riessman (2008) argues that interviews themselves should be understood as "narrative occasions" wherein life stories can be co-produced by participant and researcher. My aim has been to elicit narratives from individuals to understand how they realize and forge identities anchored in ancestors—while asking about their current family relations and bonds. Like much qualitative research, my interpretations of these occasions often held unanticipated detours.

My methodological approach draws on grounded theory procedures in that I rely on theoretical sampling, inter-relate analysis and data collection, and analyze thematic issues that arose in the context of the interviews (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Yet, it also departs from classic grounded theory insofar as I presume a less positivist and more constructivist epistemology, as Charmaz (2005) does. Furthermore, my approach draws from a qualified (rather than a radical) constructivist epistemology that reflects Altheide and Johnson's (1994) model of "analytic realism." This methodological model is deeply compatible with constructionist views because 1) it demands that we attend to processes, like historical racial projects, which are transient outcomes of interactions between discourses and institutions; and 2) it assumes that perspective is an ineluctable aspect of our social world—and as such, we must reflexively account for ourselves in the co-construction of interviews and analysis. Thus, my identity as a white, middle-class, married woman with no children in her late forties at the time of the interview is relevant because interaction will be shaped by my own and others' expectations of such a standpoint.

At this point in an ongoing research process my sample can be described as primarily middle to upper middle-class, averaging 60 years of age, and practicing genealogy for as little as two to as many as 25 years, with most located in the middle. Nine respondents are women and two are men. Six respondents self-identify as European American, four identify as African American and one identifies variously as African American, European American and as multiracial. Family structures, ever-changing, are less easy to describe briefly; however, among the 11 respondents, 10 have had children and all have been married at some point, though only four are currently married to their first spouse. One person is currently widowed and six have been divorced; among the six divorced individuals, one has remarried, one has re-partnered and four remained single.

In order to tap the meaning of genealogy in their lives, I asked about the stories in their research that have been meaningful to them, their current family lives and religious belief, their views on DNA, and their secrets and silences. I launched the interviews by asking respondents to discuss the decision to begin doing genealogy and then inquired why at that particular time. I did not initially aim to sample an older age group, yet I began to notice patterns in how respondents talked about genealogy that related to their experience of the life course and was most often spurred by family connections and disconnections. These discussions of motives and meanings related to their views of the life course that reflected Anselm Strauss's (1959/2007) notion of "turning points."

## **Turning Points and Identity in The Life Course**

According to Strauss (1959/2007: 95), "turning points" are "critical incidents that occur to force a person to recognize that 'I am not the same as I was, as I used to be'". Most respondents indicated familiar life course events that prompted the pursuit of genealogy --such as births, illness, deaths, retirement, or divorce. This article aims to illustrate how these events reveal Strauss's typology of turning points, for example, his concepts of "milestones," "meeting a challenge," or being "deceived by events in general." Yet, in addition to simply applying Strauss's typology, I add three arguments. First, I suggest that these turning points may occur simultaneously, and further, may converge like vectors across time. In this way, they reflect the concept of epiphany, proposed by Denzin (1989), that is, as a problematic moment or disruptive crisis when a person's character may reveal itself and new understandings are required; still, they need not regularly attach to a particular life course "stage", and they may be abrupt or cumulative, major or seemingly minor though illuminating, or perhaps retrospectively meaningful moments. Second, I propose an important turning point that I call "identity extensions" which seem to accompany late middle or older ages. These identity extensions attach to "growing older" but not to a specific age or event. Rather, such extensions are a process of realizing that new relational meanings unfold with increasingly finite horizons, a kind of existential crisis that can disrupt a youth's identity and meanings were she or he confronted with a terminal illness. Regardless, such a process means individuals are more apt to address existentialist questions, such as "What is the nature of human life and experience? What is my place and purpose in this larger scheme of things?" and "What is the meaning of my inevitable death?" (Johnson and Kotarba 2002: 4). Third, I analyze how the current era informs this particular generation's genealogical endeavors. Before proceeding to present this analysis, it's essential to elaborate on how I understand the life course and age-based identity.

The critical incidents that make up “turning points” need not be *naturalized* life stages as we came to understand them in Western accounts of human development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Constructionist insights on the life course reveal not only historical and cross-cultural variations in notions of the life cycle and how people construct meanings at different ages, but also the ways in which we make use of life course stages as resources to make sense of our lives over time (Holstein and Gubrium 2007). As Holstein and Gubrium (2007) explain, to understand stages as resources, scholars must bracket age as a necessary framework for orienting one’s findings and only incorporate stages when it is used as a resource by respondents. To some degree this describes my approach insofar as I was not looking for age-related constructions. Yet people in their 50s and 60s were those who were most available to be interviewed, and so necessarily reflect my findings. Furthermore, by the time I came to further analyze my interviews, I had entered my fifties, enabling me to “hear” anew the reflections of everyday genealogists (Denzin 1989). Like Karp’s (1988: 728) finding that “events pile up in the fifties making reflection about age particularly likely during this decade,” I found there was an age consciousness that was “correlated with age, but not determined by age”. While I do not take Western “ages” or “stages” as given, I am suggesting that at this approximate moment in U.S. society, being in one’s 50s or 60s tends to produce certain embodied experiences and social relations (Karp *ibidem*); these, in turn, may elicit particular ways of thinking about identity.

At the outset, it is crucial to note how my analysis of identity and becoming a generational elder does and does not draw from Erik Erikson, since it is Erickson’s notions of identity, human development theory, and his eight stages of “man” that have been most influential through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Identity for Erikson refers to the idea that one has a sense of continuity in oneself and proceeds to act on that basis (1950: 42). Most valuable about his theory are his assumptions that change and growth are continuous in life and not limited to the early years of life; that our social interactions are carriers of culture; and that as humans we are agentic creatures who shape our own lives, even while delimited by the social contexts within which we live. The epigenic elements of Erikson’s theory rooted in biology have been rightfully criticized when they suggest bodies are determinative of life stages, or that ‘anatomy is destiny’ in terms of reproductive sex, or that development can be universalized. It is important to understand bodies as do developmental systems theorists who recognize the simultaneity and interactive ways that the social is incorporated into physiology; as Fausto-Sterling (2000) notes, we must take seriously the following ideas:

...[that] bodily experiences are brought into being by our development in particular cultures and historical periods. But especially as a biologist, I want to make the argument more specific. As we grow and develop, we literally, not just ‘discursively’ (that is, through language and cultural practices), construct our bodies, incorporating experience into our very flesh. To understand this claim, we must erode the distinctions between the physical and the social body. (p. 20)

Thus, we are embodied creatures that are located in time and place and know our own mortality—though when we are likely to experience that mortal horizon is somewhat mutable. Like Kotarba and Johnson (2002), I imagine an “existential self”

that is embodied, always becoming, and reflexive.<sup>47</sup> Aging is a bodily experience and one that is “real” insofar as appearances and abilities change our ways of being in the world and require adaptation; but equally crucial, it is a social experience that is real insofar as we are “reminded” by others of our place in the age spectrum (Karp 1988).

As we’ll see, my notion of “identity extensions” speaks to the “reminders” that Karp (ibidem) discusses and both reflects and departs from Erikson’s seventh and eighth stages. Erikson’s (1950) “seventh age of man” emphasizes the challenge of “generativity” (and avoiding stagnation) or becoming a mentor or guide to the next generation, which involves becoming less self-absorbed and leaving a legacy to the next generation. As Sorell and Montgomery (2001) argue, this is primarily an androcentric understanding of this life stage because it ignores research showing how women’s lives have generally required that they be less self-absorbed and focused on care of others. While “leaving a legacy” might be interpreted in terms of conventionally male-defined understanding of “legacy,” such as institutional contributions, I would argue that the primarily female family historians below suggest another form of generativity: one based in knowledge constructions as a responsibility to ancestors, injected with sociopolitical and spiritual components. Furthermore, Erikson’s “eighth stage of man,” which emphasizes ego integrity over despair as a final stage of life, is relevant to the degree that we acknowledge, as Kroger and Adair (2008) do, that the maintenance of a continuous identity also involves symbolic connections to others across the generations. In sum, our understanding of genealogists’ endeavors are enriched to the degree we recognize that it is an activity that tends to accompany a “turning point,” “existential crisis,” or “epiphany” of some sort (Kotarba and Johnson 2002; Denzin 1989).

### ***“Milestones” Constructing a Future***

According to Strauss (1959/2007: 95) a “milestone” is a “marker of progression or retrogression” that “necessitates new stances, new alignments”. The following example reveals not only a milestone represented by giving birth, but a new alignment, that is, a consciousness of the generational continuity made explicit by genealogical practice. When asked what motivated her to do family history, Abby<sup>48</sup> says:

I think it was triggered by filling out the baby book of my daughter, who is now 28. And so when she was born, there was just something profound about filling out that tree, that little baby book tree with the mother, the father, and the grandparents. And that just fascinated me. I guess I’d never thought about it before I’d given birth. So at about that same time, um, I saw a class being offered at adult school. And it was a class in genealogy. And it was taught by a Mormon woman, but she didn’t, you know, do the religious thing, she just did the basics. (Abby, European American, age 54)

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<sup>47</sup> Kotarba and Johnson (2002: 8) explain that an embodied self means that “feeling and primordial perception precede rationality and symbol use and, in fact, activate them”; while I might portray these processes more simultaneously, overall the qualities of an existential self align closely with my assumptions. In relation to the existential self as “becoming”, they recognize that possibilities for self-growth are “constantly unfolding”. And, finally, they recognize that the self is reflexive in relation to its emotions, values, creativity, and experienced tensions with one’s society.

<sup>48</sup> All names presented here are pseudonyms to protect the identities of respondents.

Here, the milestone of motherhood sends Abby to genealogy to create continuity with descendants and ancestors. When she remarks on her fascination with the family tree and states “I guess I’d never thought about it before I’d given birth” we see the marks of a major epiphany—a turning point that forever changes her life. Giving birth was rarely mentioned as a motivator in my particular, older sample. Still, all the parents hoped that their children would eventually perceive their genealogical endeavors as a gift.

This universal account of forging a “gift” among the parents in my sample suggests a “vocabulary of motive” behind their identity endeavors (Mills 1940). Interestingly, the symbol of “gift” may serve to justify what they describe as the “obsessive” quality of their pursuits. In some cases, practitioners seem to borrow time from present loved ones—several noted some scorn or resentment by children—to produce connections to past relations. Yet, it also suggests that relational connections may migrate to the center of self knowledge as adults age in what is a highly, often excessively, individualistic society. The centrality of such connection is only enhanced by the rising rate of death among loved ones as one ages; as Karp (1988: 734) notes, there is a “momentum of mortality experiences in the fifties”.

### ***“Meeting a Challenge” by Reconstructing A Past***

Strauss (1959/2007: 97) argues that meeting a challenge “may or may not be a challenge that is institutionalized,” but describes an experience where “crucial tests are imposed by individuals on themselves” which they must pass or they will need to change direction. Death was a common motivator for pursuing family history among the relatively older age of the respondents in my sample and was often framed as a test or turning point. Iris states:

And it was like ‘wow’, you know, my elder family members just gone in a matter of months. And not only was it the shock of losing your mom, but the fact that I had not asked important questions. So, it was like I am not going to hide, I’m not in the closet any longer as far as my family and who they are. I want to know and I want to know now. So that’s what I did. I started looking for answers to questions and getting answers ...  
(African American, age 56)

Losing her elder family members was a “shock” yet also gave Iris the resolve to ask unasked questions and to share unshared identities, including her lesbian identity. Indeed, her mission seemed to be to reverse “passing” and overturn family secrets. Ironically, Strauss (1959) uses an example of “passing” or a strange role handled well as an example of meeting a challenge or passing a self-test; nevertheless, reversing passing also signifies a transformative and courageous moment—one that reflects the enormous struggles and change marking recent decades in the United States. As Iris “meets a challenge” in identity transformation upon the death of her mother and other elders, she simultaneously and not coincidentally reflects the social movement of her times that increasingly rejects passing as “straight”. Yet Iris encounters several turning points at once that impact the meanings she makes of her life—quite like Frances. In short, Strauss’s types of “turning points” are *not* mutually exclusive.

### ***Intersecting Turning Points: When Past and Future Converge in The Present***

Frances similarly found the specter of loss motivated her pursuit of genealogy, and family history became a means to “meet this challenge” (Strauss 1959). Her brother’s fatal illness presaged not only her own, but also her nephews’ loss.

What motivated me was my brother’s illness and he, his um...he has a fatal disease, so he got diagnosed with a fatal disease and so we got, but it was slow in taking its course. [...] So I think I did it as an activity to do, to have something to show him and maybe to pass on to his sons, because he was leaving three children – three grown boys actually – was going to be leaving them and I think I just decided that the heritage of – and he might, it would be some comfort to him to feel that his heritage was being passed on, that somebody was paying attention to it and that there would be some good notes for his children, because he knew he was not gonna be able to do it. (Frances, European American, age 61)

Despite the explicit contrast with Abby’s motive located in the birth of her daughter, Frances is implicitly mindful of her family’s descendants; progeny are given the gift of social memory, a place in social and family history.

Although losses are salient as motivators for doing genealogy, there are other kinds of “voids” that signify relational turning points of yesteryear. Indeed, today’s identity developments are necessarily “shaped by previously presented versions and also by understandings which prevail in the wider discursive environment, such as expectations about the appropriate trajectory of a life” (Taylor and Littleton 2006: 23). Thus, Frances speculates that genealogy was also motivated by being single.

And also because I’m not married, I don’t have a partner, I think it was a way for me to feel that I had more family (laughs). I’ve found thousands of people who are my family. When my daily reality is I don’t have any family. And my daughters had left home and my brother was [out east], and my sister is crazy, and my father is so old now. This was something that was something to talk to my father about. [...] because he is 90. And he doesn’t have an ability now to know what’s going on from one day to the next, but he does have a lot of old memories and he loves to be asked about them. [...] I’ve been their link, yeah. This has been something that I’ve mined to give us more in common to talk about. Because other issues are uh, maybe more problematic, you know, politics, religion, and all that stuff, we’d argue about. We can’t argue about this. (Frances, European American, age 61)

Here, Frances reveals a desire for expanding and securing her family, and reflects Auslander’s (2002) argument that the “discontinuous” and “fragile” families of today necessitate a “cultural imaginary” of unity and constancy that genealogy provides. While she jokes about it, she creates a sense of being embedded in symbolic family relations when she says: “I think it was a way for me to feel that I had more family (laughs). I’ve found thousands of people who are my family.” Akin to Denzin’s (1989: 130) notion of an illuminative epiphany, ruptures in Frances’ past family relations are symbolically highlighted, in this image of “thousands” of kin.

Frances’ status as a single, once-divorced woman with grown children may also represent a crossroads described by Strauss (1959) as the turning point of “betrayal”:

This kind of crossroad may not be traumatic, but nostalgically reminiscent, signifying then that the gratifications arising from past decisions are quite sufficient to make past possibilities only pleasantly lingering 'maybes.' Final recognition that they are really dead issues is then more of a ritualistic burial and is often manifested by a revisiting of old haunts—actually or symbolically. (p. 100)

In her desire for “more” family relations, she contends with a “betrayal” by a society that still places great store in people finding support through the marital institution. Frances’s progressive politics affirm postmodern family formations, yet her identity as “single” is anchored in an era when the decline of support from conventional nuclear families has not been adequately replaced by other social formations in the U.S. At the intersection of these experiences—an ill brother and being single with grown children—Frances illustrates how several turning points can occur simultaneously, and further, may converge like vectors across time, as previous turning points regain salience in later life stages.

Finally, in addition to death and tenuous family relations, genealogy served to enliven Frances’s role as daughter to an aging father. Along with charting her relations to the dead, Frances’s inclusive impulse is also an effort to produce feelings, through what Hochschild (1983) calls *emotional management*, that aims to create bonds and sustain her current family relationships; as she states in relation to her father and her brother: “This [genealogy] has been something that I’ve mined to give us more in common to talk about.”

Interestingly, this motive emerges in other interviews, such as with James, a 61-year-old, European American. He states that he was partially motivated to do genealogy to nurture his relationship to his father. He had returned to school and a class assignment required looking at family history and patterns. As he began to uncover the patterns and migrations of his family, he decided to travel to earlier family sites in the Midwest and took a “trip with my father in ’93 and ’94 and he died in ’96.” Further, Barbara, a 57-year-old European American also describes genealogy as a vehicle for communicating with her father who “doesn’t talk much”:

I never talked with my Dad. So this has provided us with something to talk about. And it’s true that every time I ever go down there he says ‘oh I found a little piece of paper...’ And I go into his den and we sit in there...and so he sees it as a way of connecting too. (Barbara, European American, age 57)

These repeated references to genealogy as an effort to forge connection with fathers also reflects the changes in and uncertainty about the status of fatherhood. In an era when men’s power has been challenged by feminists, when breadwinning is broadly shared, expectations of child care from fathers have grown, and “absent” or “deadbeat” dads have been rebuked, these efforts at communication reflect a tenuous but tenacious desire to connect across the distance of gender and/or generation as the baby boomer generation develop into their parents caregivers. When children become their parents’ caregivers, “motivations appropriate to earlier—and usually lower—status must be sloughed off or transmuted, and new ones added or substituted”; as Strauss (1959/2007:104-5) further notes, “strains in family and community life fall exactly at those points where the speed of transition gets out of alignment”, such as passage to old age. Indeed, these efforts by Frances, James, and Barbara signify an identity shift that is anchored in an age when they approach the role of caregiver, if not family elder.

### ***Identity Extensions: Approaching the Role of Generational Elder***

In the U.S., life expectancy reached the all-time high of 77.8 years in 2005 (Kung H.C. et al. 2008). For those who were born around 1950, they can expect that their parents are or will be deceased soon, and can expect about 15 to 20 more years for themselves if patterns hold (National Center for Health Statistics 2007). My preliminary sample contained a couple older, and one younger than those born in the 1950s yet at varying rates, they were all confronting the role of generational elder. This demographic context revealed certain patterns in respondents' accounts that underlie what I label as "identity extensions"; I define these as a reevaluation of self as one reaches a generational ceiling that acknowledges one of more of the following: the significance of extended kin to one's notion of identity; reverence or deep respect for ancestors; a social responsibility to the future of history.

### ***The Significance of Extended Kin***

Reunions, as gatherings of extended kin, are frequently both a means for doing genealogy and result from doing genealogy. Auslander (2002: 5) points out: "Two of the most important practices through which modern middle class families work to produce this "virtual" continuity are genealogical research and the staging of family unions". Both activities can be traced back centuries in U.S. society, yet they are an increasingly important means for constructing families. According to Auslander (ibidem), reunions have a long history—though their meaning and constitution have changed over time—increasingly becoming focused on family in contrast to an earlier focus on religious revival or community homecomings (Shore 2002 also addresses).

Five of the participants had attended reunions, based on extended kin and/or particular communities. For example, in addition to connecting to her Dad, Barbara who is white also describes how her doing of genealogy has resulted in a touching reunion between her mother and her mother's first cousin; plans are already underway to also reunite her uncle and her mother's first cousin—after an estranged period of more than three decades. Of the five attending reunions, Barbara was the one European American; the other four were African American. While my sample doesn't tell us anything about frequencies in the larger society, it is indisputable that many African Americans find the homecoming or family reunion an occasion of enormous importance for constructing family and community. Auslander (2002) observes that the African American homecoming or family reunion is distinctive in that it is closely related to at least three historical developments: early reunions of African Americans who had been former slaves on a specific plantation, the Juneteenth ritual celebrating the enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation in Texas in 1865, and finally, the Great Migration of African Americans to the North which resulted in homecomings to the South.

Eve describes how family reunions in the South have brought her "great joy" and that she has invariably received "red carpet treatment." She adds that this "meant a lot as an only child." Katie, also an only child growing up, movingly describes her feelings upon meeting extended family in the South.

It's just pure joy. Just pure joy. And they looked at me, when I went to Arkansas, I had this big smile on my face all the time, they say 'are you

happy?’ I go, I am so happy. I think it was beyond being an only child and looking...you know, I got to find somebody, it was more than that. It was, I did something that you [ancestors] asked me to do, and I’m so glad I did. [KH: yeah the reward...] Oh, just listening, this is what...and to be able...because everything that I had regarding how I was connected, I gave it to them. And I said, this is my statement, I said: “To the Walker family. This shared information is an attempt to make a family connection. There may be several errors as well as incorrect information—who am I to come along and tell you? Please feel free to make any corrections. May our ancestors forever smile upon us for this attempt to reconnect.” ‘Cause it is a reconnection. (63-year-old African American)

Such connections and relational extensions are crucial to many of those doing genealogy, and reflect the significance of extended kin to notions of identity. As we age, not only do we increasingly lose loved ones, but we are also brought closer to our own mortality and becoming ancestors ourselves. This is a function of my sample’s age and it also points to the personal transformations triggered by loss and a yearning to bestow meaning on the closing phases of one’s life. While there are many opportunities for “existential crises” across the life spectrum, when hearts yearn for meaning and purpose, these certainly multiply with advancing age; as Kotarba and Johnson (2002: 9-10) recognize “the process of self is dynamic and continues throughout the life course” yet the question of “what does all this mean?” becomes more insistent as mortality becomes palpable.

#### *Reverence or Deep Respect for Ancestors*

When Katie says: “I did something that you asked me to do,” the “you” refers to her ancestors. Listening to ancestors is a claim that is explicitly stated by two respondents and is implicitly suggested by a third; such claims reveal a search for meaning that extends and transcends personal identity. Katie explains:

Because I know that there is a supreme being, and when I say that my ancestors talk to me, you know, I’m really very serious about this. And I know that everybody doesn’t hear this. But I know that when you are working through genealogy, and it’s very therapeutic at the same time, that things you recognize don’t just happen by chance. They are placed there way ahead before you even get there.

She provides more than a few examples of serendipity that, in her view, can only be explained by ancestors’ participation in her life. When I ask her why she was chosen, she states:

You know what, I’ve asked that, and I have no idea why I was chosen, all I can say is I feel very special as being the one. I really feel very, very, very fortunate. Because there are so many good things that I have found about this family in terms of, just like I said, the strength. You know I’ve...where we’ve served in the military, we’ve served, we’ve bought property. I mean we haven’t been little, shoddy people at all, not at all. I’m just like forever impressed; it blows my mind.

Psychological speculations about why she might need to feel “special” are easy to pursue here—one could reference her only child status, her father loss in

childhood, her status as adoptee, or her multiple losses in adulthood (including the death of a child). However, there is no denying Katie's reverence for her ancestors—a key dimension of identity extensions.

Heather also communicated with her ancestors. When I asked her what was most surprising about doing genealogy, she replied:

Let me just say that probably the biggest thing that I have found is the way the ancestors talk to me and through me, and I'm sure that most genealogists will tell you the same thing. I maintain that we don't choose genealogy. Genealogy chooses us. It's my passion; it's not anything that I have chosen to do. I really believe that the ancestors have chosen me for whatever reason they feel that I'm the one to tell their stories. As a result, it happens all the time that I literally hear a voice or I'll get a hunch about something that makes no sense and every time I follow it, it leads me right to the information I'm looking for. It's as though the ancestors are helping us find them and I think, as I've said, I've talked to so many other genealogists who feel the same way. That we're just a conduit and as long as you leave yourself open. (48-year-old, multiracial American)

Not unlike Katie, one can address the social psychological dimensions of being “chosen”—given losses through death and divorce that Heather has endured. Indeed, at the end of her interview, as she tearfully discusses estrangement from a dearly loved relative, she reflexively admits: “Perhaps [I'm] concentrating on dead folks, [because] they can't reject me.” Yet, there is more to this sense of rejection than personal psychology; there is the sedimented history of living in a society that rejects her collective identities—including her African and Native American ancestors, not to mention the problematic category of “multiracial” (Ifekwunigwe 2004).

While Frances does not claim ancestors talk with her, she does convey a reverence or deep respect for forbearers as she describes a kind of resurrection of ancestors. Frances initially claims that she had been doing genealogy for three years, but then adds:

I actually had a stint of interest, um, 20 years ago. I went to Salt Lake [in Utah], but that didn't take me very far. That was because I was more of a feminist interest – my father had told me just a bunch of names of men that were—and his son and his son...and the women were just blanks on the list. And I was so...I went to Salt Lake City and I filled in some missing names. And this was the first experience in reviving people who had almost been wiped out. (61-year-old, European American)

As indicated earlier, because patrilineal systems are widespread around the world, particularly associated with Abrahamic monotheisms, tracing ancestry is much more difficult through the mother's line. Zerubavel (2003) observes:

From looking at biblical genealogies constituting the first eight chapters of I Chronicles, for example, one would never guess that women played even a minor role in such multigenerational processes of begetting. Indeed, in strictly patrilineal descent systems women formally have no descendants. (p. 68)

By tracing matrilineal relations, Frances creates social history where there had been none; in doing so, she enacts a feminist consciousness of her generation, a cohort which insisted that women's historical identities and deeds be rendered visible—not only in her mother's, but also in her father's lines.

Unclear about what “reviving people” means to Frances, I ask her ‘Is reviving ancestors for the good of today’s family or ancestors?’ She responds:

I think that’s a great question because I think that’s what I was trying to explain. I think that by talking, I think that if people do have a spirit, or if there is anything like spiritual life, it only exists if those people are recognized and talked about. I mean like if we know them, and we can say their names, then they live. And so it’s like bringing them back from, from oblivion. And maybe this is why people who are facing mortality are attracted to it—they can think of, look at all those souls who are living just because we’re speaking their names. Every time they’re spoken they seem to be remembered, just by being spoken they may get remembered.

Her recurrent ideas about “bringing them back from oblivion,” she explains, are partially a result of teaching English to a primarily Asian population. She notes:

I’ve had lots of students from Korea and Taiwan and Japan and um, I’ve had lots of talks with them about family life and ancestor worship. And the shrines in their homes for the ancestors, and how many holidays focus on the ancestors, and the photos of the ancestors, and it’s just something they...don’t even question.

While most of my interviewees did not refer to their ancestors’ hand in doing genealogy like Katie and Heather, or discuss resurrecting forbearers by speaking their names like Frances, other research emphasizes a spiritual dimension to doing genealogy. The epitome of spiritual genealogy is the traditional practice required of members of the Church of Latter Day Saints (LDS) who are required to arrange for *ordinances* to provide the dead (who were not exposed to the gospel) with a means to salvation by providing baptism and marriage through proxy in the Temple (Lambert and Thomasson 1997); this explains Frances’s earlier reference to Salt Lake City, Utah where the most extensive genealogical archives in the U.S. are kept in order to track and designate who has had ordinances provided for their post-mortem conversion. A collection of genealogical case studies and a companion to the Public Broadcasting Service’s television series on “Ancestors,” the book *In Search of Our Ancestors* devotes an entire subsection to “Providence In Action” describing the ancestors or the divine’s hand in serendipity (Smolenyak 2000). Yet, beyond transcending individual identity via spirituality, genealogists also can aspire to political transcendence.

#### *A Responsibility to The Future via History*

Strauss (1959/2007: 177) notes: “A social psychology without full focus upon history is a blind psychology”. While Katie, Heather, and Frances convey deeply personal and spiritual accounts for their drive to pursue genealogy—from being single to being rejected and chosen—socially situated concerns that reveal a generational location also emerge in their talk about personal and spiritual aspirations. A generational attunement to how (re)connections have been forged and frustrated through racial and gender formations can be ascertained in their narratives. Underlying this attunement to the struggles for equality associated with “identity politics” is yet another kind of potential turning point: a responsibility to the future via history. As Strauss (ibidem: 169) observes: “Each generation perceives the

past in new terms, and rewrites its own history". For older genealogists, their rewriting of history is usually inflected by the social movements of their generation.

It can be argued that genealogy is the epitome of the sociological imagination—linking history and biography (Mills 1959). Family biography brings history to life. Such animated knowledge reveals the complexity of historical events and selectivity of historical accounts. While a few people state they had always liked history, more say that they hated history until they started doing genealogy. Respondents learned how ancestors' lives had intersected with, produced, and responded to historical events. Abby's account is typical:

And to be a good genealogist you have to learn so much, so many different skills, you have to understand history, and politics, and geography, and social customs. If you're gonna make a good guess about what happened to somebody, you better know where people in this area migrated to...and you need to know about, you know, what age did women get married? [...] If you're going to make educated guesses you have to know for that region and for that time and you have to know that kind of stuff in order to know what records to look for. You have to know: could women own property? You know. You have to know: how did someone get naturalized in the old days. There was no INS. You know, how did you do it? And what were the rules then? (54-year-old, European American)

Abby concluded: "I was never interested in history, but now it's totally different." We've already seen that Abby's interest in women's status parallels Frances's concerns with matrilineal relations, reflecting the influence of the women's movement on their cohort. We also see genealogical motivations shaped by the Civil Rights movement.

A responsibility to the future via history, the third dimension of identity extension, has already been manifest in Katie's narrative about listening to ancestors. The legacy of racist stories forged by European American acts of commission and omission seems to fuel a social responsibility to refute a received notion that African Americans are "shoddy people." Given the lack of authority accorded African American voices by majority European Americans, it is not surprising that Katie might want to draw upon a higher authority to validate her experience.

In contrast to European American respondents who were fascinated even stunned by histories that they had not learned about in school regarding ethnoracial relations, African Americans explicitly critiqued educational institutions presentation of "history"—the silences and distortions. Essentially I heard of desires to re-tell history. For example, 76-year-old Eve notes: "The way it was taught to me in school, I didn't believe it anyway." She elaborates, saying: "You're really finding yourself getting into these books and the history to see...but then you have to be careful whose perspective you're using." And as 56-year-old Iris describes her desire to incorporate more story telling and genealogy at family reunions, she explains: "Part of our issue right now is that we do not have a written history. Everything that's about us has been written by someone else, so it doesn't really reflect us, you know." Here and elsewhere, Iris reflects the notion of a "diffuse resentment" that she, and more accurately "we" have been "deceived by events in general" (Strauss 1959/2007: 101). As African Americans, Iris and Eve are attuned to the constructiveness of history and the power associated with who gets to construct history. Their personal turning points, then, become occasions not only to narrate new identities, but to tell new histories from standpoints previously rendered invisible and still marginalized.

## Conclusion: Genealogy for A Generation Conscious of Its History

This article explores the epiphanies or turning points in identity revealed by committed, everyday genealogists. But it also tries to locate these developmental events in relation to a specific generation within a particular era. In this, it aims to answer Strauss's call to understand identity in terms of history. Given the substantial changes in family lives in the last several decades—recorded in the statistical stories of divorce, single parenthood, gay marriage, cohabitation, step-parenting, reproductive technologies—and my previous work on the cultural meanings of marriage and divorce, I wondered whether family genealogists are seeking stability and constancy.

Many scholars observe that a postmodern era of ceaseless change, fluidity and fragmentation seems to foster nostalgia for a past when identities were anchored to communities and community to a place, and families, as many imagine, were more reliable, stable, and unified (Harvey 1989; Skolnick 1991; Coontz 1992). Speaking of a desire for historical continuity in a context of flux, Harvey argues (1989):

The irony is that tradition is now often preserved by being commodified and marketed as such. The search for roots ends up at worst being produced and marketed as an image, as a simulacrum or pastiche [...] The photograph, the document, the view, and reproduction become history precisely because they are so overwhelmingly present. [...] Through the presentation of a partially illusory past it becomes possible to signify something of local identity and perhaps to do it profitably. (p. 303)

Furthermore, Harvey asserts, the pursuit is heavily laden with nostalgia, suggesting genealogists are yearning for a past 'golden era' of family relations.

There is no doubt that profits are being made in the genealogical industry, past families are being romanticized, traditions are being "invented" and sold, and finally, that respondents' longing for belonging speaks to disruptions in our families today. In our "search for secure moorings in a shifting world" (Harvey *ibidem*: 302), genealogical charts do provide a sense of constancy. We see longing for family connections expressed to varying degrees in the words of Frances, Iris, Katie, Heather, Eve, James, and Barbara. And, doing family history extends many respondents' families and communities quite literally through reunions. Yet, nostalgia for an illusory past and the commodification of tradition may be too limited an explanation for why genealogy has become salient in family lives. For the committed genealogist, it does not take long to learn about the disruptions, fragmentations, family secrets, and silences that attended family lives in the past. Only one interviewee was not motivated by the secrets and mysteries in the doing of genealogy. And, subsequent "discoveries" tend to challenge nostalgic notions of families past where both shame and dignity are lodged. Further, nostalgia for times past may carry different meanings depending on one's location within the shifting boundaries of ethnoracial, gender and class hierarchies. Thus, nostalgia for an earlier era among European Americans can disguise nostalgia for greater privilege in an earlier American era—an unlikely longing among African Americans. In contrast, among African Americans nostalgia might express itself as a longing for how things "might have been" as demonstrated by Toepke and Serrano's (1999) video "The Language You Cry In: The story of a Mende song"; this reveals how youth learn to

listen for ancestors talking from the grave and shows how a song from the 18<sup>th</sup> century stores social memories and becomes a key link for family relations.

In addition, then, to a longing for belonging in a world of uncertain family relations, to understand how genealogical endeavors beckon at this time, it is crucial to consider the race, class, and gender politics constituting and constituted by the now-aging baby boom generation. I suggest that the notion of “identity extensions” can help us see the meanings of genealogy in terms of age and generation and the likely epiphanies these elicit. In relation to age, identity extensions are meant to capture a probable “turning point” in the later life cycles as aging individuals move toward the role of “generational elder” and the keeper of stories; the role assumes a responsibility to the future via history and a deep respect, even reverence for forbearers. As Karp (1988) argues, from bodily aches to youth’s perceptions of the decade, the fifties are full of reminders that confirm time is finite and embracing life cannot be delayed. In relation to generation, these extensions reflect aspirations by a specific cohort that has witnessed an era of productive social movements—from Civil Rights for disadvantaged ethnoracial groups to the rights of women and sexual minorities; thus, identities are claimed and elevated as the dialectics of race, sex, and class politics are played out in the struggle for and resistance to greater justice, including in the realm of storytelling.

Genealogy may be perceived as a pastime of the leisure class, and even the retired class, but it should also be recognized as a story of identity that has been increasingly democratized in U.S. society—akin to President Obama’s testimonial. Not unlike Jacobson’s (2003) account of the shift toward “Ellis Island” as the all-American story, Obama’s story appropriates and aims to rework this narrative, by extending his relations to “three continents,” by identifying with “every race and every hue”, by leading us to conclude that “this nation is more than the sum of its parts – that out of many, we are truly one.” Obama provides increasingly permeable and inclusive criteria for the “politics of belonging” in the U.S. (Yuval-Davis 2006). Further, he symbolizes a *social turning point* in the U.S. when citizens of marginalized identities increasingly, if tenuously, find themselves at the center of making history.

The democratization of genealogy could lead to a democratization of history. Quoting Stuart Hall, Nash (2001) notes: “Far from being grounded in a mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity”, identities appear instead as “the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (cited in Nash 2001: 48). As we’ve seen with the family historians presented here, genealogy enables many to reconstitute the politics of their generation and reposition themselves and others in “the narratives of the past” as they approach the role of generational elder.

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### Cynicism in the Indian I.T. Organizations: An Exploration of the Employees' Perspectives

#### **Abstract**

Cynicism is described as a mind-set characterized by hopelessness, disappointment, and disillusionment, and is also associated with scorn, disgust, and suspicion. This strong negative attitude has infiltrated Indian I.T organizations, and is believed to be responsible for unfavorable organizational consequences, even though, hardly any studies have explored the causes and concerns of employee cynicism about their organizations in the Indian context. The present research centers around two qualitative case studies through in-depth interviews with seventy two participants undertaken in western India to investigate the causes and concerns of employee cynicism towards employer organization. Findings of the study indicate that workplace perceptions significantly influence organizational cynicism, which is largely influenced by poor leadership, organizational politics, decisive culture, accessibility of benefits and un-met expectations. As these findings have important organizational implications, I recommend for further studies on cynicism in the future.

#### **Keywords**

Cynicism; Employee; Organization; Information technology; Culture

Employer employee relationships, in India, have been fundamentally transformed over the last thirty years. In the eighties and nineties, Indian organizations have had growth opportunities domestically, and faced tremendous competition from global competitors outside India. In this munificent setting, researches on employee attitudes have focused on understanding the “commitment”

of employees to their employers. Researchers have focused on employees' "citizenship behaviors," which scholars attribute to employee efforts exceeding organizational inducements. The nineties and early two thousands have seen a dramatic change in the notion of employee-organization relationships. This has been specifically due to the boom in the Indian Information Technology (I.T) industry. Rampant mergers, acquisitions, quality initiatives, and reengineering programs have often resulted in mass layoffs, euphemistically labeled "rightsizings", "downsizings," and organizational restructurings. Unethical corporate leadership, corporate short-sightedness and greed have further contributed to employee negativity. As a result, many employees have begun to reexamine corporate life and the worth of corporate loyalty, leading to the development of cynical attitude towards employing organization.

Organizational cynicism (OC), which has been defined as 'a negative attitude toward one's employing organization, comprise three dimensions: (1) a *belief* that the organization lacks integrity; (2) negative *affect* toward the organization; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical *behavior* toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect' (Dean et al. 1998). Its core belief is that principles of honesty, fairness, and sincerity are sacrificed to further the self-interests of leadership, leading to actions based on hidden motives and deception (Abraham 2000). Cynicism is an attitude characterized by hopelessness, frustration and disillusionment. It is also related to contempt, disgust, and distrust (Andersson 1996; Andersson and Bateman 1997). The central belief associated with cynicism is that principles of honesty, fairness, and sincerity are sacrificed to further the individual's self-interest. This underlying self-centered purpose is believed to lead to actions based on hidden agendas and deception (Abraham 2000).

It is argued that organizational cynicism has only increased in recent years (Bommer et al. 2005). Research findings suggest that organizational cynicism is associated with a variety of undesirable outcomes. Literature reviews by Andersson (1996) and Dean et al. (1998) mention relationships with apathy, resignation, alienation, hopelessness, distrust of others, suspicion, contempt, disillusionment, and scorn, as well as poor performance, interpersonal conflict, absenteeism, job turnover, and burnout.

This strong negative attitude permeates India's corporations and is currently blamed for a multitude of unfavorable organizational outcomes. Thus, cynicism in the Indian context is recognized as a growing problem in the workplace that calls for immediate and detailed attention.

Though large number of studies with relation to organizational cynicism has been done internationally (e.g. see Qian and Daniels 2008; Brandes, et al. 2008; Bernerth et al. 2007; Carr, Napolitano and Keating 2007; Cartwright and Holmes 2006; Kosmala and Herrbach 2006; Gall 2006) hardly any research has been carried out understanding the Indian scenario.

Hence, this study intends to delve the experiences and reports on discrepancies in the employees' expectations of the world of work and the reality of the I.T organization and/or work leading to the development of cynical attitude towards employing organizations. It tries to explore the causes and concerns of cynicism from the employees' perspective in the Indian context. We start this study with a brief review of research in the related area.

## Literature Review

The word *cynicism* has its roots in the ancient Greek cynics. The two cynics most often mentioned are *Antisthenes* and *Diogenes of Sinope*. The cynics held individual wisdom to be the highest virtue, and were often known to question and criticize the values of the majority, as well as laws and customs (Copleston 1962). Cynicism nowadays is not quite what it used to be 2500 years ago. While the ancient cynics were known as relentless critics, the concept of cynicism nowadays has the flair of inherent pessimism and distrust.

Cynicism literature has been varied and rather scanty (Andersson 1996). The concept of cynicism has been around for centuries; however, the systematic study of organizational cynicism is still in its infancy (Wanous et al. 2000). Scholars have explored numerous theoretical approaches, and examined a variety of potential causes and effects of cynicism in their attempts to gain deeper insight into cynical attitudes in the workplace. However, few studies have built upon previous work, and there have been only modest attempts to integrate findings from one study to another. Thus, the body of cynicism research can be characterized as informative, yet fragmented.

In the organization sciences, two major lines of research into work-related cynicism have appeared. One has concentrated on the development and function of cynicism during the work career, particularly in occupational socialization processes. In their first work encounters, students and starting professionals frequently experience a series of unmet expectations and unexpected events, causing what is aptly referred to by Blau (1964) as a "reality shock." As a reaction to this experience, workers may get less involved and adopt a distant, cynical attitude toward their clients. Studies in this line of research, referred to as *occupational cynicism*, have primarily focused on the helping professions, in particular health care (Becker and Geer 1958), social work (Blau 1964; Meyerson 1990), and the police (Niederhoffer 1967; O'Connell, Holzman, and Armandi 1986).

A second line of research has focused on cynicism among employees responding to certain adverse organizational circumstances. Similar to occupational cynicism, unmet or frustrated expectations as well as unexpected organizational characteristics or events are the key element. This form of cynicism, referred to as *employee cynicism* or *organizational cynicism* (OC). While cynicism is often attributed a negative bias, many authors concur that cynics may also represent the "voice of conscience" for the organization and, thereby, question the suitability of poor strategic choices in the organizational context (Dean et al. 1998; Cutler 2000).

The presence and effects of cynicism in the workplace, as well as the need for knowledge related to the causes and effects of organizational cynicism, long have been recognized and initial conceptualizations have been offered (Andersson 1996; Dean et al. 1998; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly 2003). Even though these conceptualizations have been largely formed on the basis of the research carried out in the American and the European organizations, they have provided only partial insight into the phenomenon of cynicism within organizations. Unfortunately, this is the case because such conceptualizations do not reflect an integrated, systematic approach that conceptually and empirically explores the process of organizational cynicism development and its effects on the organization and employees.

## Concept of Organizational Cynicism

Dean et al. (1998) conceive of organizational cynicism as an attitude, thereby adopting a 3-dimensional cognitive, affective, and behavioral structure of the cynicism construct. The cognitive dimension, referred to by Dean et al. (ibidem: 346) as “cynicism being thought and experienced through cognition” is expressed as *denial* of the sincerity of the organization (Goldner et al. 1977; Urbany 2005), as the *belief* that selfishness and fakery is at the core of human nature (Kanter and Mirvis, 1989, 1991; Mirvis and Kanter 1991), or that organizations are unscrupulous and self-serving (Valentine and Elias 2005) and fall short of integrity (Dean et al. 1998; Johnson and O’Leary-Kelly 2003) or, alternatively, as the *disbelief* of stated motives (Stanley et al. 2005). The affective dimension of cynicism “being felt” is represented in emotionally flavored conceptualizations, such as *frustration and disillusionment* (Andersson 1996; Andersson and Bateman 1997; O’Leary 2003), or *pessimism* (Reichers et al. 1997; Wanous et al. 1994). Finally, the behavioral dimension of employees overtly or covertly “acting out” their cynicism is key to conceptualizations such as *hostile impugning and vilification* of motives (Turner and Valentine 2001), *alienation* and *psychological exit and disengagement* (O’Brien et al. 2004), a *loss of faith* in leaders of change (Reichers et al. 1997; Wanous et al. 2000, 2004), or as *distrust* of a person, group, ideology, social convention or institution (Andersson 1996; Andersson and Bateman 1997; Bateman et al. 1992; Turner and Valentine 2001).

Some amount of research has also tried to explore the consequences of cynicism. Most frequently mentioned are affective and behavioral consequences, such as a decrease in organizational commitment, motivation and job satisfaction (Abraham 2000; Goldner et al. 1977; Johnson and O’Leary-Kelly 2003; Reichers et al. 1997; Turner and Valentine 2001; Urbany 2005; Wanous et al. 1994, 2000), an increase in suspicion, distrust and contempt of the organization (Kanter and Mirvis 1989, 1991; Reichers et al. 1997; Thompson et al. 2000), and other forms of psychological disengagement and detachment (Andersson 1996; Feldman 2000; Fleming 2005; Guastello et al. 1992; O’Brien et al. 2004; O’Leary 2003). Two studies showed that cynicism is associated with a decrease in self-esteem (Fleming 2005; Guastello et al. 1992), and another study revealed that even the new employer may experience the cynicism among employees, resulting from maltreatment by their former employer (Pugh et al. 2003).

## Research Design and Methods

Due to the exploratory nature of the research question, and the number and complexity of factors contributing to employees’ attitude towards organizational cynicism, this study was done using a case study format (Merriam 1998; Stake 1997). The case study research design was selected to create boundaries and structure for the investigation, while still allowing for rich description and the inclusion of context. Qualitative methodologies are appropriate to be used when there are large numbers of variables in an area where much is still unknown (Creswell 1998). One of the strengths of a qualitative case study is its openness to generating new knowledge without having a predetermined hypothesis or theory; rather, understanding or meaning emerges from the data (Patton 1990). Specifically, the

concern of the article is to explore, investigate and examine the nature and causes which leads to cynical attitude of the employees towards their employing organizations. In this regard, an in-depth understanding of causes, values and behaviors of individuals is crucial as is an appreciation of the context of being cynical towards the employing organization. A case study method provides a suitable structure for the in-depth analysis of illicit behavior and the context for such activities (Miles 1979). Therefore, the research reported here centers on two in-depth qualitative case studies. The two case companies are identified by the pseudonyms "Raj Technologies" and "Xion India Ltd."

Strength of "Raj Technologies" is around eighteen thousand employees with a turnover of \$ 6.5 billion dollars and strength of "Xion India Ltd." is around seventeen thousand employees with a turnover of \$ 9 billion dollars. Both the firms may be described as Indian MNCs having a significant emphasis on rules and procedures across all manners of organizational activities.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

The research described here was based upon social constructivism. The interest of social constructivism is to discover the ways social reality and social phenomena are constructed. Social constructivism states that knowledge is actively constructed by each individual and that this process is socially mediated (Tobin and Tippins 1993). There is an emphasis on the importance of culture in the context of understanding what occurs in society and construction of knowledge based on this understanding (Derry 1999; Kim 2001; McMahon 1997). There are three main premises that underlie social constructivism: reality, knowledge, and learning. Reality does not exist prior to its social intervention. Members of society invent the properties of the world and reality is constructed through human activity (Kim 2001; Kukla 2000). In terms of knowledge, individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment in which they live. Lastly, learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities. Learning neither takes place only within an individual, nor as a passive development of behaviors that are shaped by external forces (McMahon 1997). The data gathered from this study was a collection of participants' varied experiences leading to cynical behavior towards employing organization, depending upon how each individual constructed his understanding and justification of the behavior. It is assumed that cynicism is a learned behavior that is constructed through social interactions.

### ***Participants***

Since the recruitment process involved a request for voluntary participation, it was difficult to accurately predict the number of staff who would participate in this study; as many as ninety employees from both the organizations were approached. However, seventy two participants agreed to volunteer.

The participants were employed as Project Managers, Team Leaders and Executives in these organizations operating in Pune and were selected via randomized quota sampling to reflect a mix of age, positions, genders and

experience with organization. At both the organizations, 36 interviews each were conducted. Across the two cases, the majority of the respondents were males (53%).

Demographic details have been summarized into Table 1 to provide a broad outline of the distribution of some of the relevant characteristics of the sample.

| Distribution    | Name of the Company |                | Total |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|-------|
| Age Wise        | Raj Technologies    | Xion India Ltd |       |
| 21 - 24         | 16                  | 14             | 30    |
| 25 - 28         | 17                  | 15             | 32    |
| 29 - 35         | 3                   | 7              | 10    |
| Experience Wise |                     |                |       |
| 0 - 3           | 13                  | 11             | 24    |
| 4 - 7'          | 20                  | 20             | 40    |
| 8 - 10'         | 3                   | 5              | 8     |
| Gender Wise     |                     |                |       |
| Male            | 20                  | 18             | 38    |
| Female          | 16                  | 18             | 34    |
| Position Wise   |                     |                |       |
| Manager         | 6                   | 8              | 14    |
| Team Leader     | 14                  | 14             | 28    |
| Executives      | 16                  | 14             | 30    |

Table 1: Demographic details of the Participants (n=72)

### **Data Collection**

The data was obtained from seventy two in-depth interviews with individual participants over a period of 6 months. Conducting in-depth interviews with people who have direct, first hand experience with the phenomenon of interest is believed to be the most effective way to gather such data (Patton 2002). Varied experiences leading to cynical behavior towards employing organization were studied in a non-manipulative and non-controlling method with no preconceived constraints on what the outcomes of the research should be.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, which served to guide but not govern the discussion. Questions were open-ended in order to provide participants with the opportunity to fully explain their experiences. Individual interviews were conducted either at a restaurant situated near the participant's organization or at his home or also in a private area, often chosen by the participant. Interviews generally lasted one hour, were tape recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Participants were made aware of the recording and transcribing procedures prior to their involvement with the study. After the interviews, memos and notes were written about questions, impressions, and feelings researcher had during the interviews.

For the in-depth interviews, availability of the informants were checked, and after mutually deciding the time and date, meetings were held. In order to maintain

the confidentiality of all recorded material, appropriate safeguards were taken to ensure that this material is protected. At the conclusion of the individual interviews, participants were asked to allow the researcher to contact them for follow-up verification of the transcription and interpretation of the data. The anonymity of the participants was protected by referring to each participant only as a *participant*. The first five minutes of each interview were devoted to developing trust and creating an informal atmosphere.

Data collection stopped at the point of "Theoretical Saturation", the point in data collection at which no new themes or insights are revealed (Flick 1998). Data collection and analysis used a thematic analysis approach to derive patterns in informants' perceptions and experiences in recruitments (Miles and Huberman, 1984). No preliminary hypotheses were offered and data was analyzed continuously to identify common themes.

### **Data Analysis**

Analysis of the data was done following the procedure recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Typed transcripts were analyzed thematically. Repeated readings of transcripts enabled successive waves of data to be condensed into coherent clusters (Miles and Huberman 1994). The data was displayed visually and systematically in a clustered matrix. Reading across the rows provided me with a brief profile of each participant and offered an initial test of the relationship between responses to different questions (Miles and Huberman *ibidem*). Reading down the columns enabled me to make comparisons between participants' responses. By analyzing the information in the matrix, conceptual or theoretical coherence was established. With respect to establishing patterns, I sought added evidence of the same theme from different participants whilst remaining open to disconfirming evidence, advice offered by Miles and Huberman (*ibidem*).

Clustering is used to better understand a phenomenon by grouping and then conceptualizing objects that have similar patterns (Miles and Huberman *ibidem*). It is the activity of conceptualizing the grouped data that takes clustering one step further in analysis than simply noting patterns. In the present study, clusters were employed around events such as experiences leading to the development of cynical attitude. After clustering was employed to group variables together logically, analysis in the present study was taken one step further.

Subsuming particulars into more general classes is a conceptual and theoretical activity (Miles and Huberman *ibidem*). By employing this technique, fewer classes of variables are obtained as a precursor to attaining theoretical coherence. Finally, the process of analyzing and interpreting data in the present study progressed to interpreting the results in light of existing theory in the field. In addition to verifying much of the existing theory in the field, further insights are also offered by the research in the form of recommendations to parties engaged in early work adjustment.

### **Trustworthiness**

Qualitative researchers endeavor to achieve what Lincoln and Guba (1985: 290) call trustworthiness in their work. They have framed the notion of trustworthiness as a question: "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?" They have presented four

criteria for the purpose of evaluating the goodness and rigor of qualitative work. The criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility, or truth-value, as defined by Maxwell (1996) is the correctness of a description, conclusion, explanation, or interpretation. Credibility is parallel to internal validity and provides assurances of the fit between respondents' views of their experiences and the researchers' reconstructions and representation of the data (Guba and Lincoln 1989). As defined by Maxwell (1996), credibility is the correctness of a description, conclusion, explanation, or interpretation. Techniques used to establish credibility of the current study included data triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking. Data triangulation included the use of multiple data sources to reach conclusions (Polit and Beck 2004). In addition to data collected during the personal interviews, field notes, as written by myself, served as another layer of data for the study. Discussion with colleagues acted as a major source in this regard. The text from all transcribed interviews were reviewed by and discussed with an experienced phenomenologist. Interview techniques I used also were reviewed by the phenomenologist. While these practices are consistent with opening up the inquiry (Cohen et al. 2000), they are also referred to as peer debriefing. This is when peers review aspects of the inquiry (Polit and Beck 2004).

Additional approaches to establishing credibility included collecting data through personal in-depth interviews, and using non-leading questions during the interviews to facilitate the expression of rich data by the informant. Audiotaping the interviews, using one interviewer to collect the data and one trained transcriptionist for transcribing the audiotapes and comparing transcribed data with the audiotapes to ensure accuracy, also aided in establishing credibility.

Transferability, parallel to external validity, addresses the issue of generalization in terms of case-to-case transfer. The findings of this study may or may not be transferable to certain other settings. Dependability was assured through planning a suitable research methodology to address the specific question posed by the study. This methodology was undertaken in a rigorous manner as planned. To establish Confirmability, rich and thick description of the setting, program, participants, procedures, and interactions were provided so that readers could understand the specified boundaries and parameters of this study. In addition, participants were allowed to read and confirm interview transcripts.

## Findings

Discussion with the participants indicates that the cynical attitude towards employing organizations developed amongst the employees due to the negative experiences while being associated with the organization. Analysis of the data uncovered varied reasons which led to the development of cynical views amongst the participants. Analysis of the interviews uncovered five main reasons behind cynicism in the organization: Poor Leadership, Organizational Politics, Decisive Culture, Accessibility of benefits and Un-met expectations. To help the readers to understand the various themes in a better way, direct quotes are used for illustration.

### ***Theme 1: Poor Leadership***

The first theme that emerged from the discussion was with reference to “Poor Leadership”, which led to the development of cynical attitude amongst the employees about their organization. Poor leadership could be understood as may be abusive, passive, aggressive, or punitive, and leaders may simply lack appropriate leadership skills. Poor leadership could be evidenced within the organization in different forms like “workplace harassment” (e.g., Rospenda 2002), “emotional abuse” (e.g., Keashly 1998, 2001), “bullying” (e.g. Einarsen 1999; Hoel et al. 1999), or simply “workplace aggression” (for a review, see Schat and Kelloway 2003). It has been also seen from leader’s passive attitude from decision making and the responsibilities associated with their position (Bass 1990; Hater and Bass 1988).

Discussion with the participants revealed that they had experienced poor leadership quality within their reporting heads.

An example is quoted as under:

Leaders in our organization set wrong examples. Our manager never comes to office on time. However he expects us to be at our desk before time. Quiet often, he takes the rules and regulations for granted and violates them..... But when anyone of us makes such mistakes, he immediately starts talking about discipline and its importance in life.

Another respondent quotes her views as under:

I feel sorry to say that our leader is of passive nature. She is not capable enough to take any decision on her own. ...for every small thing, she discusses the matter with the delivery head and then passes the decision to us. She always tries to play a safe game and whenever something wrong happens, she immediately says that it was not her decision and indirectly puts the blame on her superior. With such people at a senior level, I don't know how long this organization is going to survive.

Leadership issues were found to be one of the major causes amongst the employees leading to lower motivation level; ultimately leading to the development of cynical attitude amongst the employees.

### ***Theme 2: The Perceived Political Threat***

Meaning of politics in an organization could be conceptualized as the exercise of power to negotiate different interests among members while maintaining one’s interests in certain organizational issues. In this regard, the perceived political threat refers to the impact that the employees have in their mind when they realize that something “wrong” is happening which they are not able to understand. Such situation is created due to the politically disturbed environment prevailing in the organization. It particularly refers to the psychological hassle that goes on in the mind of the employees while working in such an environment. In a politically disturbed situation, people seemed to be quiet scared and threatened. They were very well able to sense some danger but could not pinpoint it:

Quiet often I have faced a situation where though I realized that things are not the way they appear, still it’s pretty difficult to make out what’s going

around. Things become even more complicated and threatening when we realize that our curiosity to know, enquire or comment on that matter may bring unwanted problems for us.

The perception of working in such an environment has also found to be affecting the participants psychologically:

Often, such an environment in the organization has given unnecessary tensions to me. Many times, I feel scared and really do not understand what to do. Most importantly, many a times, I am not able to make out as what is actually going around and that too what for. I get really disturbed because of this and am not able to sleep at night.

Respondents shared that they not only had to go under immense stress and pressure under such a situation but also they did not know what to do. According to them, it was an invisible attack, which they could only sense but could not do anything, but suffer. This made them feel even more uneasy and scared. Some of the participants agree to the fact that such people, who are involved in organizational politics, get a kind of label and are known for that. Being involved in politics had developed mixed feelings amongst the participants against the players:

Look... I know that "Roy" (name changed) is a useless fellow.... what does he do other than sitting at the boss's chamber and gossiping useless things for hours. Most of the time, I do the work, which he is supposed to do. Still I have to support him and be in good terms as when I am in need of getting some help, which too out of the way... he is the only person who can help. He has that capability.

Such experiences led to the development of cynical behavior amongst the employees. These employees were found to be helpless and victims of the prevailing politics within their organization. This not only created fear in the minds of the employees ultimately leading to a high amount of mental stress.

### ***Theme 3: Decisive Culture***

Every organization wishes to be called as a value based organization, having an open and transparent culture. However, how far the organization is actually value based and is open in terms of its cultural aspects, is an area of concern; leading to the generation of the next theme i.e. "Decisive Culture".

Discussion with the participants reveals that the organizations talk a lot about the prevalence and promotion of Open culture and being a value based organization. However, while working with the organization, the employees experience the decisiveness of the prevailing culture. An example is quoted as under:

The buzz word of today's organizations is to talk about 'value based organization', 'ethics', 'corporate values', ...etc...Our operations manager always talks about 'following the value system at all times'....BUT actually this does not happen every time. At critical times, when he finds that it is difficult for him to get a business from the client, in joint consultation with the top management, he uses all means to get the project .... At that time he has only one thing in mind...i.e. to get the business by any means.

Another respondent quotes as under:

We have an open door policy in this organization where anybody can approach the management and point the prevailing inefficiencies and give recommendations for improving the same. However, my experience in this organization has been quiet opposite. When I tried to point out some of the prevailing inefficiencies existing in this organization and gave some suggestions to improve the same, I was informally warned to concentrate on my work only and nothing else!

It was understood that the open culture was the term quiet often used by the organization to create a hyped image. However, in reality, the employees had opposite experiences which made them realize the decisiveness of the prevailing culture, reducing their level of enthusiasm and spirit, ultimately leading to the development of cynical attitude.

#### ***Theme 4: Accessibility of Benefits***

Tough competition and societal pressure for the introduction of family friendly work practices have led to an increased demand for availability of a gamut of family friendly work practices within the I.T organizations. However, how far these available practices are actually accessible, has led to the generation of the next theme, which is termed as accessibility of the available family friendly work practices. Discussion with the participants revealed that their organization has introduced quite a number of family friendly work practices. Some of them, for example, are: Parental Leave, Work from home, Saturday and Sunday off, Job sharing, Paid leave at a short notice, Work place nursery, a short vacation after the completion of a long project etc... However, how far these available benefits are actually accessible is a concern for some of the participants, leading to the development of negative views about their organization. One such experience has been narrated as under:

I have been continuously working on this project since the last three months without any breaks. Since we do not have adequate number of team members, our work load has doubled. Hence, to do that, we have to come on weekends also. Our company boasts of two days holiday in a week...BUT actually are they accessible....I don't think so!

Another respondent quotes as under:

We have the provision of going on a short vacation (around 1 week) after the completion of a long project. Till now, I have completed 3 critical projects one after the other....but still have not got the short paid vacation even for once. Every time before our project is complete; another is ready in the pipeline to be executed. Since I am the only person with such project execution experience, I am not able to avail leave even for my personal life. These things were not conveyed to me at the time of my recruitment. Now I realize them one by one. This is really absurd.

Discussion with the participants revealed that the problem of accessibility of the available benefits were largely due to inadequate team size causing extra burden on the existing team members. While during the selection process, the organization did all its best to highlight the available family friendly work practices, creating a hyped image of the organization, however, not a single word was mentioned about their accessibility. Once after joining the organization, when the employees confront the realities, it created negative impression about the organization leading to the feeling of distrust.

## Theme 5: Unmet Expectations

“Unmet expectations” refer to the high expectations that the candidates had developed from the image that the organization had portrayed to them and the big promises that they had made during the time of their recruitment, which were not met as per their (employees’) expectations. The unmet expectations had been experienced by the employees in different ways as mentioned below:

### *Phony designation*

“Phony Designation” refers to the situation where the employee feels that the designation of the job given to them is superior as compared to the profile of the job. This is a case when the title of the job position speaks “dynamic” about the nature of the job, however, when actually doing the job, the employee feels nothing as such. Discussion with the participants indicated that they were highly impressed with the designation that they were offered and hence, accordingly, they were made big promises about the nature of the job. However, while actually working on the job they realized that the profile was much lower as compared to the designation that they were holding. An example has been narrated below:

I am working in this organization as a ‘Sr. Research Analyst’...doesn’t it sound great....but actually since the last six months, I have not done any type of research or analysis. ..I am still waiting to do any such kind of work. I simply collect the data and arrange /segregate them as per requirement. Is this what a Sr. Research analyst does...? I think this company has actually made me a data entry coordinator!

Discussion with the participants indicated that the designation given to them didn’t make much sense as they felt them to be phony; reducing their level of morale. This made them feel inferior when asked about the nature of their job. Participants felt that, somewhere, the organization had not done justice with them by portraying a hyped image of the job profile and giving them a phony designation, which actually had little or no relevance with the actual nature of job. This led to the development of some kind of negative feeling about the organization amongst the participants.

### *Difference in Salary*

“Difference in Salary” refers to the employee’s expected salary, as per the commitment made by the organization and the actual salary that they receive. Discussion with the participants revealed that some of them experienced a shock when they came to know the actual salary they got at the end of the first month. This difference in expected vs. the actual salary was due to the lack of proper communication between the organization and the employee. It was understood that when a job applicant negotiates his/her salary with the organization (i.e. before joining) he/she presumes that the negotiated salary would be his/her actual salary (i.e. the net salary that the candidate is going to get at the end of every month) whereas, the company talks in terms of ‘cost to the company’ (i.e. C.T.C); which is the aggregate amount that the company spends on the candidate and not the net amount that the candidate is going to get at the end of the month. Discussion with the participants revealed that the gap between the expected and the actual salary was because of some of the components in the salary structure which inflates the salary figure. However, in reality, these components are not disbursed at the end of the

month. One such component is 'the performance incentive'. An example is quoted as under:

When the company negotiated the salary with me, it spoke in terms of my cost to the company. They included my performance incentive which is approx. one third of my salary. Now...an important aspect of the performance incentive is that you get this amount at the end of the year, after your appraisal. This amount is variable and subject to your performance. But while calculating your C.T.C, the company considers the full amount of incentive. Secondly, if you leave the company in between, you lose the incentive of those many months. Don't you think that the company should have explained all these jugglery to me at the time of my recruitment...? They tell me all these things when I get my first salary, which is 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the expected salary, that too when I ask them the reason of this difference!

It was understood that such problems occurred because of the improper communication during the salary negotiation between the organization and the candidate. Since the company is always in a hurry to fill the vacant position, at times, it neglects these important aspects to discuss with the prospective candidates and at other times, the HR/recruiter themselves are not completely aware of them. These things not only created uneasiness amongst the participants but also led to development of withdrawal behavior.

#### *Limited Scope for Growth*

"Limited scope for Growth" in the present context refers to the situation when the employees realize that their career goals cannot be achieved in the present organization. During the discussion, it was understood that in order to attract a good candidate, the organizations made big promises of showing a very bright future and a very dynamic career growth to the prospective applicant. However, on the basis of the hyped image, thus created, when a candidate joins the organization and realizes the limited scope of growth in his/her domain area of specialization, he/she gets a reality shock. An example has been quoted as under:

I am specialized in the field of networking and wish to build a career in the same area. While joining this organization, I was told that I am going to have a dynamic career and have very bright prospects in this organization. However, within three months of joining, I realized that in my area, I have a very limited scope of growth in this organization. In the field of networking, I could grow only upto a certain level and not beyond that. Though our organization requires networking professionals; it is not a domain expert in my field. If I had been told about this during the time of my interview, probably, I would have not joined this organization. I think I have made a big mistake"

It was understood that once the organization realized the potential of the prospective candidate, it made every effort to make that candidate join the organization, however, in this process they ignored their moral responsibility of informing the different aspects of the candidate's job profile which he/she is supposed to do and the growth opportunities within the organization. Non fulfillment of this responsibility led to the development of inflated image of the job profile creating high expectations amongst the applicants. However, on joining the

organization, their confrontation with the reality gave them the feeling of being cheated.

## **Discussion and Implication**

The aim of this study was exploring the reasons which lead to the development of cynical views amongst the employees about their organization. The exploration of causes reveals that employees develop cynical attitude towards their organization on the basis of the experiences that they have while being associated with the same. These and other findings suggest that generating greater insights into the various facets of organizational cynicism with specific reference to the I.T industry in the Indian scenario is important for both the development of knowledge regarding constructs of organizational cynicism and conceptualizing contemporary organizational life.

Till date, studies on organizational cynicism has been largely on, for instance, due to broken promises leading to perceptions of psychological contract violation or breach (Abraham 2000; Andersson 1996; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly 2003; Pugh et al. 2003), organizational politics in which power play and self-serving behavior may go at the expense of uprightness (Davis and Gardner 2004), the feeling of being disregarded by the organization and not being treated with respect and dignity (O'Brien et al. 2004), the absence of meaning in work (Cartwright and Holmes 2006), a lack of sincere participation in decision making processes and the absence of genuine support by management (Fleming 2005; O'Brien et al. 2004; Wanous et al. 2000), the deficient quality of leader-member exchange (Bommer et al. 2005; Cole et al. 2006; Davis and Gardner 2004), a history of failed change attempts (Reichers et al. 1997; Wanous et al. 1994, 2000, 2004) and everyday workplace events and practices such as high executive compensation, restructurings, downsizings and layoffs (Abraham 2000; Andersson 1996; Andersson and Bateman 1997; Bateman et al. 1992). However, these have been largely focusing on the American and European organizations in the manufacturing setup and have been quantitative by nature. Against this, in the present study, I have tried to highlight the causes of employee cynicism in the Indian context with specific reference to the I.T industry using qualitative methods.

This is an important contribution because the existing research provides a general overview of all the sectors and not I.T industry specifically as such. Since, in India, I.T industry has brought a revolution in developing the Indian economy, understanding the employees' perception towards organizational cynicism increases the importance of this study. Previous research has already highlighted the adverse consequences of employee cynicism. Most frequently mentioned are affective and behavioral consequences, such as a decrease in organizational commitment, motivation and job satisfaction (Abraham 2000; Goldner et al. 1977; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly 2003; Reichers et al. 1997; Turner and Valentine 2001; Urbany 2005; Wanous et al. 1994, 2000), an increase in suspicion, distrust and contempt of the organization (Kanter and Mirvis 1989, 1991; Reichers et al. 1997; Thompson et al. 2000), and other forms of psychological disengagement and detachment (Andersson 1996; Feldman 2000; Fleming 2005; Guastello et al. 1992; O'Brien et al. 2004; O'Leary 2003). Hence, understanding the antecedents of Organizational cynicism in the Indian context will help the organizational forerunners and business leaders to take proactive measures in order to curb the same.

Since one of the striking aspects of India's recent speedy growth has been the dynamism of the service sector, particularly information technology (I.T) industry, this industry has been considered as the prime helping in the growth and development of India (see Nasscom 2003). However, the I.T industry in the Indian sector has also been found to be known for its high attrition rate (as high as 30 percent at the junior programmer level according to the "NASSCOM-Hewitt total Rewards Study 2005"). Hence, exploring the employee perceptions of organizational cynicism in the I.T industry becomes crucial as this will inform organizational literature and management practice in important ways.

A key contribution of this study is the provision of empirical insights into the causes that lead to the formation of cynical views amongst the I.T professionals. It further adds the dimension of "Decisive culture", and "Accessibility of benefits" as a construct of organizational cynicism.

Analysis of the data revealed that poor leadership quality in the I.T organizations was one of the significant causes of cynicism in the present context. Previous research has highlighted the shortage of qualified I.T professionals in the Indian scenario. In such a situation it is logical to understand that the I.T organizations have no option but to compromise with the low quality of available professionals for their vacant positions at senior level and tend to put the most suitable amongst the available person in those positions. This ultimately has led to the filling of vacant positions by less capable persons; causing unrest and dissatisfaction amongst the employees. Since, previous research has already shown that poor leaders rely on the laissez-faire style to avoid decision making and the responsibilities associated with their position (Bass 1990; Hater and Bass 1988), this may be a source of employee stress (see Podsakoff et al. 1996) and retaliation (Townsend, Phillips, and Elkins 2000) ultimately resulting in cynical behavior (e.g. see Cole et al. 2006; Stanley et al. 2005; Bommer et al. 2005; Davis and Gardner 2004; Wanous et al. 2004, 2000; Reichers et al. 1997); hence, my present findings support the previous results obtained in different settings.

The prevalence of organizational politics was found to be another important reason which led to the development of cynical attitude amongst the I.T professionals. Such a climate created fear and distrust amongst the employees ultimately leading to helplessness and formation of cynical views about the employer organization. Similar results have been also observed by other researchers in various other contexts ( e.g. see Davis and Gardner 2004; Ferris et al. 2002; Abraham 2000; Dean et al. 1998; Andersson and Bateman 1997; Andersson 1996; Kanter and Mirvis 1989). Hence, these findings strengthen the results of previous research and further add the Indian I.T industry.

Unmet expectations were found to be a third reason leading to cynicism amongst the employees. Three different causes were found that could be covered under this construct. The first could be referred to as "*phony designation*". It was understood that in some of the cases, the organizations had given such a designation to the employee that did not have much relevance with the actual job profile. Such phony designations created a feeling of inferiority amongst the employees while discussing their roles with others.

The second reason was relating to the "*salary difference*" that the employees experienced after receiving their first salary. It was understood that the organization, while negotiating the salary with the prospective applicant, did not explain all the components of the salary in detail. Some of the components in the salary structure were paid annually and that too on the basis of performance. Other components such as petrol allowance, mobile expenses etc. were included in the salary structure,

which the employees got for doing company's work. Such components unnecessarily inflated the salary figure. In absence of proper communication during the time of recruitment, the employee perceived them to be a part of their monthly salary, leading to reality shocking experience after getting the first month's salary.

The third reason explored was relating to the realization of the "*limited scope of career growth*" for the employees. Discussion with the participants revealed that the organizations made big promises relating to their career growth within the organization, during their recruitment process. However, after spending some time with the organization, these employees realized that the scope of their growth in the organization was limited only to a certain extent. This realization gave them a shocking experience leading to the development of the view of their career getting blocked.

Decisive nature of the prevailing organizational culture was found to be yet another construct leading to the formation of cynical views amongst the I.T professionals, which was presumed to be open and value based. However, with passage of time, the employees realized that the prevailing culture was pretty decisive by nature. It was understood that though the organization spoke a lot about the prevalence of open culture and promoting prevalence of the same, however in reality, the employees had opposite experiences, leaving them with the impression of everything being fake.

Lastly, another important construct identified during the study was relating to accessibility of the available benefits given by the I.T organizations to its employees. It was understood that the I.T companies had implemented a number of family friendly work practices for its employees, which they very successfully propagated to attract job applicants. However, in reality, how far those available benefits were actually accessible was an area of concern for some. Due to tight project schedules in combination with inadequate team size, the I.T professionals were found not able to use those benefits. This made them feel these work practices to be superficial, leading to reduced job satisfaction. They perceived them to be like a mirage, having no significance in reality. These findings may be a manifestation of the research focus adopted. This study has tried to highlight the fact that employees are highly sensitive to their work environment and their views and perceptions get influenced by the culture prevailing in the organization. These finding suggest that the I.T professionals are not simply passive agents or chattels, but rather instrumental and deliberately self seeking.

This study has also tried to focus some light on the work culture of Indian organizations. Previous research on work culture of Indian organizations has already shown the presence of "fulfilling social obligation by giving undue favor" (e.g. Sahay and Walsham 1997; Sinha 1997), "preference for personalized relationship" (e.g. Kanungo and Mendonka 1996), "presence of checks and balances which slow down decision making" and "adaptation to social circumstances" (Narain 1990). Kanungo and Mendonca (1996: 283) mention that the environment of developing countries are characterized by high complexity due to presence of heterogeneous elements, low predictability due to presence of unstable and turbulent elements and low munificence due to the scarcity of needed resources. Monitory form of compensation and job security are therefore highly valued by Indian employees (Gopalan and Rivera 1997). Sinha et al. (2004) have identified the impact of societal culture on organizational culture in India. They found four major pan Indian societal dimensions: hypocrisy, corruption, inaction and respect for power. Three dimensions: quick rich disposition, non-work orientation and face keeping were differently endorsed at different location. Infrastructural facilities have sweeping impact on societal,

organizational and managerial dimensions of beliefs, preferences and practices. People from infra-structurally adequate place rated themselves, the people and the organization more positively. Hence, the results of the present study extend to work of the previous findings by adding varied reasons which ultimately lead to the formation of cynical attitude amongst the employees towards their organization.

On a more practical level, this study also raises implications that are directly relevant to human resource practitioners, organizational decision makers and I.T professionals.

Firstly, the organization should focus on having transcendental leaders. Previous literature has shown the impact and importance of leadership in such type of organizations (e.g. Bass and Avolio 1993; Bass 1990; Kotter and Heskett 1992). Specifically, this research adds to the picture by a weak leadership with negative implications, affecting the morale of the employees. While the leadership style followed in the case organizations was found to be of passive nature having a very poor insight and poor follower acceptability. Leaders with greater amount of dynamism are found to be needed in the present state of the organization who could have higher acceptance amongst the team members.

Secondly, In order to have a control over the political environment prevailing in the organization, management should encourage equity and transparency and promote a culture of organizational support amongst the employees. Earlier research has demonstrated how politics in organizations can be helpful for members of the organization and for its strategic decisions. (e.g. Kumar and Ghadially 1989). Concurrently, the human resource department should adopt a proactive approach in implementing performance based career growth and succession planning. This not only helps in strengthening employer employee relationship but also motivates employees to focus on productive activities, leading to growth of the organization. Emphasis should focus on motivating managers and above to discourage such activities and providing juniors with equal opportunities, discouraging politically motivated actions. Induction programs should clearly state that such behaviors are not encouraged or rewarded.

Thirdly, since salary is one of the most important aspects for an employee, the organization should be very careful and transparent about explaining all components of the salary structure in a detailed manner to the prospective employee, leaving no confusion about the same.

During the interviews conducted with applicants, realistic job previews should be presented. These previews should emphasize the nature of the duties to be performed and a clear message should be sent to the applicant around the volume of paperwork required. If possible, shortlist candidates should be demonstrated a brief overview of the nature of job. Similarly, the designations given by the organizations should be according to the content or profile of the job.

A comprehensive profile of the individual's career aims compared with the organization's goals may reveal potential congruence between the two. Strong evidence from this research indicates that the good financial rewards on offer from the organization are not always the most valued aspect of work for I.T professionals who primarily seek challenging tasks and a defined career path.

Fourthly, the organizations should not only preach about the prevalence of a free and open culture but also try to implement the same in order to get maximum output from their employees. The advantages of having an open culture have already been proved in previous researches. Similarly, the family friendly work practices should not only be available to the employees instead, they should also be made

accessible to them. The benefits should be designed in such a manner so that the employees can get the most out of them.

These approaches may require changes in disciplinary codes. While such changes may prove an effective means of increasing employee morale, I recognize that such issues are likely to be difficult to both implement and police.

## Limitations

This study has number of limitations that should be highlighted. In particular, two restrictions deserve individual mention. First, the research design was explanatory and descriptive in nature. While this approach has allowed us to illuminate and more clearly define the concepts and constructs involved in organizational cynicism, the nature of the design precludes causal claims. The evidence from the interviews strongly indicates that I.T professionals, human resource managers and project heads all believe that such factors eventually lead to lower job satisfaction, lack of commitment, alienation, and negative citizenship behavior which has been highlighted in previous research (see e.g. Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly 2003; Abraham 2000; Reichers et al. 1997; Andersson and Bateman 1997; Wanous et al. 1994). Thus, although this research precludes causal claims, the presented empirical evidence and extant theory is sufficient to enable us tentatively to suggest the existence of such association.

This study is also limited to the extent that I had to rely on informants' past experiences, perceptions and self-reporting. As with all studies that rely on informants I am unable, conclusively to exclude the possibility that informants (intentionally or otherwise) supplied inaccurate or misleading responses (either for the reason of social desirability bias or simply to conceal other acts). Although I designed this research to limit such bias, the possibility of such issues must be acknowledged.

Second, the focus of this study has primarily been on the employee's perception of organizational cynicism with specific reference to the I.T industry in the Indian scenario and not on the overall industry's perception as a whole, as conventionally discussed in the literature. (e.g. Eisenberger et al. 1986). Although I feel that such an approach has generated deep, rich and interesting insights into these phenomena, this focus limits the extent to which I am able to comment on the full range of factors leading to employee cynicism in the Indian context. Similarly, I am unable to comment validly on the antecedents of cynicism with specifics to the I.T industry. Such issues require further research which, given the likely time lags, is unlikely to be coming for a number of years.

The limitations and contributions of the study lead to a number of potentially fertile opportunities for further research. While this research has described many interesting factors, the research design adopted limits my results and the contributions of my work. In particular, although the research design and methods develop rich insights, the extent to which these results could be empirically generalized is constrained by the selected context of the research. As stated by Brantlinger et. al. (2005: 203), "qualitative research is not done for purposes of generalization, but rather to produce evidence based on the exploration of specific context and particular individuals". Hence, in this regard, further research in varying context is needed to gauge the generalizability of the insights gained in the current study. The methodological approach may also have constrained the findings. That is, I uncover five causes primarily leading to employee cynicism in the I.T industry using

qualitative methods. Thus, further studies wishing to extend my findings may benefit the adoption of quantitative methods of data collection. Further, I believe that it would be advantageous to adopt a different approach in future studies by exploring these phenomena over a longer period, probably involving data collection at numerous points in time. Such an approach should yield valuable insights into not only the determinants of organizational cynicism but also of the relationship of particular determinant with respect to the organizational cynicism in any particular industry. While the current study supplies evidence on the causes that lead to development of cynical behavior, further research could explore the intensity of these identified factors, measuring the impact of each of these factors on the I.T professionals; helping the management of these organizations to take immediate corrective actions against those first. Without further study, such issues will remain speculative, so I strongly urge my colleagues to pursue this topic.

It is hoped that the present results contribute not only valuable insights into perceptions of employee cynicism in the I.T industry, but also provide a tentative starting point towards the greater understanding of the employees' behavior and perceived notions with regards to organizational cynicism.

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## *Qualitative Sociology Review – Book Reviews*

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### Book Review:

Coming home: Media and Returning Diaspora in Israel and Germany,  
by Nelly Elias. State University New York Press, Albany, New York 2008

The book by Nelly Elias entitled “Coming home. Media and returning Diaspora in Israel and Germany” is a comparative study of two groups of immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU). It is based on qualitative approach that is 100 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Russian speaking immigrants who emigrated from FSU between years 1993-2003. In each country there were conducted 50 interviews (p.10). Besides, the author presents in-depth analysis of socio-demographic and cultural features of each group as well as describes immigrants adaptation strategies influenced by local policy of each host country.

The declared topic of the book is “comparison between media consumption patterns of Russian – speaking immigrants in Israel and Germany” (p.7). Indeed the author systematically describes first the development of Russian-language media in Israel and Germany and then media in the life of returning Diaspora in Israel and in Germany. These two chapters have symmetrical construction: at the beginning the author characterizes social and cultural patterns of adaptation among FSU immigrants in each country. These patterns, constructed both by immigrants themselves and the host society, influence immigrants’ attitude towards acquisition of home-country language as well as strategies of adapting in new environment. As a result, immigrants focus their attention on these media, which in the best way fulfill their needs. Therefore the author in each chapter begins from presenting the most popular media and she gradually moves on towards the least popular. Thus, Israeli immigrants prefer to watch Russian TV channels, read Russian language newspapers, read Russian books and finally, listen to Russian radio. Although they understand the necessity of learning Hebrew, at the same time they do not feel pressure to acquaint it by rejecting their mother tongue. The immigrants’ attitude is supported by contemporary Israeli integration ideology that promotes cultural pluralism. Thus, Russian immigrants (it should be added that most of investigated persons had academic degrees – about 70%) realize the need of cultivating their culture of origin and the language skills are defined here as one of important items of the cultural heritage. However it does not mean that they do not identify themselves with the Israeli state and the Jewish identity. On the contrary, when preserving their own culture at the same time they strongly identify with their new (old) homeland – “Israel is a Jewish country. Therefore it is our country” (p.43). This fact can be well recognized in FSU immigrants attitude towards Hebrew media that are much more difficult to deal with. Nevertheless the immigrants try to follow Hebrew news reels and political programmes especially in face of important political and local events like e.g.

*Aqsa Intifada*. In such case they appreciate Hebrew media estimating them as more objective and better describing difficult situation of Israel state than the Russian media.

In case of FSU immigrants to Germany the situation is quite different as the integration ideology is. Immigrants with German descent repatriating themselves to Germany are expected to totally and effectively assimilate with the German society. German language is in this process one of the most important means. Therefore FSU immigrants reject their Russian cultural roots and especially Russian language skills which they identify as an obstacle in the process of successful assimilation (here the Author associates this strategy also with the level of education, in the investigated group only 17% had academic degrees). As a result FSU immigrants in Germany prefer German media, especially German TV channels, newspapers and books, sometimes radio and they limit their contacts with Russian media in order not to be influenced by the Russian language. Nevertheless this situation causes some paradoxes. Firstly, FSU immigrants have problems with integration as they are labeled by locals as Russians or newcomers and not homecomers. Secondly, the more they get involved in modern German culture the less they identify with it, defining it as full of low values and commercial patterns. As a result although they feel Germans they do not identify themselves with the German society and culture.

Due to the lack of space I have referred just to the main research results reported by the author in details and supported by number of interviews' quotations illustrating each step of the analysis. Nelly Elias presents the results of her research in a very interesting way, but in my opinion it is not the only reason to find the book as an important source of information and research analysis. Although media seem to be the main theme of the book, for me they are just a pretext to discuss such socially and theoretically important problems as: integration ideologies and their consequences, attitudes of a host society towards homecomers and vice versa, problems of being defined as a stranger or a homecomer etc. Nelly Elias' book delivers material to investigate these problems both in theoretical context and in relation to social history of a certain society, here the German and Israeli one.

In the case of German society, the book shows contradictions between the policy of assimilation due to *Jus sanguinis* criterion and FSU immigrants reception by the German society. German immigrants are identified as those who try to pass as Germans whereas they represent other, alien, culture. It would be worth comparing this situation with other immigrants in Germany e.g. the Turkish ones who cannot benefit from the right of blood criterion. Such contradictions involve general questions about social and cultural consequences of integration strategies.

As for the Israeli society, the study shows social history of following waves of immigration – *Aliyah* constituting the Israeli state and its society. On the basis of these findings we may observe how Israeli integration ideology has changed and what are the consequences of this shift. When Israeli state was in the process of establishing the dominant strategy of assimilation by no means made Jewish immigrants from different parts of the World (but mostly from Europe) lose their cultural roots very often together with their language skills. Post-war ideology aimed to reject social and biographical background and build a new society based on common values related to the myth of *Eretz Israel*. Nowadays Israel promotes the politics of cultural pluralism and FSU immigrants can benefit from it by cultivating their cultural roots.

We should consider that the shift from assimilation to multiculturalism seems to be a general strategy of integration ideology within most of West European countries. Nelly Elias' study inspires to put questions about universal and particular (that is

culturally and socially contextualized) features of this process in relation to problem of contemporary migrations within Europe. Therefore the book may be interesting not only for those scholars who study German or Israeli societies but also for those who analyze processes of migration and assimilation, especially (although not only) in the European context.

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# *Qualitative Sociology Review – Book Reviews*

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## Book Review:

Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences,  
edited by Ruth Wodak and Michał Krzyżanowski. Palgrave Macmillan,  
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire 2008

The new book released by the scholars from Lancaster University and the University of Vienna, who are grouped around the renowned critical discourse analyst Ruth Wodak, is a very **useful** and **timely** position within the burgeoning writing on discourse analysis. The structure of the book is well suited to didactic purposes, and the concise and well formatted chapters containing much illustrative material makes the presentation lucid. Several key ideas and concepts of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (such as discourse, text, context, genre and the like) are elegantly and comprehensively presented by Ruth Wodak in the introductory chapter. Eight chapters that follow the introduction can be viewed as a mosaic of CDA applications diversified with regard to:

- 1) discipline within which CDA methods are applied (e.g. communication studies, political science, and sociology),
- 2) research material (oral and written, verbal and visual, formal and informal talk and text and the like), and
- 3) methods (corpora analysis, conversational analysis, rhetoric analysis and visual discourse analysis).

Since the book's main purpose is to serve as a textbook of discourse analysis for undergraduate and graduate students, it is worthwhile to discuss several methodological and theoretical points that the book's content and structure instigate.

The first basic point that needs considering, is whether discourse analysis (DA) is rather a set of methods or a broader theoretical and methodological framework. In the book the editors and several authors emphasize that they consider the DA in trans-disciplinary terms. Thus they would rather see it as a framework, which has an ambitious goal of making social sciences rethinking their ontological and epistemological underpinnings. At the same time, a skeptical reader might disagree that this feature is unique to discourse analysis. The **linguistic turn** started to have a perceivable influence in social sciences in the 1960 and 1970. The changes instigated by the reception of the works of linguistic structuralists such as Ferdinand de Saussure, analytical philosophers interested in language, such as John Austin or Ludwig Wittgenstein, have led social sciences into a variety of directions. Not to mention originally sociological approaches that emphasized the role of language and linguistic cognition (e.g. microsociology of Erving Goffman or ethnomethodology of Harold Garfinkel). In other words, the claim of discourse analysis for being a unique

trans-disciplinary approach emphasizing the role of language in the construction of social reality should be qualified.

Discourse analytical approach is indisputably one of the outcomes (or by-products) of the linguistic turn in social sciences. In parallel, it is a consequence of the interest in text and talk that the linguistics demonstrated in the second part of XX century. The simple fact that discourse analysis draws attention of social scientists to interaction and meaning does not make it unique. What seems to be an “added value” of discourse analysis (critical discourse analysis, in particular) as a trans-disciplinary approach in its own right is its problem-oriented character. It makes DA instrumental in addressing complex problems of contemporary societies and creatively engaging in a wide range of theoretical and normative debates. Another characteristic feature of discourse analysis is its ability to address mass communication and politically produced texts as research material. Thus DA allows transcending the limits of microsociological or ethnographic approaches that concentrate primarily on “naturally occurring conversation” or situations of face-to-face interaction. This feature is a double edged sword and can be seen as both strong and weak point of DA (I will return to this point later in the section on context).

The book is a proposal for such social sciences as sociology, political science, international relations, and perhaps history. The authors of the book have applied the theoretical categories of some of these **disciplines** in their analysis (e.g. the concept of populism from political sciences in the chapter by Martin Reisigl). At the same time, the book signals that not all paradigms within these disciplines are receptive to discourse analysis to the same extent. In other words, within the disciplines there are niches, in which discourse analysis finds applications, such as qualitative sociology or political theory (e.g. discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe). In international relations, and especially in the field of European Studies, although perhaps not a mainstream, discourse analysis is present and one can even speak of different approaches to DA (e.g. Copenhagen School on International Relations or Governance School). Discourse analysis is less welcome in empirical political science which has its rigid methodological requirements stemming from a particular epistemological premises it relies on. For instance, one issue of *Qualitative Methods* (2004), an American Political Science Association Newsletter, was devoted to the juxtaposition of discourse and content analysis. Most of the participants emphasized that though political scientists deal widely with text and oral communication, DA is not a well established research framework and other methodologies, e.g. content analysis, or frame analysis are more wide spread. Thus, the question that supersedes the frameworks of the “Qualitative Discourse Analysis...”, but seems highly relevant for further investigation of the role of discourse analysis in and for social sciences is: are the modes of reception (and more broadly modes or trans- and inter-disciplinarity) institutionally, epistemologically, or otherwise conditioned?

The textbook openly declares its epistemological underpinnings by introducing the word “**qualitative**” in the title. It is thus not likely to draw attention of positivistically minded social scientists, and at the same time it is appealing to social scientists sharing an interpretative or constructivist paradigm. Simultaneously, the title contains a declaration that there is more than one way of doing DA and the field is vast enough to differentiate between (qualitative and quantitative) approaches. I consider this an important message and an opening of the discussion on the appropriate methods of discourse analysis for interpretative and positivistic social sciences respectively.

Turning to more particular points that the textbook triggers, this issue of **context** appears to be of vital importance for DA. According to several authors of the volume

the theoretical rationale and methods of incorporating context into DA framework deserve particular attention. In much DA research context seems to be incommensurable to the sample of texts analyzed, the decisions for including some parts of the context and not others seem rather arbitrary. In the introductory chapter Ruth Wodak emphasizes that the concept of “context” has utmost importance for DA, she also mentions that beginners find it difficult to properly position it, since the very concept is polysemic in DA. What is more, context has a variety of functions (e.g. in Chapter 4 “Analyzing TV Documents” by Alexander Pollak, context is related to production and reception *intentions* and *expectations* (towards TV documentaries), and not solely to some of the social and political underpinning of their production (pp. 77-78, cf. 92-93).

Virtually all the authors of the book grapple with the concept of context demonstrating the possible understandings and practical ways of dealing with the context in DA research. For instance, Martin Reisigl in Chapter 5 “Analyzing Political Rhetoric” devotes a separate section to the context pointing to the necessity of defining context through time, actors, genres and fields involved in social communicative practice (pp. 103-104). Greg Myers in Chapter 6 “Analyzing Interaction in Broadcast Debates” pays attention to intertextuality and situationality of discourse thus making these categories crucial to defining the scope of contextual data (pp. 124-126). Several of the authors mention that they present only a snippet of the actual research, for the limitations of the article’ size do not allow them for more details to be included. The discussions of context demonstrate that discourse analysis is still searching for the ways of more effective and methodologically accurate accounting for the context.

On the other hand, the discussions on the context presented in the volume indicate that monograph is probably the best format for a piece of discourse analytical research, which in this sense becomes very similar to an ethnographic study. The possible interactions between discourse analysis and **anthropological** paradigm are still understudied, although in interdisciplinary fields, such as organization research, these analytical frameworks have often been going “hand in hand” (e.g. Kostera 2003). Chapter 9 on the relations between DA and ethnography by Florian Oberhuber and Michał Krzyżanowski is an intriguing attempt of directly addressing this issue by the scholars working in CDA. The authors aim at connecting “thick description” (Geertz 1973) that is obtainable through participant (or non-participant) observation of organizational routines with the detailed attention to how interaction is discursively constructed. Two questions that stem from the reading of this chapter are worth noting since they are also relevant to other chapters (e.g. Chapter 7 “Analyzing Research Interviews” by Jackie Abell and Greg Myers and Chapter 8 “Analyzing Focus Group Discussions” by Michał Krzyżanowski).

First question refers to whether the choice of the material to be analyzed by DA methods (oral vs. written communication) affects the conceptual framework of the study. Does the choice of oral communication makes the research more actor-oriented, while concentrating on written documents lead to more structure oriented optics? On the one hand, organizations – that are presented as a field of research in Chapter 9 – are written cultures, much of their products are various types of written genres, from a promotional leaflet to business meeting minutes to logo and the like. On the other hand, researchers of organization have shown that informal interaction – i.e. oral discourse – matters much in organizational functioning (e.g. Czarniawska 1997). It seems that the choice of oral or written is not theory-blind decision. Much of oral discourse analysis demonstrate the flexibility of structure and potency of social

actors while written discourse analysis demonstrate the power of structures and limitations they impose on individual and group subjectivities.

The second question is of a rather different nature and refers to ethical (or ideological) underpinnings in the choice of a site for ethnography by a discourses analyst. "Studying up" coined and first advocated by Laura Nader (1974) and later developed by other anthropologists (e.g. Wedel et al. 2005) has caused some tensions in anthropology as a discipline for, unlike studying marginalized subaltern groups, it suggested looking at elites. Thus the air of social advocacy inherent in many of anthropological studies (in American cultural anthropology, in particular) gives way to a more critical approach to the subjects of the study, especially in the case of powerful organizations, e.g. police, European Commission and the like. Therefore, when a critical discourse analyst thinks about doing ethnographic research, is it a coincidence or a rule that more powerful organizations will be considered as potential sites? Since aiming at bettering and/or eliminating of unjust social practices is one of the critical analysis main goals this seems highly likely.

Yet another more particular issue refers to the "**tool-kit**" of critical discourse analysis. For instance, Chapter 2 "Analyzing Newspapers, Magazines and Other Print Media" by Gerlinde Mautner, presents a set of analytical instruments that are almost classical to CDA. These include the categories of transitivity, modality and argumentative strategy. It seems that there exists a set of linguistic categories that CDA researchers most eagerly use in their analysis. This is partly due to the nature of these categories (they are usually linguistic categories that indicate the relation of linguistic phenomenon to social – or more broadly – non-linguistic reality – phenomenon). Although it might be an enterprise bearing a risk of limiting the field, it is perhaps worthwhile to construct a vocabulary (or grammar) of such categories for the beginners who would like to get the first insights into the methodology.

The volume does not attempt presenting such a "grammar" (although it contains a very useful glossary of the key terms, pp. 204-208), rather it draws readers' attention to a variety of the research possibilities that the framework of discourse analysis is capable of opening. The authors and editors avoid limiting the field, their aim is to promulgate the discursive reflexivity and discourse analytical skills as widely as possible in social sciences. Not only through its content, but also through the clear structure, graphically emphasized mnemonic and didactic devices and selections of basic and recommended literature to particular chapters, the volume will perfectly fulfill the role of a **textbook** of CDA and will be instrumental in promoting discourse analytical framework in the academic institutions.

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# *Qualitative Sociology Review – Book Reviews*

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## Book Review:

Theory and Methods in Sociology. An Introduction to Sociological Thinking and Practice, by John A. Hughes and W.W. Sharrock.  
Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills 2007

According to the intention declared by the Authors, this book should help to *write a text which better combines sociological theory and method than hitherto*. John A. Hughes and W. W. Sharrock decided to put an emphasis on link between theory and method to make a step toward better research practices and progress in sociology as a discipline.

[...] We ourselves subscribe to a fondness for the idea that sociology will eventually establish itself as a well-grounded empirical discipline. (from Preface)

“Theory and Methods in Sociology” seems to be a valuable book for students and social scientists. The main advantage of this book is a concise presentation of relations between theory and methods in different paradigms and particular theories. As a result a reader has an opportunity to look at a selected problem from a more holistic perspective, which includes theoretical suppositions and methodological practices. Moreover, we can find many examples that make discussed issues better explained and transparent. Additionally, at the end of each chapter there is presented selected bibliography that helps us broaden our knowledge on this area. Thanks to that, a reader has a good opportunity to direct his interest on selected problem and find some additional information about it. However, it must be stressed that the book is rather closer to a compendium than to a monograph, so those who look for more detailed information relating to specific problem may not be fully satisfied.

The book “Theory and Methods in Sociology” consists of an introduction and three parts: “The Positivist Project”, “The Qualitative Turn” and “Critical Questions”. Each part encompasses selected issues divided to specific problems presented in detail. Now I will try to present shortly the content of each part.

## ***“Introduction”***

In the first part the Authors made brief presentation of the following chapters. In the “Introduction” Hughes and Sharrock also point out on the dilemma that is the leitmotiv of this book: what characterizes sociology as a science: pluralism or disarray? There are discussed some issues, which among sociologists are perceived as basis of disagreement in their conception of sociology as a social science, for instance: dispute between qualitative and quantitative methods of social research, the problematic gap between theory and method and its consequences, building generalizations, holistic and atomistic thinking represented by different schools and paradigms etc. In this part we can find “introduction” to the complexity and contradictions present in contemporary in sociology.

## ***“The Positivist Project”***

In this part the Authors present the philosophy of positivism in sociology. In the second chapter entitled “The Positivist Project: Introduction” there is discussed the ontology of sociology as a science. Hughes and Sharrock describe contribution of “Founding Fathers” in the process of building theoretical and methodological fundamentals of sociology. We can find there some basic information about the role of classics such as Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton and Paul F. Lazarsfeld in building foundations of sociology.

The next chapter “Building a Science of Sociology” is devoted to the major premises of positivist strategy. There is presented methodology of logico-deductive way of forming hypothesis and building conclusions. We can find there Karl Popper’s model of falsification and confirmation, brief description of selected formal theories (evolutionary theories, exchange theories, game theory, behaviorism, the model of social system by Talcott Parsons). Next, there are presented middle range theories (Merton’s social structure and anomie) and growing tendencies of mathematical description of reality.

In the fourth chapter entitled “Variable Analysis and Measurement” there are characterized different types of variables, relations between variables (independent and dependent), levels of measurements and their methodological consequences but also some basic means of quantitative analyses (cross-tabulation, contingency table, correlations, associations etc.). The chapter also encompasses the problem of operationalization and its role in theory building and much more. Presented issues are well illustrated with many practical examples and case studies.

Chapter five “Interviews and Questionnaires” is oriented not only on techniques of social research but also concerns some general methodological problems connected with their application. Hughes and Sharrock present the philosophy of using questionnaires (the connection between questions, answers and obtained data, responses as indicators of phenomena etc.). The Authors also deliver some basic characteristics concerning the types of questionnaires, but also some useful general rules relating to their use in research. At the end of the chapter there are discussed different approaches and practices concerning the process of interviewing. There are also presented some conclusions and remarks connected with questionnaire as a tool of data gathering.

Chapter six “The Social Survey and Multivariate Analysis” is devoted to the problem of large sample research and data analyses. The Authors describe the history of social survey and its growing role in public opinion research. There are also discussed hopes directly connected with making generalizations in case of studies

that base on social survey technique. The next part of the chapter contains some technical description of statistics, analyzes and types of samples linked procedures of using social survey but also some practical aspects and methodological conditions of doing surveys.

Chapter seventh "The Demise of Positivism?" presents criticism expressed both by supporters and opponents of positivistic paradigm. The Authors investigate the reasons of decay the model of sociology as a science that bases mainly on mathematical and statistical models of building conclusions. In their opinion:

[...] positivism failed by its own standards, at least insofar as the adoption of those standards was meant to render sociology 'genuinely scientific'. (p. 158)

### **"The Qualitative Turn"**

Part two "The Qualitative Turn" characterizes qualitative movement present in sociology after "hopes' lost" linked with attempts to build quantitative model of sociology as a "genuinely scientific" science. Chapter eight entitled "The Contest over Realism: Introduction" begins from the presentation of Blumer's critique of positivists' conception of variable as too mechanical point of view on human relations. There are also described basics of symbolic interactionism, especially Chicago School and grounded theory as an opposite proposals of interpreting reality and making research.

In the following chapter "The Method of Fieldwork" a reader can find deepened information concerning links between developing methods rooted in field and naturalistic theories that put emphasis on viewing reality from the perspective of actions and processes initiated by social actors. The Authors present many aspects of fieldwork studies in relation to "new methodology" principles. The new methodological and theoretical standpoint is illustrated with examples of techniques used by sociologists oriented on qualitative methods such as participant observation, case study, qualitative interviews etc.

In chapter tenth "Explorations in the Actor's Point of View" Hughes and Sharrock discuss [...] *shift in sociological thinking proposed by interactionism and issues arising from the interactionist perspective* [...] (p.235). The main problem touched here is the emphasis on "the actor's point of view" and actor's definition of situation both the basic assumptions of interactionists' stance. The Authors contrast this standpoint with the requirement of objectivity that is essential for positivists.

[...] we reviewed some of the arguments which not only were critical of positivist sociology and social research methods, but also proposed an alternative conception of the sociological endeavour. (p. 255-256)

In the next parts there are presented some theories and their assumptions that base on mentioned fundamental "actor's point of view" premise.

"Data Collection versus Analysis" encompasses one of the most important and timeless problem present in countless sociological discussions. In this chapter, the Authors are trying to deal with still raised questions: What kind of data a social scientist should choose - hard or soft? What kind of research to do - qualitative or quantitative? Triangulate methods or not? If so, how to do it and under what conditions? These questions are discussed from the perspective of interactionist theories.

### ***“Critical Questions”***

The next chapters from the third part “Critical Questions” relate also to issues mentioned in the previous chapter. The Authors treat the problems that concern the modern sociology and its ideas of describing the surrounding reality. Hughes and Sharrock write for instance that

[...] in part of the book we aim to examine more recent developments in sociological thinking that seek to refurbish and reassert the critical posture of discipline. [...] A major element in this refurbishment was a subtle critique of contemporary society and its dominant modes of thinking, especially its preoccupation with science, and particularly with positivistic science. (p. 279)

There are presented theories standing in evident opposition to dominant and widely shared visions of society and methods of research that are popularized by them. We can find in this part discussion over arguments raised by structuralists and post-structuralists, modernists and post-modernists and other critically oriented schools or representatives of independent ideas. The Authors have rather successfully mixed different theoretical and methodological outlooks, presenting as a result some alternative ways of perceiving sociology as a science. This part encompasses also selected questions raised by both classics like Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Claude Levi-Strauss, Sigmund Freud and many others but also ideas initiated by their followers and critics. As an outcome part “Critical Questions” is interesting as well because of some original commentaries given by the Authors.

### ***The final conclusions***

In my opinion this book is innovative by the fact that the Authors do not quit from problematic questions and issues, instead presenting their own ideas and commentaries on these subjects. Moreover, the problems in spite of their complexity are described in accessible manner what makes this publication an interesting proposal especially for students who write M.A. thesis or Ph.D. dissertation. The next advantage of this book is a well presented combination of theory and method illustrated with many examples useful during first stages of research designing.

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## *Qualitative Sociology Review – Book Reviews*

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Book Review:  
Corporate Wasteland. The Landscape and Memory of  
Deindustrialization, by Steven High and David W. Lewis Cornell  
University Press, Ithaca and London, 2007

Lodz, a city in Poland where I live owes its identity to the dynamic development of textile industry during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the last two decades this city, like many other industrial cities in Europe and North America have seen its factories being shut-down, lost workers' communities and ambiguous future of the buildings hoping for revitalisation. With the collapse of industry and so shift from production on consumption as the basic societal process, some factories were turned into amusement and shopping centres, whereas lots of them were demolished to make a place for parking lots or "brownfield investment". The former industrial cities within the city with workers' houses and amenities like hospitals, schools and palaces of the former powerful capitalist owners are turned into tourist attractions. The commercial centre located in the former industrial city concessioned few rooms to commemorate the factory's workers with a museum of factory with an objective of guiding the young consumers through the bygone industrial era... As deindustrialization is a global process, it was an exciting experience to read a book written by Canadian authors documenting similar processes in North America.

The authors are Steven High, researcher and expert from the field from Concordia University, Montreal, the author of *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt 1969-1984* and his fellow photographer David W. Lewis. The book consists of few separate narratives, some of which are based on oral history interviews and photographs, all of them highlighting different dimensions of the deindustrialization process. They start with telling the story of a worker who was presented a medal for 35 years of work by a liquidation commissioner over a barbed-wire separating his plant from outside world. They examine the cases from North America of mills and plants being closed in places such as Ohio or West Virginia, U.S. or Ontario, Canada, giving voice to the former workers and critically analyze the contemporary discourse on deindustrialization.

The deindustrialization is often welcome as a positive process, one step forward towards a new green and high-tech future. However, in the case of small cities as Sturgeon Falls in Ontario where the paper mill was only one significant working place, its closure puts an end to the people's identity, their local universe. The case of steelworkers in Youngtown, Ohio is a story of an unsuccessful resistance of workers and coalition of religious supporting them. In 1976 the city dwellers constructed a steel capsule to commemorate 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of US independence which was meant to communicate to people living after 100 years that steel made the

community prosperous. However, in one year's time, the steel factory was closed and community was suffering economic hardships and identity loss.

The authors seem to be convinced that the popular representation of deindustrialization as "an only option" or "sad but inevitable process" is a mystification designed to cover man-made decisions. The Canadian laid-off workers often speak about the corporate greed and blame Yankee capitalist for taking over their plants just to close them down, thus eliminating competition. The workers often tried to rescue the plant, appealing to government's and union's help, striking and bolstering Canadian nationalism. The labour union decided to send six representatives to six different mills owned by the same company in Canada to spread solidarity actions. Sadly, their representative is ignored by workers in Dryden, Ontario, where "most of the paperworkers simply shrugged their shoulders and said that the company was treating them well" (p. 103). In about a year's time, some 500 workers in Dryden got laid off. All the defiance strategies fail and American owners from Weyerhaeuser company refuse to talk about selling the paper mill in Sturgeon Falls. As one worker's wife wrote in a letter to press "those Americans might as well have dropped a bomb on Sturgeon Falls" (p.113).

Although mill was bigger local tax-payer and employer still bringing profits and offering environmentally friendly production out of recycled paper, it was closed and demolished anyhow. Some workers observed and took pictures of how their mill was demolished, whereas some preferred to close their eyes. "Now it is going to be torn down just like part of your life is being ripped away" – confessed one of the workers (p. 106). The book provides us with a record of memory debate taking place in American and Canadian cities. Whose memory should be saved? Some columnists argue that the city is not a cemetery and it should be free to develop replacing old landscapes with new ones. The mines, smokestacks or mills are said to be too dirty or too ugly to be preserved. However, if the place employed significant number of workers, should it not be saved just for its symbolic value for them?

The authors pay attention to tragedies of the workers and their families who see a big parking lot in a place where they used to work for ages and have a feeling that their work was turned into dust. One laid-off machine tender decides to keep wearing a thirty-year ring with a letter "W" he got from Weyerhaeuser. "What do I think about Weyerhaeuser? (...) I hate them with a passion. (...) I wear this because I am proud to wear it. Not because it is Weyerhaeuser, but it's thirty years of service – good service" (p. 99).

The workers are in need of re-defining their identity which was based on the mill. The whole town makes efforts to move to post-industrial era through developing tourist and housing facilities for bigger neighbouring cities, offering more working places in retail stores. The former mill workers who used to be the richest social group are now poorer than others and more reluctant to imagine meaningful economic activity in their town without industry.

Although in Canada, the "greedy American capitalists" are often the ones to blame, the corporations do not feel any patriotic sentiments. The authors take readers to Detroit for a guided story of places shown by blue-collar worker of GM Detroit Gabriel Solano, "I-75 Gypsy" as he calls himself because he survived three plant closures along the Interstate Road 75. He tells a story when the workers were offered free hot dogs in last days of operating of their plant. He threw a hot dog into a wall in presence of plant manager as a desperate act of resistance: "Here you are shutting our plant down, putting us out of work. You're playing Christmas music. It's at Christmas time. I should be happier than a pig in you-know what? (...) this is what I think of your hot dogs. A matter of fact, this is what I think of you (p. 125-126)".

As another element of big picture of deindustrialization, the authors present and critically analyze the urban explorers (UErs) movement which is one of the social outcomes of the mentioned process. The UERs are mostly white middle-class young people who fancy exploring and documenting the decay and destruction of industrial places that often used to be symbols of their cities. They go to "places you're not supposed to go" and through entering the abandoned sites "cross an imaginative divide separating the post-industrial present from the industrial past". The UERs are global on-line community that developed their ethics of "taking pictures and leaving no footprints" and publish their "exploration" stories on the Internet. Often they find a sense of a mission in documenting the places before they get demolished, saving memory. However, the authors point out that the UERs are concentrated on their own feelings evoked by the places and universal symbols of "truly decay at its finest" (p. 53) and inevitability of time running. They do not bother into investigating the reasons behind closing certain factories and looking for the responsible ones. Some of them do not pay attention to the geographic information, while focused on the aesthetics, be it aesthetics of decay, derive the places of its social context.

There are also groups purely focused on recording and presenting on-line video recordings of demolition of industrial buildings. The authors see in this an important "secular ritual" of transition to the new era of service, high-tech "lean" economy. While in my city old factories are usually demolished overnight with a purpose of not rising attention, in North America the demolition was made a public entertainment. The demolition professionals try to become new superheroes, insisting on creative character of their destructive work, as one of them claims, contrary to construction professionals, they work without a prior scheme.

The strong advantage of the book is a presentation of complexity of deindustrialization in a concise and comprehensible way through giving voice to those who experience it. The authors present varieties of workers' opinions and sometimes do not hesitate to include their own. The book offers an analysis of such diverse sources as oral interviews, on-line narratives, biographic interviews, press articles and popular songs. However, with its 150 pages, it is just an invitation to explore more deeply the challenges and atrocities that the deindustrialization provokes. The authors do not present ambitions to provide a theory of deindustrialization or any kind of general theoretical conclusions, they leave the reader alone with a perplexed picture of big complexity. In the end, it is just a nice collection of essays and stories on deindustrialization and laid-off workers perspectives on what happened, accompanied by visual materials.

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## 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.

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**Erin E. Robinson** is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York. She received her Ph.D. in Sociology at the University at Buffalo where she researched social movement mobilization patterns in communities facing environmental hazards. Her research has involved ethnographic field methods and the use of frame analysis as both a research tool and mode of analysis in social movement research. Her primary research interests are community mobilization, grassroots networking and collaboration, environmental sociology, and social construction of risk. Currently, she is studying semiotics and the transformation of meaning in urban space surrounding the development of community gardens.

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**Henrik Loodin** is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Sociology, Lund University, Sweden. His main research areas of interest include medical sociology and its subdiscipline sociology of mental disorders. He is also interested in narrative methods, autobiographical research and migration. In his current research, he seeks to understand the social processes and exclusionary mechanisms involved when receiving the psychiatric diagnosis posttraumatic stress disorder. Henrik is a member of the Swedish Sociological Association executive board and connected to the Vårdal Institute.

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**Chaim Noy** received his PhD in Psychology from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. He is presently teaching at the Sapir College, Israel. His main fields of interest include performance studies and everyday life, language and discourse, semiotics, mobility, masculinity, tourism, and qualitative and experimental research methods. His recent books include *Narrative Community: Voices of Israeli Backpackers* (Wayne State University Press, 2006), and *Israeli Backpackers: From Tourism to a Rite of Passage* (co-edited with Erik Cohen, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2005).

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**Karla B. Hackstaff** (Ph.D.) is an Associate Professor of sociology at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, USA. Her research and teaching are in the areas of family relations, race-gender-class, social psychology, and qualitative methods. She is author of the book *Marriage in a Culture of Divorce* (Temple, 1999), continues research on family history, and is currently working on the meanings of age, illness, and injury in family relations.

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## Author-Supplied Abstracts & Keywords

**Robert Prus**

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*Poetic Expression and Human Enacted Realities: Plato and Aristotle Engage Pragmatist Motifs in Greek Fictional Representations*

Poetic expressions may seem somewhat removed from a pragmatist social science, but the history of the development of Western civilization is such that the (knowingly) fictionalized renderings of human life-worlds that were developed in the classical Greek era (c700-300BCE) appear to have contributed consequentially to a scholarly emphasis on the ways in which people engage the world.

Clearly, poetic writings constitute but one aspect of early Greek thought and are best appreciated within the context of other developments in that era, most notably those taking shape in the realms of philosophy, religion, rhetoric, politics, history, and education.

These poetic materials (a) attest to views of the human condition that are central to a pragmatist philosophy (and social science) and (b) represent the foundational basis for subsequent developments in literary criticism (including theory and methods pertaining to the representation of human enacted realities in dramaturgical presentations).

Thus, while not reducing social theory to poetic representation, this statement considers the relevance of early Greek poetics for the development of social theory pertaining to humanly enacted realities.

**Keywords:** Poetics; Fiction; Classical Greek; Plato; Aristotle; Pragmatism; Symbolic Interaction; Representation; Reality; Literary Criticism

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**Enrico Mora Malo**

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*Perform Strikes. A Case Study*

In this paper we show the results of an analysis of the production of individual class subjectivities in the context of strikes among both those in favour and those against. Among the several processes going on in the production of subjectivities of class, we consider strikes because we want to emphasise the active role that the subjects keep up within the class relationships of domination and exploitation. We start from a conception of the subjectivity understood as fragmentary and contingent that we apply to our analysis of class, but in this paper we limit production of individual subjectivities to context of strikes. Our analysis focuses on a case study from the beginning of the 1970s to the end of the 1990s, which was led by the workers of a company in the motor industry, situated in Catalonia. The main devices used to work on the empirical material are biographical interviews and informative interviews. We start the analysis by showing the various directions taken by that the subjectivities of workers and of the company in strike interactions, in individual terms. Then we look into the role of gender in the provisional configuration of these subjectivities in the context of a strike when these subjectivities became collective subjectivities. In this respect, we focus on the company's workers.

**Keywords**

Social classes; Gender; Subjectivity; Conflict

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**Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson**  
University of Exeter, UK

*Intimate Intrusions Revisited: A Case of Intimate Partner Abuse and Violations of the Territories of the Self*

Intimate partner abuse is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon, highly situated and “locally-produced” by intimate partners in the domestic interactional milieu. Adopting a symbolic interactionist approach, this article uses a limited topical life-history case study to investigate the interactional experiences of a male victim of female-perpetrated intimate partner abuse. The theoretical analysis utilises Goffman’s conceptualisation of the “territories of the self” and their subjection to various forms of contamination or “modalities of violation”, applied in this case to the contested domestic interactional milieu. The paper seeks to add to a developing qualitative literature on male victims’ experiences of intimate abuse and violence, and to extend Goffman’s conceptual insights into a new domain.

**Keywords**

Intimate partner abuse; Abused men; Erving Goffman; Territories of the self; Topical life history

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**Erin E. Robinson**  
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*Mobilizing Voices: A Discussion of Leadership in an Environmentally Contaminated Community*

Leadership is a key factor in successful social movement mobilization. Without a grasp of leadership dynamics in a community, it is difficult to explain how individuals come to occupy leadership roles and what impact this has on the overall success of a movement effort. In this study, I use the qualitative approach to investigate how leadership is framed in a community facing the existence of environmental contamination. I follow the development of leadership among actors and particularly the relationships that they create and maintain with expert environmental activists. Using interview data from 35 community residents and activists, I establish how leadership frames were presented to the community and how these frames impacted mobilization efforts and outcomes.

**Keywords**

Social movement; Leadership; Environmental activists; Qualitative research design; Framing

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**Henrik Loodin**  
Lund University, Sweden

*The Absurdities of Mental Illness – A Narrative Inquiry Into Psychiatric Diagnosis*

This text examines three life stories about becoming mentally ill and Albert Camus' fictive narrative "The Stranger". The main concern is how the social and psychiatry intervenes in the narrative that the interviewees give. Drawing from a reasoning in Michel Foucault's monograph *Madness and Civilization* and Dorothy Smith's work on relations of ruling the argument in this article is that when becoming mentally ill one is involved in a process of losing agency in one's own life story. Illustratively with Camus' novel the analysis unravels that the interviewees become strangers in their own life story.

**Keywords**

Narrative; Estrangement; Psychiatry; Life Stories

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**Chaim Noy**  
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*Authenticating Tourists: The Politics of Authenticity in a National Heritage Site in Israel*

This paper offers a multifaceted appreciation of the political roles played by authenticity in modern tourism. The study, located at a national heritage and commemoration site in Jerusalem, Israel, traces authentic occurrences—manifestations and representations—that culminate in an ideological ecology of authenticity. Through this depiction, the active and often veiled role authenticity, understood as a social structure, plays is foregrounded. A special place within this ecology is reserved for the role performed by the site's visitor book. The paper conceptualizes the commemorative visitor book as an ideological and institutional interface, which serves as an authenticating device. This device allows a transformation of visitors into ideological social agents who partake in the structure of national commemoration in Israel.

**Keywords**

Authenticity; Discourse; Nationalism; Heritage tourism; Commemoration; Israeli society

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**Karla B. Hackstaff**  
Northern Arizona University, USA

*"Turning Points" for Aging Genealogists: Claiming Identities And Histories in Time*

Based on qualitative in-depth interviews, I examine the use of genealogy with regard to the current historical moment for identities rooted in kin, race, class, gender, nation—and age. Drawing on the concept of "turning points" coined by Anselm Strauss, I explore moments that motivate the doing of family genealogy. First, I suggest that Strauss's turning points may occur simultaneously and converge like vectors across time. Second, I argue that late middle-age lends itself to "identity extensions", which I define as a reevaluation of self that acknowledges one or more of the following: the significance of extended kin to one's identity; reverence for ancestors; a social responsibility to the future. Finally, I analyze how the current era informs a particular generation's genealogical endeavors. I conceive of U.S. baby boomers' genealogical projects as an expression of longing for connections in family lives and for a place in social history across the generations.

**Keywords**

Genealogy; Family history; Identity; Turning point; Aging; Generation; Race/class/gender; Baby boomers

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**Rajib Lochan Dhar**

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*Cynicism in the Indian I.T. Organizations: An Exploration of the Employees' Perspectives*

Cynicism is described as a mind-set characterized by hopelessness, disappointment, and disillusionment, and is also associated with scorn, disgust, and suspicion. This strong negative attitude has infiltrated Indian I.T organizations, and is believed to be responsible for unfavorable organizational consequences, even though, hardly any studies have explored the causes and concerns of employee cynicism about their organizations in the Indian context. The present research centers around two qualitative case studies through in-depth interviews with seventy two participants undertaken in western India to investigate the causes and concerns of employee cynicism towards employer organization. Findings of the study indicate that workplace perceptions significantly influence organizational cynicism, which is largely influenced by poor leadership, organizational politics, decisive culture, accessibility of benefits and un-met expectations. As these findings have important organizational implications, I recommend for further studies on cynicism in the future.

**Keywords**

Cynicism; Employee; Organization; Information technology; Culture



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