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Charisma, Magic, and Spirituality as Socially Engaged Processes: Lucian's (circa 120-200) *Alexander the False Prophet* and People's Accounts of the Supernatural

Abstract Focusing on *Alexander the False Prophet* and *The Lover of Lies*, two texts from the Greek poet-philosopher Lucian of Samosata (circa 120-200) of the Classical Roman era, this paper considers (a) charisma, magic, and spirituality as aspects of an interconnected, collectively achieved, developmental process associated with the emergence of a religious cult. Somewhat relatedly, this paper also acknowledges (b) people's broader, longstanding fascinations with matters that seem incredulous.

Depicting a more sustained realm of prophetic activity and an account of people's intrigues with the supernatural, Lucian's texts offer some especially valuable transhistorical and transcultural reference points for the broader sociological study of human knowing and acting. The paper concludes with a consideration of the implications of these matters for the study of people's involvements in religion and spirituality as humanly-engaged realms of endeavor and interchange.

Keywords Magic; Charisma; Religion; Spirituality; Supernatural; Pragmatism; Symbolic Interactionism; Lucian of Samosata; Prophecy; Belief; Doubt; Community

Robert Prus is a sociologist (Professor Emeritus) at the University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. A symbolic interactionist, ethnographer, and social theorist, Robert Prus has been examining the conceptual and methodological connections of American pragmatist philosophy and its sociological offshoot, symbolic interactionism, with Classical Greek, Latin, and interim scholarship.

Attending to pragmatist viewpoints and ethnographically-oriented accounts of human group life, encountered in the developmental flows of Western social thought, he has been working with ethnohistorical materials in the interrelated areas of religion, education and scholarship, rhetoric,

poetics, philosophy, history, love and friendship, politics and governing practices, and deviance and morality.

As with the present statement focusing on Lucian's work on charisma, magic, and the supernatural, Robert Prus has been indicating, in more direct conceptual terms, the exceptional scholarly advantages of developing more sustained transsituational (transcontextual, transhistorical, and transdisciplinary) analytic comparisons of human lived experiences from the classical Greek era to the present time through the more extensive use of ethnohistorical and contemporary ethnographic materials.

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The philosopher-poet Lucian of Samosata (circa 120-200) is scarcely known to those in the human sciences more generally or among those in religious studies more specifically. Nevertheless, some of the more discerning, even if sometimes openly sarcastic, analyses of religion from the more distant past are those that Lucian has provided.

As part of a larger project on the development of Western social thought, particularly that pertaining to the study of human knowing and acting from a pragmatist standpoint, I have been examining the works of various scholars from the classical Greek and Latin eras.¹ Plato (circa 420-348 BCE) and Aristotle (circa 384-322 BCE) are by far the most consequential classical scholars because they so astutely address a wide range of matters pertaining to human knowing and acting. However, other scholars from the Greek and Roman eras—such as Herodotus (circa 485-425 BCE), Thucydides (circa 460-400 BCE), Xenophon (circa 430-340 BCE), Cicero (106-43 BCE), Dio Chrysostom (circa 40-120), and Lucian (circa 120-200)—also have contributed substantially to the study of community life as a humanly engaged process.

I have written on some of Lucian's works elsewhere (Prus 2008b; 2008c; 2015b), but here I focus more directly on *Alexander the False Prophet* and *The Lover of Lies* or *The Doubter*. Although Lucian has written on many other aspects of religion, the two statements considered here have a somewhat more sustained quasi-ethnographic quality.

¹ For a fuller sense of the base on which the larger "Greek" project has been pursued, see Prus (2003; 2004; 2007a; 2008a; 2009; 2010; 2011a; 2015a). Some other publications derived from the Greek project can be found in Prus (2015b).

Whereas Lucian's account of prophecy focuses more specifically on the life and times of Alexander of Abonoteichus (circa 120-200), a person whose spirituality-based prophecies achieved some prominence in the classical Roman era, Lucian's *The Lover of Lies* deals with people's intrigues with the supernatural.

Rather than dismiss these materials as accounts of some quaint features of a bygone era, I contend that these materials have an enduring relevance not only for comprehending people's involvements in spiritual or religious matters more generally but for a fuller understanding of community life. Thus, Lucian's statements provide valuable transhistorical reference points for comprehending important associated matters, including magic and religion, character and charisma, authenticity and realism, human agency and resourcefulness, beliefs and intrigues, impression management and influence work, ambiguity and commitments, forming and objectifying associations, and people's participation in collective events. It is not possible to address these topics in any detail in the present statement, but readers will find material pertinent to all of these (notably inter-related) matters in the "chapter and verse synopses" provided for these two texts.

Lucian may have written these texts as a poet-philosopher or philosopher-poet rather than adopting a more exclusive or explicit role as a historian or ethnographer, but he addresses aspects of people's involvements in religion and their attentiveness to the supernatural in ways that much contemporary scholarship focusing on religion fails to accomplish. Moreover, he does so in ways that are highly

suggestive for future inquiry into the nature of people's experiences with religion and their intrigues with the supernatural. Thus, even though openly depreciative of those who promote and/or accept religious standpoints at times, Lucian is a remarkably astute student of the human condition. Approaching prophecy and spirituality as realms of activity and interchange, Lucian draws attention to the reality of religion as a humanly engaged process.

After brief commentaries on (1) some noteworthy affinities between religion and spirituality, (2) some other authors who have dealt with religion in the classical Greek and Roman eras, and (3) Lucian's work more generally, (4) a synopsis of Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet* is presented, followed by (5) a consideration of the significance of this text for comprehending magic, charisma, and cultic associations. The next part of the paper deals with (6) *The Lover of Lies* or *The Doubter*. Mindful of the broader pragmatist or constructionist approach that informs the present statement, I conclude the paper by (7) asking about the relevance of Lucian's texts for understanding and studying people's participation in religious movements and their broader intrigues with spirituality and the supernatural.

Building on symbolic interactionism (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969; Strauss 1993; Prus 1996; 1997; 1999; Prus and Grills 2003), this statement on Lucian's works also is informed by the Chicago-style ethnographic literature developed over the past century. As will become evident, this statement benefits from other pragmatist-oriented scholarship from the classical Greek and Roman eras, as well as some more contemporary pragmatist-oriented sources of which

Emile Durkheim's (1915 [1912]) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* is especially consequential.

Religion and Spirituality: Noteworthy Affinities

Because this paper rather inevitably takes us into considerations of religion and spirituality, it is appropriate to acknowledge some preliminary (even if only sketchy) distinctions and *affinities* between these two realms of people's beliefs and practices.² Some material developed by Emile Durkheim and two of his students, Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert, has been particularly instructive in this regard.

After stating that neither (a) conceptions of the supernatural nor (b) figurehead (anthropomorphic or personified) visions of divinities are essential for religion, Durkheim (1915 [1912: Book 1]) identifies three fundamental criteria for a religion. These are: (1) a set of distinctions between the *sacred* and the profane, (2) a set of practices associated with those distinctions and related beliefs, and (3) the development of a moral community in which those beliefs and practices achieve a collective adherence and enacted vitality. While I very much concur with the position on religion Durkheim assumes in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, it is appropriate to acknowledge some important affinities between religion and spirituality.

² Recognizing some of the ambiguities and controversies surrounding religion, spirituality, and mysticism, an Appendix (On Studying Religion and Spirituality: Attending to the Realism of Elusive Essences) is provided to clarify some conceptual aspects of religion and spirituality, as well as to briefly consider the potential of spirituality as a subject matter for more sustained interactionist inquiry.

People defining themselves as "spiritualists" often contend that they are not involved in religion—which to them often is envisioned in terms of institutionalized beliefs, practices, formal organizations and material structures, and various centralizing God figures. Much like Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert (1964 [1898]; 1972 [1902]) and Emile Durkheim (1915 [1912]), I envision people's conceptions of spirituality as (a) involving essences or forces that not only (b) exist beyond currently living humans but that also (c) have capacities to assume agency (exercise deliberation and choice) and affect human life-worlds in ways that are (d) only selectively receptive/amenable to human influence or control.

Relatedly, although it may be tempting to envision spirituality as an individual phenomenon, it appears that all conceptions of mystical essences emerge as products of group interchange rather than the spontaneous independent creations of individual consciousness somehow apart from their earlier group-based capacities for language and conceptuality. All human capacities for conceptuality, thought, memory, and reasoning are contingent on group interaction and the symbolic interchanges taking place within (see: Prus 2007b; 2007c; also Mauss and Hubert 1964 [1898]; 1972 [1902]; Durkheim 1915 [1912]; Mead 1934; Blumer 1969). Still, dependent on the group for their very existence—emergence, viability, and longevity, only some activities and indications taking place in any group setting are likely to become linguistically more sustained, as well as more fully interactively systematized into community life.

Even though linguistically-enabled individuals (i.e., "ethnologists"—Prus 2007c) may find things meaningful—interesting, worthwhile, important, and amazing, as well as banal, disappointing, puzzling, frightening, and so forth, all conceptions of the supernatural, as well as specific variants of divinity, spirits, ghosts, and the like, are to be understood within the context of the linguistic group(s) of orientation of the individuals involved. Indeed, without some conceptual connectedness with linguistically-enabled others, individual humans would have no basis for puzzlement, amazement, repulsion, or doubt.

Like religion, spirituality only achieves a meaningful quality within the context of the human group, and only within the context of the human group might viewpoints and practices achieve some longer-term presence. Relatedly, without in some way linguistically accessing the collectively attained conceptualizations of "whatness" (what is and what is not) of the community, there would be no whatness (substance, conceptuality) of thought for humans who lack symbolic exposure to some group of orientation.

Whereas people defining themselves as participants in more established religious communities may dismiss "spiritualism" as sacrilegious, fringe elements of society, both sets of participants commonly also ascribe sacred (revered, awe-inspiring, mystical) forces and agency qualities to evil, as well as benign essences (Durkheim 1915 [1912]). Adherents to conventional religions, like the "spiritualists," also often embrace, if not more

explicitly insist on spiritual transformations and mysterious interventions.³

It is important to note, thusly, that “realities and relativism aside,” all religions—like all more systematized realms of spirituality—seem attentive to matters of life and death, as well as the fears, losses, hopes, and frustrations that people experience in contending with circumstances seemingly beyond human control.

Like Mauss and Hubert, I also envision spirituality as denoting socially accomplished products and processes. Relatedly, earlier collectively experienced aspects of spirituality seem foundational to virtually all conventionalized religions. Even though particular individuals may be involved in interpretations of instances and enactments of “spirituality,” these expressions and possible extensions also are most appropriately understood as variants of more foundational group viewpoints and practices (also see Mauss’ 2003 [1909] statement on prayer).

Mindful of (a) the preceding qualifications, (b) the desire to avoid artificial distinctions between religion, cults, and spirituality, and (c) the not uncommon categorical assertions on the part of various sets

of believers that they more exclusively possess and enact “the truth” pertaining to religious and spiritual beliefs and practices, I will use the terms religion and spirituality in ways that reflect their mutualities. The emphasis, accordingly, is on the ways that those defining themselves as “conventionalist” and/or “spiritualist” attend to those essences or forces that they envision as *more autonomous agents* with capacities to affect, as well as attend and adjust to the views and practices of particular groupings of people and/or more individualized representatives thereof. Still, because Lucian appears to have had a good classical Greek education, it also is important to situate his scholarly productions within that context.

Analytic Precursors in the Classical Greek and Latin Eras

As noted in an earlier paper (Prus 2015b), Lucian is by no means the first of the classical Greek and Latin scholars to discuss religion as a realm of human lived experience. Hence, while recognizing the central roles assumed by Homer (circa 700 BCE) and Hesiod (circa 700 BCE) in crystallizing images of the Greek Olympian gods,⁴ it is important to

⁴ In addition to Homer and Hesiod, it may be noted that the Greek playwrights Aeschylus (circa 525-456 BCE), Sophocles (circa 495-405 BCE), and Euripides (circa 480-406 BCE) also give considerable attention to the Greek gods and human morality. Like the texts attributed to Homer and Hesiod, the plays of these three tragedians are rife with images of living, thinking, acting, and interacting characters. The human characters portrayed in these texts often intermingle with immortal Greek gods and other fictionalized beings, but virtually all participants assume human-like stances (with capacities for activity, linguistic communication, and tactical, minded interchange). Aristophanes (circa 450-385 BCE), the playwright who wrote a number of highly intricate, deceptive, multi-themed comedies, not only presents human characters in extended ranges of expression, activities, and

note that other Greek authors were more explicitly attentive to the pragmatist or constructionist features of religion.

Thus, Protagoras (circa 490-420), whose texts were publicly burned, encountered considerable hostility on the part of some of his contemporaries for insisting (more pragmatically) “that man is the measure of all things” and Herodotus (circa 485-425) in *The Histories* openly identifies the Olympian gods as the fabrications of Homer and Hesiod. Plato (see *Republic* and *Laws*) also clearly recognizes the problematic nature of claims about divinity even as he stresses the interdependency of morality, religion, education, and law for propping one another up and their overall importance for maintaining the functional/operational cohesiveness of the community (also see Prus 2011a; 2011b). Relatedly, the Roman author Marcus Tullius Cicero’s (106-43 BCE) exceptionally astute *On the Nature of the Gods* (Prus 2011d) and the Greek author Dio Chrysostom’s (circa 40-120) *On Man’s First Conception of the Gods* (Prus 2011c) also should be recognized as particularly noteworthy precursors to the materials that Lucian develops on religion.

Lucian’s references are not sufficiently precise to establish definite lines of influence with these earlier authors. Minimally, however, Lucian has had considerable exposure to Greek philosophy (and

relationships, but also adds yet other dimensions to his comedies (and literary criticism). In *Frogs*, for instance, Aristophanes presents the 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.” For a complete collection of the (extant) texts from these Greek dramatists, see: Oates and O’Neill (1938).

theology), rhetoric, and poetics. As well, despite the overtly cynical, sometimes sarcastic manner in which he discusses the validity of people’s religious beliefs, Lucian brings “to life” a number of features of people’s religious beliefs and practices in ways that are not encountered elsewhere in the literature.

Lucian on Religion

The eight volumes in the Loeb collection of Lucian’s works contain about 70 separate articles, most of which have been developed as dialogues and many of which have a notably playful, poetic quality. Whereas Lucian’s texts are rather diverse in their overall coverage, a substantial portion of these statements specifically deal with religion, philosophy, and rhetoric.

In addition to the two texts considered here, Lucian has written a number of dialogues that focus on the ways in which people engage aspects of religion. These include: *On Sacrifices*, *On Funerals*, *Icaromenippus*, *Menippus*, *The Parliament of the Gods*, *Zeus Rants*, *Zeus Catechized*, and *A Conversation with Hesiod*. Lucian is pointedly cynical about the viability of people’s religious beliefs and practices, but his texts are remarkably attentive to the socially constituted features of people’s religious viewpoints and activities (for more detail, see: Prus 2015b).

Lucian deals with a wide, somewhat overlapping array of issues in developing these other statements on religion. Among the more central themes Lucian addresses in the preceding texts are people’s (a) sacrifices and other attempts to influence divine

essences, (b) notions of fatalism or predestination, (c) debates about the existence of divine beings, (c) means of legitimating divine beings, (d) images of and preparations for the afterlife, and (e) intrigues with the supernatural. Although many of his statements on religion are situated within “the community of the Olympian gods,” Lucian is attentive to a wide range of viewpoints on divinity (Greek and barbarian). He also recognizes the competitive, comparative, and shared qualities of differing religious standpoints. Thus, despite its poetical qualities, Lucian’s “anthropology of religion” is strikingly pluralist and generic.

*Alexander the False Prophet*⁵

Although Alexander achieved honour not only in his own country, a small city in remote Paphlagonia, but over a large part of the Roman world, almost nothing is known of him except from the pages of Lucian. Gems, coins, and inscriptions collaborate Lucian as far as they go, testifying to Alexander’s actual existence and widespread influence, and commemorating the name and even the appearance of Glycon, his human-headed serpent. But were it not for Lucian, we should not understand their full significance. [Lucian 1913-1967:173 (Harmon introduction to *Alexander the False Prophet*, vol. 4, 1925)]

⁵ This synoptic statement on Alexander of Abonoteichus has been developed primarily from A. M. Harmon’s (1925) translation of *Alexander the False Prophet* from *Lucian* (Loeb edition), volume 4, pages 173-253. I also worked with a translation from H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler (1905), entitled *Alexander the Oracle Monger*. The references provided in the present paper are to the (now standardized) notations that accompany the Greek texts in the Loeb English translation. Readers are referred to the fuller, considerably more detailed account found in the Harmon translation.

In developing *Alexander the False Prophet*, Lucian provides an account of the practices of Alexander of Abonoteichus and his associates that led to the emergence of a religious cult that not only lasted well over a century but that also appears to have attained considerable prominence during the classical Roman era.⁶

Whereas Lucian explicitly describes Alexander as a despicable character, Lucian simultaneously seems intrigued with the prophet Alexander. Thus, he describes Alexander as an exceptionally knowledgeable, creative, resourceful, astutely analytic, and daringly bold individual, as well as someone with extensive interpersonal skills. More importantly yet for our purposes, and despite his open hostility towards Alexander and his pointed depreciation of the mentality of Alexander’s followers, Lucian provides an instructive, well-informed account of Alexander’s activities.

Still, it should be acknowledged that although Lucian was a “participant-observer” in the broader theatre in which Alexander operated as a prophet, Lucian’s statement is much more a product of “investigative reporting” than an account based on extended insider access to the prophet Alexander and his practices.

Despite these limitations, Lucian provides one of the more sustained, directly descriptive accounts of

⁶ Although I had not made the linkages myself, Daniel Ogden (2009:61-77) explicitly identifies Alexander of Abonoteichus, along with Apollonius of Tyana (circa 15-100) and Simon Magus (lived first century CE), as rivals of sorts to Jesus of Nazareth. For some other accounts of neo-Pythagorean religious representatives and comparisons with Jesus of Nazareth (circa 7 BCE - 36 CE [outer range estimates of *The Catholic Encyclopedia* records]), see: W. Turner (1911) in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

the activities of a prophet and the associated emergence of a religious cult from the more distant past, but he also addresses important features of charisma, deception, and authenticity within religious contexts. Thus, whereas Lucian very much focuses on Alexander’s practices as a prophet, Lucian also provides background materials that are particularly valuable for illustrating ways that religious movements may emerge and take shape as organizational phenomena.

Relatedly, it is apparent that Alexander’s *successes as a prophet are contingent on the images he invokes and the associations he cultivates in the process of collectively pursuing his more personal interests amidst the viewpoints, interpretations, and activities of others in the community*. Thus, there is an “emergent oneness of the cult (i.e., the subculture) with the prophet.”

Lucian (*AFP*:1-2) opens *Alexander the False Prophet* by stating that he is preparing this text for his friend Celsus who requested that Lucian provide him with a history of Alexander’s involvements in and practices pertaining to his religious cult.⁷ Lucian notes the irony involved in both Celsus’ interest in preserving the memory of a scoundrel of such magnitude and the work that Lucian, himself, will put into developing this statement.

Still, venturing forth, Lucian (*AFP*:3-4) says he will first attempt to describe Alexander’s appearance and character. Lucian says that Alexander not only

⁷ According to Harmon (1925, the translator), whereas Alexander’s own religious activity took place about 150-170, the cult that Alexander had generated survived for at least another century.

was tall and exceptionally handsome, almost god-like in appearance, but that he also had a gaze that was strikingly intense and captivating. Consistent with his other external virtues, Alexander’s voice is described as not only particularly clear but also distinctively melodious.

After describing Alexander as strikingly attractive in all respects, Lucian observes that Alexander also possessed a level of comprehension, a quickness of mind, and a pronounced aptitude for learning and absorbing materials that readily distinguished him from others. Moreover, Lucian continues, almost everyone who met Alexander was readily impressed by his magnificent, highly affable character.

Attempting to piece together Alexander’s past, Lucian (*AFP*:5) surmises that Alexander likely began to develop, as well as benefit from, these emerging qualities as a youngster. Lucian further notes that while still a youth, Alexander had become acquainted with an older man involved in mystical incantations, the preparation and sales of potions and remedies, promises of revelations, and the like. It is here, Lucian supposes, that Alexander learned to make use of the effects of magic and to appreciate other modes of trickery.

After his mentor died, the still youthful Alexander (*AFP*:6-8) formed a partnership with an entertainer, Cocconas. At some point the pair became acquainted with a Macedonian woman who, in addition to supporting them for a time, also took them to the once flourishing community, Pella. It was there that they learned about some very large but highly domesticable snakes.

It is not apparent just how extensively the two had planned things out at this point, but anticipating that they could benefit by incorporating a serpent into their routines, they purchased one. And, working on the premise that hope and fear are two matters that offer great potential for personal gain, the two partners developed the idea of founding a prophetic shrine wherein they might embark on the selling of oracles.

Next, Lucian (*AFP*:9) says, came the planning stage as Alexander and Cocconas considered where, when, and how they might best pursue their venture. They decided to locate in Chalcedon, a region in which Alexander had grown up, but more importantly it gave them access to the temple of Apollo.

The two worked in tandem, but appeared separately to the townspeople. Thus, whereas Alexander began establishing his own presence in the community, his associate Cocconas spent time announcing obscure oracles among the populace. Cocconas had been emphasizing the name Alexander as a prophet in conjunction with vague, but frequent references to Asclepius and Apollo.⁸

As part of their scheme, Alexander and Cocconas shallowly buried some tablets near the temple. The tablets stated that Asclepius, along with his father Apollo, would soon take up residence in that area. With conditions arranged to foster curiosity, the subsequent discovery of the tablets by some local

⁸ As Harmon (1925:173) notes, (sacred) snakes were featured at the sanctuaries of Asclepius whose role was to heal the sick. Apollo was considered an important source of oracles or prophecies. Alexander and Cocconas were setting the stage with considerable insight and ingenuity.

citizens generated great excitement and anticipation on the part of those in the community.

Cocconas died shortly after the tablets had been discovered, but their earlier dramaturgical arrangements had been more extensive yet.⁹ Alexander earlier had entered Chalcedon attired in a manner consistent with the oracles that Cocconas have delivered. As well, beyond Alexander's intendedly striking, noble appearance, he also took care to display occasional fits of madness wherein, after chewing on some soapwort, Alexander generated yet greater attention with an incredible foaming of the mouth.

Another part of their earlier preparations had involved the manufacture of a human appearing serpent's head. Made of linen, this object had been painted to look both human and life-like. Moreover, Alexander and Cocconas, through the use of string controls, had developed a technique to simulate the appearance of conversation with this prop. Thus, they could open and close its mouth, as well as move its forked tongue. This mechanism would be used along with the body of the serpent obtained from Pella to create some exceptionally compelling effects.¹⁰

Still, as Lucian (*AFP*:13-17) indicates, Alexander (now acting on his own) would embark on a yet more

⁹ It is apparent that Cocconas very much worked behind the scenes. The plan was to visibly establish Alexander as the principle agent in their theatre of operations—a role that Alexander readily assumed on the death of his associate.

¹⁰ As Durkheim (1915 [1912]) indicates, the relationship of religion and magic is multidimensional. Thus, while those practicing religion may be hostile towards magic and magicians may be skeptical of religion, the base-line features of religion and magic are more integrated than these viewpoints suggest. Not only may magic (like science) develop as an extension of religion but the mystification of religion also bespeaks effects that have "magical" qualities.

elaborate, resourceful, compelling presentation. The night before a major event was to occur, Alexander had placed a newborn snake in a blown out goose egg, sealed it, and deposited the egg in some water that had accumulated at the newly dug foundations intended for construction by the local residents of what was to be a special temple for Apollo.

The next day, after appearing in a highly frenzied state and gathering a crowd amidst promises of the visit by a god and uttering many obscure but intensely excited references to Apollo and Asclepius, Alexander ran to the temple foundations where he continued with a display of incantations and praises to Apollo and Asclepius. It was in the midst of his excited state that Alexander would publicly discover the egg he earlier had placed in the wet mud. Breaking the egg open, the crowd witnessed, with some awe, the arrival of the promised god, in the form of a very young snake. Having thusly established the young snake's presence, relevance, and prominence, Alexander immediately ran off home with the new-found god whose arrival he had enabled.

After remaining in seclusion for a few days, Alexander allowed people to see him in a partially lit room. Attired in a manner befitting royalty Alexander now appeared in the presence of an exceedingly large but highly docile serpent. It was a setting in which he was able at once to focus attention on this wondrous phenomenon and yet quickly move individual viewers along in what would be a passing crowd of people eager to witness matters firsthand.

Concealing the snake's head in his attire, Alexander adeptly manipulated the more human-like face

of the artificial serpent's head that he and Cocconas had constructed. Keeping the highly intrigued crowd moving past himself and the god he presented, Alexander not only generated amazement at the phenomenal growth of the snake but he also provided the passing onlookers with opportunities to witness the affected movements of the (artificial) snake's head. To further establish the authenticity of the illusion he had created, Alexander let people touch the serpent's body so that they might directly ascertain its realism for themselves.

As word spread that people not only had witnessed the birth of a god but that many also had actually touched it, Lucian (*AFP*:18) notes that people begin to make paintings, statues, and other representations of the god that Alexander would announce as *Glycon*, the grandson of Zeus and the source of light to humanity.

It was at this point too, Lucian (*AFP*:19) explains, that the purpose of the larger scheme might be invoked. It was to make predictions and give oracles in order to achieve personal and financial gain. Although by no means the first to offer good fortune by foretelling the future, Alexander had announced that Glycon would make predictions and that those who wished to do so could submit written questions. Moreover, Alexander invited interested parties to place their own wax seals on their statements saying that he would return these to them unopened.

After describing some ways that one might open wax seals without detection (*AFP*:20-21), Lucian (*AFP*:22) comments on the overall resourcefulness of Alexander's responses to these questions. In

addition to combining guesswork with deception and obscurity, Alexander also would make use of his own knowledge of various medical treatments whenever these might seem appropriate. As well, whereas Alexander's predictions often were far from specific, he claimed that the meanings of his prophecies were contingent on subsequent manifestations of Glycon's will along with Alexander's prayers.

Stating that the fees charged for individual oracles were very modest overall, Lucian is quick to observe that wealthy or greedy people often submitted several questions at a time. Still, Lucian (*AFP*:23-24) notes that Alexander eventually hired a set of assistants to support his ventures. In addition to writers of oracles, sealers, and collectors of information, Alexander also sent agents to more distant areas of the Roman Empire to announce his success in solving all manners of difficulties that people might have.

As Lucian (*AFP*:25) makes clear, Alexander also had detractors. Thus, although Alexander seemed comfortable with the Platonists, the Epicureans became an obvious source of difficulty and resentment for Alexander.

Along the way, (*AFP*:26) Alexander arranged to exhibit Glycon for those who requested to see the god, although he primarily limited exposure to the serpent's body. Still, Alexander eventually promised something even more astonishing. He would provide direct consultations with (a speaking) Glycon without acting as a personal intermediary. Arranged as private hearings, these oracles involved an accomplice who spoke through a crane's wind-

pipes that had been attached to Glycon's artificial head. These communications, Lucian observes, were reserved for those sufficiently generous in their rewards for Alexander's efforts.

Whenever Alexander's prophecies proved unsuccessful, Alexander (*AFP*:27-28) adjusted and reinterpreted his messages as he developed more fitting, "after the fact," oracles.

As well, Lucian (*AFP*:29) notes, Alexander astutely befriended other priests and prophets by using certain of his oracles to encourage specific people to seek readings from these other sources.

Then, after noting that Alexander's fame had spread substantially and aroused great attention in Rome, Lucian (*AFP*:30) observes that Rutilianus, a superstitious but distinctively prominent Roman official, took particular interest in Alexander and had sent a number of messengers to consult with Alexander.

For his part, Lucian (*AFP*:31) observes, Alexander received visitors most graciously and generously, thereby encouraging good will on the part of all who contacted him. Still (*AFP*:32), as a means of exercising some personal control over certain wealthier, more powerful people, Alexander also sometimes avoided returning replies to those who sought his counsel.

After stating that a number of oracles that Alexander provided failed to materialize, Lucian further observes that when Rutilianus asked Alexander for his advice on managing his affairs, Alexander suggested that Rutilianus marry Alexander's daughter.

Rutilianus did so, seemingly envisioning that as a way of achieving a greater level of heavenly grace.

Still, Lucian (*AFP*:36) notes, Alexander's ventures assumed even grander dimensions. Thus, for example, Alexander sent messengers to several Roman cities warning the occupants of plagues, earthquakes, and other disasters that Alexander alone would be able to help them avert.

Around this same time, Alexander dispatched a series of agents to Rome to keep him informed of the concerns and circumstances of more prominent persons. As a result, Alexander often knew about these people's situations and dilemmas before they sought his counsel.

In addition to his other activities, Alexander (*AFP*:38-40) also established an annual three-day "Celebration of Mysteries" in which he affirmed his heavenly presence to the faithful. Atheists, Christians, and Epicureans were explicitly excluded from these events.

Then, after commenting on Alexander's licentious behavior at the celebrations of mysteries, Lucian says that Alexander not only had sexual relations with younger boys but also involved himself with any woman he found attractive. So compelling was Alexander's presence, Lucian says, that in many cases these women and their husbands boasted about having a child by Alexander.

Shifting topics, Lucian (*AFP*:43-47) next recounts an incident in which the Romans had lost twenty thousand soldiers in an invasion that Alexander had pre-

dicted as a victory. Alexander justified his oracle by saying that while god said there would be a victory, he did not say whether the Romans or the Germans would prevail.

Alexander (*AFP*:49-51) also devised a procedure for "providing oracles during his sleep." Collecting the scrolls on which questions were asked, Alexander stated that he would sleep on them and report the revelations that god had provided in a dream. While more impenetrable scrolls typically received more obscure responses, Alexander's responses often assumed the form of riddles.

Notably, too, for the more persistently curious, these ambiguous responses also provided opportunities for financial gain by third party translators. Sharing their fees with Alexander, these third party mediums interpreted Alexander's replies to the questions asked.

To add to the overall aura of his presence, Lucian says that Alexander at times also publicly delivered oracles to people who were not present, as well as to people who had not submitted questions, or who simply did not exist.

When sealed scrolls were delivered in languages other than those familiar to Alexander, Lucian notes that Alexander not only faced the task of accessing these materials but also that of finding translators.

Again, reminding readers that Alexander had his detractors, Lucian (*AFP*:53-54) says that he, himself, had submitted many paid inquiries to Alexander, but had received only obscure, if not more

directly irrelevant and incomprehensible, answers to his questions.

Along the way Alexander not only became aware that Lucian had been criticizing him to others but also learned that Lucian had earlier advised Rutilianus against marrying Alexander's daughter. Still, on hearing that Lucian had arrived in the community (AFP:55-56), Alexander in an apparent display of congeniality invited Lucian to visit him.

However, the already disaffected Lucian was much less gracious. Thus, when the two met and Alexander extended his hand for Lucian to kiss, Lucian reports biting Alexander's hand with such intensity that some of Alexander's supporters began beating and choking Lucian. Still, Lucian notes that Alexander quickly gained composure and announced that he would take this troublesome individual as an indication of Glycon's abilities to turn bitter enemies into friends.

After dismissing the others, Alexander informed Lucian that he knew exactly who Lucian was. Mindful of his dependence on Alexander for his immediate safety, Lucian quickly became much more accommodating to his host. Thus, when Lucian subsequently appeared with Alexander, those who had witnessed his attack on Alexander were amazed to observe the dramatic transformation that Alexander had so quickly produced.

Later, on learning that Lucian was planning to leave the community, Alexander not only sent Lucian a generous assortment of gifts but also provided a boat and crew for Lucian's voyage. [As a testimony

of sorts to Alexander's persuasive capacities, Lucian reports accepting Alexander's offer of a trip home with confidence.] Only later, on route, would Lucian learn from the ship's captain that Alexander had paid the captain to have his crew dispose of Lucian once they were well underway.

Following Alexander's attempt to have him drowned at sea, Lucian (AFP:57) says that he was determined to prosecute Alexander for his misdeeds and misrepresentations. In compiling evidence for his case, Lucian says that he found an assortment of other people to support him in this undertaking. However, much to his dismay, Lucian subsequently found that the territorial governor was deeply concerned about maintaining the good will of Rutilianus and effectively discouraged Lucian from pursuing the case.

Before concluding his account of Alexander, Lucian (AFP:58-60) comments on the Alexander's continued brashness. Thus, for instance, not only did Alexander insist that the Emperor change the name of the community to one of Alexander's preference but Alexander also proposed that the governor strike a new coin with Glycon on one side and Alexander on the other. [As Harmon (1925:173) observes, some of these coins and associated artifacts have survived the passage of time.]

Despite predicting that he would live to be 150 years of age, Alexander died at the age of 70, one of his legs having become infested with maggots. Although several of Alexander's supporters subsequently sought control of his shrine, Rutilianus proclaimed himself to be the person most fitted to assume this role for his master Alexander.

In closing this statement, Lucian (AFP:61) says that while he is pleased to provide this account for his friend Celsus, in recognition of his reason, wisdom, and quest for the truth, Lucian also offers this statement to exonerate the philosopher Epicurus and his pursuit of liberating thought. Still, Lucian hopes that this text might have some broader value to those readers who pursue reason and understanding.

As readers may appreciate, after reading the preceding material, Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet* is much more than an account of Alexander's deceptive practices. Thus, in the process of elaborating on Alexander's activities in some detail, Lucian sheds light on many other features of Alexander's theater of operations. As a result, Lucian not only has generated an instructive account of magic, charisma, religion, and people's participation in collective events but he also provides considerable insight into activity and relationships, influence work and deception, and authenticity and realism.

Since all of these matters deserve our attention as students of the human condition, one of the problems with which I have grappled was that of selecting from among these topics one of the better ways of developing a line of analysis. Mindful of Alexander's activities as a tactician, I started with a consideration of magic as a matter of intersubjective accomplishment.

Putting *Alexander the False Prophet* in Perspective

So magic, basically, is, you take the reality and you change it, and the way you impose your interpreta-

tion is by not allowing the audience the ability to sort of form alternate theories. Now the reason they can't form alternate theories is, they don't know what's about to happen. When you structure the trick, they don't know what to pay attention to. When I say I'm imposing my interpretation, in a sense I'm editing what things they pay attention to, right? If I keep it very narrow, they have to come to these conclusions... You have to do it this way, because if they can follow the events the same way you do, there will be no illusion. See, and that's a method thing, it doesn't have a lot to do with the presentation. What is the audience thinking at this point? What are they interested in at this point? How do I change things to create the illusion? You have to go through the trick and figure out each point what they want to know, and that's a method. On the presentation side, you have to go through the trick and say, "Why is the audience interested at this point and how do I keep their interest?" [Prus and Sharper 1991:256-257]

[I]t's very difficult to learn to become natural. It's something that we're not naturally inclined to do. Handling things with grace and making it appear that nothing happens is an unnatural activity...So there is the juxtaposition between nothing going on and something magical happening...The first illusion is that nothing is going on. Most people aren't aware that that is the real illusion! To the audience, there is only one illusion, "What does the magic look like?" Well, by then it's too late, because they've already been deceived by the prior illusion that nothing has taken place. [Prus and Sharper 1991:205]

As suggested in the preceding extracts, I have focused on magic as a social process in addressing

Alexander's activities as a prophet. Although people often think of magic as an individual accomplishment in much the same way that they envision charisma as an individual quality, a fuller consideration of "magic as a realm of intersubjective accomplishment" provides a valuable analytic viewpoint for comprehending aspects of charisma, religion, reality, and collective interchange.

Moreover, because both Alexander's charisma and his success as a prophet were contingent not only on his activities but also on the relationships that Alexander developed in conjunction with his followers and their interpretations thereof, these processes are very much intertwined and draw attention to some highly consequential but comparatively overlooked features of cultic life.¹¹

Although many people may envision magic as an illusion or trick that fools and amazes the naive and temporarily baffles more knowledgeable individuals, those more thoroughly embedded as performers in "the magic community" (Prus and Sharper 1991) not only are much more attentive to the dramaturgical aspects of magic but also to the importance of performers connecting with their audiences in shaping and reshaping the definitions of reality that others experience (also see: Mauss and Hubert 1972 [1902]).

¹¹ For a fuller sense of the interconnections of people's activities and relationships, along with the associated matters of people acquiring perspectives, developing identities, making commitments, experiencing emotionality, forming and coordinating associations, and participating in collective events, as well as people's involvements and continuities in particular realms of activity and associated life-worlds or subcultures, see: Prus (1996; 1997; 1999; Prus and Grills 2003).

Relatedly, whereas many people appear to think that a central aspect of being a magician is acquiring a "bag of tricks," presuming that magic exists within the props or devices that performers might use to create illusions, magic is better envisioned as a matter of intersubjective accomplishment.

Quite directly, magic does not inhere in some apparatus or movements (as in slight of hand) but is most centrally dependent on the target(s) of the illusion accepting, if only briefly, the images conveyed by the performer. Without this, even temporary acceptance of the reality [of the presentation], there is no magic. Relatedly, any intended misrepresentation that the other accepts as viable may be seen as an instance of magic, for however long that misrepresentation or fictionalization is accepted.

Like all instances of shared humor and effective communication more generally, all successful instances of illusion (i.e., all instances of deception) are dependent on audience viewpoints, interests, and interpretations. Lucian does not dwell on this, but he does point out that Alexander has had an apprenticeship in magic, as well as "the thief subculture."¹² Thus, a more contemporary statement on deception serves as a relevant point of departure for an analysis of Alexander's prophetic endeavors:

From this viewpoint, a theory of deception would have the following elements. First, we would ask about the "perspectives," interpretive frameworks, or belief

¹² Although both magicians and thieves may use deception in pursuing their objectives, it is important to distinguish "deception as a mode of entertainment" from "financial scams," "confidence games," and other means of theft that depend more centrally on deception or misrepresentation.

structures in which people conceptualize, present and experience deceptions or illusions. Within this notion of perspectives, we next ask about the definitions of self, other, and the situation that the "perpetrators of the deception" invoke. What are their interests, preliminary considerations, plans, preparations, and attempted presentations? Likewise, we would attend to the "audiences," asking how targets receive presentations of illusions. What are their interests, and what sorts of interpretations and adjustments (influences and resistances) do they make to performers as their mutual encounters transpire? Fourth, we would ask about the ways in which performers and targets view each other (identities) and the types of relationships or bonds that develop among themselves as their encounters take place. Fifth, the theory would be processual; we would try to follow the sequence along, as it was developed, experienced, and modified by the parties involved. Viewed in this manner, deceptions are social constructions. They may entail creativity and resourcefulness and may be implemented with any variety of interests or motives in mind, but they are developed in anticipation of audience reactions and only through audience reactions can they hope to achieve a sense of viability. [Prus and Sharper 1991:301]

Lucian's account of Alexander's prophecy does not address all of the aspects of deception just outlined in the sort of detail that one might desire. Nevertheless, it is apparent from the material Lucian presents here that Alexander's activities and cultic relationships are highly consistent with this broader set of processes.

Still, whereas most performances of magic, even those that are more extensively staged, have a rel-

atively fleeting quality—with these events often lasting only a few hours at most, it is worth noting that Alexander's "magic" had a considerably more encompassing and enduring quality.¹³ As well, even though a great many performers may acquire some mystique or charisma because of their capacities to transcend the abilities and/or knowledge of others in the setting, seldom are they envisioned in the potent, almost god-like terms, in which Alexander was "enshrined."

Some (including Lucian) may be tempted to dismiss those who made commitments to Alexander's oracles as gullible or naive, but it is very important to observe that Alexander not only knowingly had entrenched his persona and prophetic activities within the religious viewpoints of his contemporaries but he also actively generated an extended array of contact points between spiritual matters and the illusions he presented. As a result, Lucian's account of *Alexander the False Prophet* offers an opportunity to consider *the linkages of magic and religion* in ways that are seldom made so explicit.

Moreover, it is apparent, from examining Lucian's text, that Alexander's "magic," as well as his broader success as a prophet, involved much more than tricks or illusions and needs to be understood in terms of the ways in which Alexander dealt with his associates.

¹³ Among other things, this means that those so inclined would have had more time to observe, engage, study, and analyze (as did Lucian) Alexander's activities than is the case for many performing as magicians. This, in itself, is not a basis for skepticism as much as it would provide opportunities for exposure by those who in some way had become skeptical.

Thus, to put Alexander's prophecy in perspective, it is necessary to acknowledge various other, seemingly more mundane things that Alexander did and to recognize that many of these other matters, as well as the effects of his more specific illusions were instrumental for sustaining his personal prominence. In that regard, *Alexander the False Prophet* offers considerable insight into the matter of "cultivating charisma."

As used here, *charisma* reflects notions of esteem, intrigue, mystique, aura, or other prominent images, awes, or auras that people attribute to others (individuals, groups, or categories of people).¹⁴ Still, although charisma, like magic, is contingent on the definitions of others, charisma also is best understood as an intersubjective process. Thus, in addition to considering (a) the processes by which people attribute auras (e.g., intrigue, affection, fear) to others, a fuller understanding of charisma requires that scholars also examine (b) the enterprise in which tacticians engage in attempts to have themselves envisioned in certain fashions, (c) the manners in which tacticians endeavor to utilize current imputations of mystique, and (d) the ways that others (supporters, competitors, oppositionary parties) view and deal with these tacticians and their practices.

These matters are useful for highlighting and summarizing some of the ways that Alexander was able to establish himself as a charismatic figure, as well as alerting readers to the sorts of things that other

¹⁴ For two reviews of the literature focusing more directly on "charisma," see: Gardner and Avolio (1998) and Dawson (2009). For a more sustained analysis of influence work (and resistance) across the fuller array of interpersonal and organizational contexts, along with an ethnographic research agenda for studying the activities of tacticians and targets of persuasive endeavor, see: Prus (1999).

prophets, mediums, or psychics may do in attempts to establish their credibility and presence among their associates (also see: Cheung 2006).

Still, because Lucian more centrally focuses on Alexander "as a tactician," I will use that as a point of departure in this consideration of charisma. Mindful of tacticians' attempts more generally to shape the images of reality that others experience, I briefly reference some of Alexander's plans and preparations, as well as some of the methods he appears to have used to establish himself as someone of exceptional significance in the community.

As the earlier consideration of magic suggests, Alexander took exceptional care in shaping the images of reality or notions of "whatness" that those in his audience might experience (and act upon). While there is no guarantee that instances of truthful communications will be more readily accepted than those that are deceptive at the core, intended misrepresentations appear most effective when these are situated within contexts that targets consider authentic in other ways. Alexander seems to have been abundantly aware of this and astutely used this to his advantage.

As well, even though some illusions may be generated through the use of devices, props, sleight of hand, and other movements, performers also may selectively invoke speech, sounds, and background appearances to create more compelling (seemingly impossible) effects.

Relatedly, the things that are left unsaid or undone on particular occasions may be more consequential

for generating particular illusions than the things that people actually say or do. Moreover, as with other communications, in which speakers routinely connect all sorts of matters as they make indications to the recipients, performers also may create or accentuate illusions by focusing on (a) things that their audiences have experienced, (b) current or earlier audience emotional states, (c) their general curiosities and more particular intrigues, (d) the things they do or do not believe or "know" about some particular phenomenon, and (e) their ambiguities, hopes, and fears. Thus, whereas only some illusions may more exclusively involve abstractions or conceptual matters (what is sometimes referenced as "mental magic"), all illusions are contingent on the conceptual frames that recipients use to make sense of the matters at hand (also see: Mauss and Hubert 1972 [1902]).

Rather than simply dismiss those who accept the intended illusions, deceptions, or fictions as gullible, weak-minded, and such, it is instructive to ask *when and how anyone* might accept instances of representations as viable.

Even though some people may be defined as "more superstitious" or "spiritually-oriented" than others, and on this basis may be more likely to accept certain claims (and illusions) about the things they encounter, we might observe more generally that people's sense of confidence in the particular things they experience not only reflects the particular worldviews with which they work but also seem likely to be heightened when they can identify more substantial and/or multiple contact points with other things that they know (accept as viable) regarding

some phenomenon (i.e., can establish more indisputable and/or multiple "points of authentication").

Looking back over Lucian's account, it appears that Alexander and Cocconas not only were highly attentive to the matters of fitting their illusions into the prevailing conceptual frameworks of their associates in formulating their plans and making preparations but Alexander and Cocconas also built a series of interpretive bridges to foster credibility of Alexander's role and persona.

This is evident not only in Alexander's and Cocconas' activities involving the Temple of Apollo but also, on an ongoing basis, throughout Alexander's career as a prophet—wherein he continued to generate points of authentication on the part of those more receptively and intimately involved in his theatre of operations.

In order to focus attention on Alexander at the outset, Alexander and Cocconas went to considerable effort—before Alexander began more openly to assume the role of prophet—to establish the relevance of the name "Alexander" and to have Alexander adopt appearances of nobility, as well as assuming a degree of eccentricity as a base for what would be his emergent, visible, highly exceptional character.

Likewise, in presenting the newborn snake and then his own serpent as the god Asclepius (whom Alexander subsequently renamed Glycon), Alexander developed an extended set of authentication points. This included numerous instances of visual, witnessed activity, as well as offering spectators more immediate and undeniable physical contact with part of Glycon's

body. Later, Alexander even provided opportunities for a more select set of people to directly converse with his representation of this deity.

Even though much less dramatic, another very important aspect of Alexander's planning and preparation process was that of attending to the circumstances of his targets and their associates—what Mead (1934) would describe as “taking the role of the other” in both more generalized and more particularized terms.

Alexander and Cocconas were not only mindful of people's broader viewpoints and interpretive practices in formulating their collective venture, but they also recognized that people commonly experience more particular, more personal, often intense desires, ambiguities, and anxieties. Alexander and Cocconas planned to use these fears, desires, and ambiguities as leverage points around which to obtain financial and other considerations by offering to help people deal with their predicaments and aspirations.

In addition to comprehending these broader aspects of the human condition, Alexander also assumed a notably active role in learning more about people's circumstances. Not only did Alexander explicitly encourage people to reveal their concerns and troubles to him, but he also investigated the situations of noteworthy individuals and kept track of the matters in which these people were involved.

Whereas the preceding considerations of preparations and attending to target circumstances represent an important base for cultivating relationships in Alexander's prophecy, it is important to acknowl-

edge some other aspects of Alexander's activities that likely contributed to his success as a prophet and, by implication, consider the relevance of related practices for other psychics, spiritualists, mystics, and religious leaders.

Although a more marginal observation in some respects, it is worth noting, as Lucian points out, that Alexander had an exceptionally striking appearance and character. Lucian suggests that Alexander seemed to have become aware of the way others tended to see him early in life and not only cultivated these qualities along the way but also built advantageously on this realization as he related to others more generally.¹⁵

In addition to learning about people's circumstances, Alexander also appears to have taken what was interpreted by these others as a visible, empathetic interest in their situations. Thus, whereas his offers of help were financially accessible to many, the people with whom Alexander interacted typically seemed confident of his capacity to help, as well as his interests in their well-being.¹⁶

¹⁵ This process seems to parallel what Goffman (1963) refers to as “the natural cycle of passing,” wherein someone who is stigmatized, passes (as a normal) on occasion, begins to see benefits of being treated in this manner, and then endeavors more systematically to pass as a normal. Orrin Klapp (1969) outlines a similar set of processes in discussing the careers of those (“heroes,” “villains,” and “fools”) who become “symbolic leaders.” Indeed those recognized as “celebrities of sorts” (including Alexander) may find themselves accepting the reality of the definitions of the other, even though they may somewhat simultaneously realize that their personal roots and activities do not justify these claims. Also see Mauss and Hubert's (1972 [1902]) remarkably astute *A General Theory of Magic* which they developed around spiritually-enabled healing.

¹⁶ This capacity to generate trust on the part of the other rather notably included Lucian. Thus, despite Lucian's pronounced earlier cynicism and disaffection, Lucian reports that he had no reservations about accepting Alexander's offer of a (presumably safe) voyage home.

Notably, too, even in responding to people's requests of help, Alexander not only maintained a sense of mystique and encouraged a loyalty of dependency on the part of those wishing to know (and shape) the future. Moreover, Alexander appears to have strategically invoked his intermediate role as a messenger—sometimes claiming much closer affinities with divinity and sometimes disclaiming personal accountability for more ambiguous or erroneous prophecies as a mere messenger of the gods.

As well, it is worth noting that while dealing with both spectators and adherents over a period of twenty years, Alexander continued to adjust, improvise, and extend his qualities, abilities, and claims as a prophet. In the process, Alexander gave people even more of what they wanted, reworking his routines mindful of their desires and their willingness to support him and his ventures.

Still, whereas Alexander achieved a substantial following, he also had an assortment of competitors and opponents (including Lucian) with whom to deal. Alexander seems to have offset some potential animosity and criticism from his more immediate competitors (priests, prophets, psychics, spiritualists) by assimilating some of these practitioners into his broader theater of operations.

Nevertheless, as Lucian indicates, Alexander also had his detractors, most notably the skeptics, the Epicureans, and the Christians. When unable to reason with, charm, or otherwise neutralize opponents, Alexander (with the apparent assistance of his supporters) explicitly sought to exclude these people from his assemblies. As well, in Lucian's case

at least, Alexander appears willing to more completely eliminate his opponents using the screens of tolerance, friendship, and trust.

Before turning more directly to the second of Lucian's texts considered in this paper, it may be appropriate to comment, albeit briefly, on the authenticity and illusions invoked by prophets, spiritualists, psychics, mediums, and the like.

Attending to the analyses of prophecy and destiny developed by Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE) in *On Divination* and *On Fate* (Prus 2011d), it may be observed that all instances of foretelling the future are fraught with inauthenticity.¹⁷ Thus, while not denying the relative accuracy of some predictions of the future, and allowing for all matters of coincidences, as well as the more systematic patterns that people may discern in nature more generally and the human condition more specifically, prophecy and other claims to foretell the future are subject to a conceptual problematic.

First, if all is fated, there is no reason to suppose that knowing the future would offer any advantage. Indeed, the best that could happen is that people could watch with anticipation that which is about to unfold. Relatedly, if all were fated, there would be no capacity for human intervention—either through people's more direct physical activities or through their thoughts, hopes, prayers, and the like.

¹⁷ While not referencing predictions based on more sustained study as infallible, Cicero distinguishes scientific predictions (based on studies of past experiences) from claims of predestination or fatalism based on interpretations of signs that are not amenable to sensory examinations.

Indeed, only if it were possible for people to knowingly and deliberately enter into “the process of becoming” before particular things took place, would it be useful to know aspects of the future.

However, if people could “enter into the process of becoming” in some meaningful, intentioned, interventionist terms (as though activities), then the future would no longer be fated and thus would be unknowable.¹⁸ Moreover, since all aspects of the future would be intricately related to the things that happened in the past, any intervention would restructure the future. It is not possible, therefore, to viably claim combinations of fate or destiny and agency.¹⁹

This is not to deny the value of prophets, mediums, spiritualists, and others for providing people with a sense of direction or for suggesting ways of dealing with their dilemmas, troubles, or aspirations within the ambiguities of community life.²⁰ However, to claim any special insight beyond that associated with (possibly more) knowledgeable and/or thoughtful individuals suggests an illusion. These [claims] may be perpetrated (articulated, objectified, acknowledged) through long-standing variants of

mysticism—as evidenced in the formulation of ideologies or belief systems, points of reference, procedures, and assemblies, as well as indications that others accept, believe in, and act on these claims to knowing.

While it is important that the relationship of religion and magic (as in the practice, promotion, and acceptance of illusions) be studied more systematically by those in the human sciences, it is also worthwhile noting, as Emile Durkheim (1915 [1912]) observes, that people’s involvements in religion provide a collective source of confidence and personal strength, direction, and community that those lacking these involvements may not possess.

That is, regardless of the authenticity of the claims that might be made for these viewpoints, these expressions of spirituality and the particular communities or cults that develop around these realms of activity and interchange nevertheless represent mechanisms by which people may deal with ambiguity, trouble, loss, as well as sustain hopes and desires.

Consequently, beyond the things that specific prophets or spiritualists do or do not do, it is important to attend to the matters that adherents experience on more personal, as well as collective terms as they interact with prophets and other spiritual leaders, as well as participate in collective events with others in their respective communities.

In addition to the presentations (and claims) generated by prophets and spiritualists, as well as the ways they relate to those who attend to their mes-

sages, it is instructive to be mindful of the matters for which their audiences might desire assistance, the ways they pursue these interests, the experiences they have as a consequence of their association with those “visionaries” or “mediums,” and the things that these people do to support and maintain their spiritual leaders, as well as help sustain one another within the broader collectivity of which they are part.²¹

It is mindful of people’s desires to shape the future amidst the challenges, struggles, and uncertainties of everyday life that we now turn to a somewhat broader set of people’s intrigues with the supernatural.

The Lover of Lies, or The Doubter

Whereas Lucian’s *The Lover of Lies, or The Doubter* [hereafter *LL*; although more appropriately entitled “the lovers of lies and the doubter”] revolves primarily around incredible claims pertaining to the supernatural,²² this little text provides some valuable transhistorical materials and associated in-

²¹ Although Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert (1972 [1902]) seem unaware of Lucian’s account of *Alexander the False Prophet*, their cross-cultural, ethnohistorically informed analysis of magic as spiritually-enabled problem-solving is notably consistent with the conceptual materials introduced here. More methodologically rigorous as well as more explicitly sociological in emphasis, Mauss and Hubert also address (and illustrate) in some detail the centrality of people’s perspectives on the nature of “the whatness of reality”—with magicians giving meaning to the problems and ambiguities that people are experiencing through their preparations, activities, impression management, and the establishing of connections. In both cases, we begin to see successful instances of the contrived shaping of reality as *collectively achieved events*.

²² This statement has been developed from A. M. Harmon’s (1921) translation of *The Lover of Lies, or The Doubter* from Lucian (Loeb edition), volume 3, pages 320-381. The references provided in the present paper are to the (now standardized) notations that accompany the Greek texts in the Loeb English translation. Readers are referred to the fuller, considerably more detailed account that Harmon provides.

sights of relevance to the broader sociological study of human knowing and acting.²³

Relatedly, while some contemporary readers may be inclined to dismiss both the fabrications and the apparent willingness of people to accept these fictions as indications of less sophisticated, less scientifically informed, and less technologically advanced times, it may be acknowledged that many of our contemporaries accept or even adamantly insist on the viability of fatalism or destiny, prophecies, and dream-based messages, visions, and other spiritual predictions of the future, and miracles, as well as ghosts, angels, and other spirits. Many also are intrigued with the possibility of communication with the deceased, reincarnation and earlier lives, and instances of the resurrection of the dead.²⁴

Moreover, even though some may be highly skeptical of these matters, others may assign exceptionally high levels of realism to these viewpoints and employ these as particularly consequential, if not primary, reference points for directing their own lives and those of others. As well, although people’s beliefs may be “individual matters” in certain respects, the expression, confirmation, articulation, and maintenance of these standpoints, including the tendency to explain puzzling features of one’s own experiences in supernatural terms, is most evident in, and appears to derive substance through, group interchanges involving like-minded others.

²³ For a more sustained conceptual account of “in defense of knowing as well as in defense of doubting,” see Prus’ (2006) interactionist analyses of Cicero’s *Academica*.

²⁴ It should not be assumed that those adopting and/or encouraging these viewpoints are poorly educated people.

In what follows, I provide a synoptic rendering of Lucian's *The Lover of Lies*, attending to the overall flow of his text. Still, before doing so, it may be helpful to highlight some of the conceptual themes Lucian addresses in this statement.

First, while acknowledging people's more general intrigues with the supernatural, Lucian's statement suggests that some of the best educated and most thoughtful individuals of his time found conversing about supernatural matters and listening to the accounts offered by others to be a matter of considerable interest.²⁵ Rather than questioning the viability of one another's remarkable claims, they appear to accept these other accounts as providing credibility for their own intrigues and/or claims about the supernatural.

Although Lucian does not dwell on this point, it is apparent that the people he discusses not only have been exposed to conceptions of the supernatural at young ages but that the mystification that they experience also has a broader base in the community.

It also is evident that disbelievers or doubters are not especially appreciated in the settings in which claims about the supernatural are made. Thus, whereas attempts variously may be made to inform, explain, and convince skeptics of the viability of the supernatural in certain settings, those

who refuse to accept standpoints of these sorts can expect to be confronted, chastised, ridiculed, excluded, and/or more directly rejected from those settings in which those assembled make claims about the supernatural.

Whereas the occasion that Lucian discusses lacks a clear, particular religious focus, Lucian suggests that the emotional involvements of the participants in collective events can notably overshadow the same people's more characteristic concerns with reason and evidence. Interestingly, as well, there is the further suggestion that *even skeptics* require the association of like-minded others if they are to sustain an emphasis on reason and authenticity.

In making this point, I am contending that the interchanges that Lucian depicts here involve much more than the portrayal of two different, seemingly incompatible viewpoints. Thus, the significance of people's participation in and experiences with these collectively accomplished events should not be overlooked—for it is in these interactional contexts that the particular things that people say and do (including the ways the participants express, attend to, and sequentially participate in the development of these interchanges with others) acquire a realism that transcends the particular things they say or do.

Lucian presents *The Lover of Lies* as a dialogue between two speakers—Tychiades and Philocles. Tychiades describes his recent experiences while visiting with a group of highly educated and respected associates at the home of Eucrates, a person whom Tychiades notes is generally considered to epitomize local trust, truth, and wisdom.

Lucian (LL:1) opens *The Lover of Lies, or The Doubter* with Tychiades asking his associate, Philocles, why people take such great pleasure both in telling preposterous tales to others and attentively listening to others who also make claims about incredulous matters.

Observing that he can appreciate the sensibility of people who "lie for gain," as well as the practices of poets who fabricate for purposes of entertainment, Tychiades says he is highly perplexed by those who not only tell incredible tales but who then further insist on their truthfulness. This is even more perplexing because some of these people are among the most thoughtful, responsible, and discerning members of the community.

As he elaborates on his experiences, Tychiades (LL:6) stresses the overall wisdom and virtue of those assembled at Eucrates' residence. Tychiades (LL:7-9) explains that these people had been discussing ailments and treatments, but then began to talk about remedies of such increasingly fabulous sorts that Tychiades felt obliged to ask if anyone could actually believe in these cures.

To his surprise, Tychiades not only encountered ridicule for his skepticism, but amidst his attempts to defend himself, Tychiades (LL:10) also was subsequently accused of disbelief in the gods and all that is holy. Although he directly affirmed his respect for the gods and acknowledged the good that they do, Tychiades defended his skepticism, saying that this did not justify the fabulous claims being made.

Tychiades (LL:11-14) subsequently found that his reasoned protests were dismissed as others at the

gathering proceeded to provide accounts of people being brought back to life, of people flying, walking on water, and being transformed into other life-forms.

Following further objections on his part, Tychiades (LL:15-19) was presented with additional second-hand, as well as first person testimonies of people exorcising spirits, encountering spirits, and witnessing statues coming to life.

Along the way, Tychiades (LL:20-28) also was cautioned about his skepticism and chastised for his alleged sarcasm, amidst accounts of the extensive harm that inanimate objects can intentionally inflict on people, as well as accounts involving incredible creatures, trips to Hades (Hell), and deceased individuals being restored to life.

While anticipating an ally in his quest for reason with the arrival of another renowned sagely guest, Tychiades (LL:29-32) was even more surprised to find that once Arignotus the Pythagorean had been appraised of the overall conversational flow, the newcomer not only rebuked Tychiades for his skepticism but also asserted that he himself had driven a terrifying spirit out of a house in Corinth and proceeded to provide a detailed account of the event.

Even as Tychiades' hopes for a sensible intellectual companion vanished, the host, Eucrates (LL:33-36), presented another testimony regarding his own observations and personal experiences with some mystical incantations that had the capacity to generate extended movement in inanimate objects.

²⁵ As indicated in the text compiled by Theresa Cheung (2006), intrigues with the supernatural, as signified by séances, prophesies, parapsychology, and the like in the 1850s-1900s not only attracted but also were endorsed at various points in time by a broad assortment of intellectuals, celebrities, and other public figures.

Then, after dismissing Tychiades' (LL:37-38) protests that the speakers should be mindful not to fill the minds of some young people present in their midst with fear, terror, and superstition, Eucrates began an account of yet another incredible event.

Noting that he subsequently had constructed an excuse for departing in the middle of Eucrates' tale, Tychiades (LL:39-40) tells Philocles that he now has a pressing desire for a dose of forgetfulness, lest the preceding topics of conversation stay with him in less beneficial ways. Philocles acknowledges the effects of such accounts not only on those who experience them more directly but even those, such as himself, who are exposed to those ideas through secondary sources. Tychiades concludes their interchange with the observation that as long as they can be attentive to the truth and sound reasoning practices, they should be able to minimize the effects of encounters of the sort he has been discussing.

A Contemporary Sequel... Encountering Spirituality

Although Lucian's account of Tychiades' experiences may seem like a quaint episode from the distant past, I will briefly comment on some of my own, albeit limited experiences as an outsider at a few collective events involving people from some spiritual communities.²⁶

At one of the first "spiritualist" gatherings I attended I was quickly struck by the abrupt but clearly assertive claim that, "There are no coincidences!"

²⁶ I did not attend these events as a researcher, but instead was a guest of one of the participants.

[The associated claim is that "Everything happens for a reason."] When I said, "Of course, there are coincidences," I, like Tychiades, was subjected to a series of rebuffs, explanations, accounts, and testimonials, as well as some visible disaffection and some pointed distancing.²⁷ I had not anticipated the ensuing reception to my comment, but apparently I had breached some sacred conceptual territory.

As with Tychiades, I found that many of the accounts and modes of evidence that my associates offered were dubious, if not distinctively far-fetched at times. I also found that those defending the group's position not only bounced from topic to topic but they also freely mixed accounts of personal experiences with reports about third party others, references to particular mystical ideologies and authorities, metaphors about the problems of truly knowing in other contexts, and references to the potency of dreams and meditation experiences. As

²⁷ Only later would I realize that the claim [more accurately expressed] is that there are no random occurrences—that everything somehow is [has always been?] rationally predetermined by the [vague] forces of the universe. This often is more casually expressed as, "Everything happens for a reason." Still, despite claims regarding predetermined occurrences, the same people insist that they, themselves, can enter into the causal process as agents—with little apparent attentiveness to either (a) the broader (universalistic) implications of their own acts or (b) the effective *invalidation* of the claimed predestined course of events.

Individuals questioning or disagreeing with this position, variously, may be patiently, abruptly, or aggressively informed of the outsider's failure to "comprehend how things really are." Questions such as "whose reason prevails" or "what is the source of the reason" at best are followed by an insistent contention that "everything can be reduced to energy" [as if reason inheres in energy]. In most cases I've observed, especially in group contexts, emotional conviction to a spiritualist viewpoint is seen as vastly superior to comparative analyses and resultant conceptual implications.

Readers are referred to Cicero's *On Divination, On Fate, and On the Nature of the Gods* for much more sustained, conceptually sophisticated analyses of the associated materials on human knowing and acting as this pertains to the matters of fate, predestination, divination and divinity (Prus 2011d).

well, there were some general insistences that, "You just feel it!"

Some of the more common claims I encountered (with widespread acknowledgments among the participants) involved reincarnation, messages embedded within dreams, predestination, and knowledge about people's former as well as future (after death) lives, as well as affirmations about the powers of particular psychics or mediums. Relatedly, there were claims and acknowledgements of the spirits of deceased individuals returning in other life-forms to communicate with the presently living. I also noticed that people would sometimes reference aspects of particular movies, spiritualist and clearly recognized fictional publications, and even staged magic performances as (metaphoric) evidence that the claims they were making had greater authenticity (allegedly reflecting the realistic realms of possibilities) than outsiders might acknowledge. Likewise, if particular claims could not be directly disproved by outsiders, this was often taken as evidence that an openness to the broader realm of claims was indicative of more informed (spiritualist) minds.

Speaking more generally, I would describe the people participating in these events as competent, responsible, and well educated people. I also was pointedly informed on numerous occasions that many people adopting spiritualist viewpoints were scientists, engineers, and educators—many of whom "had now become aware of how things really are"—that there are many matters beyond human comprehension and rational thought. Overall, more women than men appeared to be involved in spiritualist

life-styles and, as far as I can tell, most of the people I encountered actively participated in in spiritualist-related alternative health practices. Still, it seems difficult to differentiate the participants in these events in most other ways from people with similar educational and vocational backgrounds. Likewise, with a few more idiosyncratic exceptions, most of the people I encountered in the settings would readily blend into the more conventional community.

Even though it was evident, from some more isolated comments that some of the participants later made, that my skepticism was at times shared by some people in these settings, seldom were the participants directly questioned about the most incredible claims they might make. Instead each speaker was seen to offer something valuable to the gathering, as well as interesting to the individuals present. Tolerance granted to earlier speakers also seemed to help provide a context in which the views of other participants might more readily be accepted.²⁸

While in these settings, I was bothered by what seemed a very easy but uneven mixing of aspects of

²⁸ When I later pointedly asked some of the participants with whom I had closer contact if they really believed some of the things that others had claimed, I frequently was told that "anything is possible" and "there are many things beyond our comprehension"—often supplemented by instances of matters involving the speaker and others that were envisioned as inexplicable in other terms. Thus, whereas these people (at other times) might voluntarily express doubts about things that certain others had said, outsider requests for fuller explanations or other sustained quests for details generally were not welcome. More persistent curiosity on my part was not appreciated and emotional disaffection and detachment typically were part of the treatment I encountered for my desires for clarification. Relatedly, I was reminded of Mauss and Hubert's (1972 [1902]) observation that belief in any part of the spiritual world implies a broader (emotional), even if notably softer, receptivity to other expressions (casual hearsay, specific claims, activities, and interchanges) of associated spiritual and mystical matters.

truth and fiction. It also became quite apparent that the notions of authenticity (as with cross-cultural and cross-contextual comparative analysis) with which I worked were not shared by most participants when spiritualist topics were being discussed. However, I know from other conversations that the same people can be highly analytically discerning when dealing with other topics. Still, as I attended more of these gatherings and talked with the participants in other settings, I also began to realize that these events could assume a variety of “intellectually engaging” dimensions for the participants.²⁹

Thus, in addition to more casual intrigues, as well as more intense fascinations, with broader ranges of matters pertaining to spirituality and divinity, desires for insights into the future, and the prospects of other lives,³⁰ some people participating in these events might have more immediate, more intense senses of anxiety, fears, and losses, while others might share some more general, but still noteworthy apprehensions about the future.

As with people involved in other subcultural contexts (Prus 1997), both particular events and more casual gatherings offered many “continuities of re-

ality.” This became evident in matters pertaining to group related identities, activities, expressions of emotionality, relationships, and consensual validations of claims to knowing, as well as memories of shared events and references to challenges, tactics, resources, commitments, sacrifices, and spiritually-related accomplishments. It also became apparent that the broader matters of sociability, friendship, entertainment, and shared meals and refreshments, along with the affectivity associated with participants’ personal observations and acknowledgments within these gatherings, contributed notably to the continuity of people’s *attentiveness to spirituality* as a meaningful, consequential realm of personally lived experience.

Accordingly, while I experienced a number of parallels with the interchanges that Tychiades reports to his friend and “trusted other,” Philocles, it appears that attention to these other matters may help explain some of people’s tendencies to engage, as well as sustain collectively expressed images of the supernatural. Minimally, these would seem to suggest points of inquiry for those who wish to learn more about people’s involvements in spirituality and their intrigues with the supernatural.

In Conclusion

There are a number of branches of philosophy that have not as yet been by any means adequately explored; but the inquiry into the nature of the gods, which is both highly interesting in relation to the theory of the soul, and fundamentally important for the regulation of religion, is one of special difficulty and obscurity...The multiplicity and variety of the opinions held upon this

subject by eminent scholars are bound to constitute a strong argument for the view that philosophy has its origin and starting-point in ignorance, and that the Academic School were well-advised in “withholding assent” from beliefs that are uncertain...[M]ost thinkers have affirmed that the gods exist, and this is the most probable view and the one to which we are all led by nature’s guidance; but Protagoras declared himself uncertain, and Diagoras of Melos and Theodorus of Cyrene held that there are no gods at all. Moreover, the upholders of the divine existence differ and disagree so widely, that it would be a troublesome task to recount their opinions. Many views are put forward about the outward form of the gods, their dwelling-places and abodes, and mode of life, and these topics are debated with the widest variety of opinion among philosophers; but as to the question upon which the whole issue of the dispute principally turns, whether the gods are entirely idle and inactive, taking no part at all in the direction and government of the world, or whether on the contrary all things both were created and ordered by them in the beginning and are controlled and kept in motion by them throughout eternity, here there is the greatest disagreement of all. And until this issue is decided, mankind must continue to labour under the profoundest uncertainty, and to be in ignorance about matters of the highest moment. [Cicero 1933, I:1-2]

Lucian may have lived some 2000 years ago, but the matters he discusses in *Alexander the False Prophet* and *The Lover of Lies* have considerable relevance to the situations and practices of a significant proportion of contemporary society.

Thus, whereas some may hope, anticipate, or claim that science will provide all of the answers pertinent

to human knowing and acting, it is apparent that neither philosophy (Cicero 106-43 BCE) nor science (Durkheim 1915 [1912]) have the capacity to answer many of the questions that people have about the cosmos, people’s places within, and the ever unfolding nature of the future.

Even though people, rather inevitably, make claims about the future, as well as “what presently is,” as they go about their activities, the future represents realms of ambiguity—the significance of which is intensified as a consequence of people’s hopes and fears regarding the future. Moreover, because individual instances of human life are so fundamentally intermeshed in the life-worlds of their associates, people often seem to appreciate knowing that they share significant points of uncertainty with an extended set of others.

As well, whereas science and logic operate on an impersonal level, people live their lives on much more personal, intimate levels. Thus, while people may abstractedly, more impersonally consider the nature of things, they still typically experience their own hopes and fears, comforts and pains, and opportunities and dilemmas in much more direct and immediate terms.³¹

Mindful of these matters, there are many opportunities for prophets, mediums, psychics, and spiritu-

²⁹ Although this observation surprised me, even as I thought about it, it appears that for some people an engagement of spiritualist matters (as in discussions, testimonials, lectures, reading and other media materials, and the like) might be *the major source of intellectual continuity in their lives*. Notably, thus, people’s more technically demanding work roles often appear to be taken for granted or seen as uninspiring. By contrast, people developing active intrigues in spiritualist matters might engage these “fields of study” in highly sustained, focused ways—especially when in the company of similarly fascinated others.

³⁰ Despite some intense claims on the validity of an afterlife existence, most also seemed fearful of dying. When I asked more about this seeming contradiction, I sometimes was told, “You just don’t understand! You need to learn more about this area!” or, “I don’t want to get into that!”

³¹ When people have experiences that they are unable to explain or resolve in more conventional terms, especially if these experiences are more disconcerting (as in troubling dreams, peculiar coincidences, unexpected sensations, unusual curiosities or fascinations, shameful behaviors and desires, as well as matters of illness, losses, and pressing dilemmas), they may through senses of curiosity and/or desperation continue to seek answers in alternative sources.

alists to enter into the meaning-making process of any who might desire “insider information” about the future.

Moreover, because they offer portals through which those experiencing dilemmas, anxieties, suffering, and loss may gain glimpses into the future, prophets, psychics, and other spiritualists may be able to generate more personalized instances of dependency and loyalty on the part of individual associates, as well as develop and maintain more distinct sets of collective followings.

Proportionately few contemporary spiritualist leaders may have approximated the success that Alexander was able to achieve. Nevertheless, there are a great many opportunities for interpersonal and financial gain for those who more systematically cultivate the means of relating to others in prophetic and/or spiritualist terms.³²

Very few of the people I encountered in the spiritualist community seem attentive to history or so-

cial process in careful, sustained ways.³³ Indeed, even though they frequently referenced and read popular publications on spirituality, most avoid detailed analyses of the phenomena in which they are involved. Not infrequently, thus, they often insist that spiritualist claims and practices are distinctively powerful. Many also suggest that these spiritualist viewpoints are relatively recent and insightfully unique to our own time. Still, as Mauss and Hubert (1972 [1902]) observe, even the most original and daring spiritualist magicians (presumably including Lucian’s Alexander here) typically build on the traditions (as in viewpoints, practices, images, legends, knowledge and technologies, interactional styles, emotional expressions, and dependencies) developed by their predecessors.³⁴

Regardless of whether claims and prophecies are developed in (a) more distinctive religious or spiritual terms, (b) particular entertainment motifs, (c) embedded in fictionalized conceptions of science, or (d) ideologies of political activism, they offer hope and direction to those who desire ways of

³³ In contrast to most of the people that I encountered in the spiritual communities discussed herein, I have also met people who engage spirituality in much more sustained conceptual, analytic, and historical terms at academic conferences on religion and spirituality. Whereas some of these people approach spirituality more consistently in pluralist analytic terms, others approach the study of spirituality more selectively and in ways that more closely approximate the pursuits of studious church-based theologians.

³⁴ As well, it is to be acknowledged that even those who may be inclined to be skeptical or cynical about prophecies, mediums, and other spiritual advisors are apt to have experienced wide ranges of interpersonal exposure and media portrayals since early childhood. Likewise, a great many people are likely to have encountered others who have had involvements with psychics, fortune tellers, spiritualists, and other mediums offering advice pertaining to the future, as well as providing accounts of alleged instances of encounters with spiritual and other mystical essences.

transforming themselves beyond the limits of their present circumstances.

Relatedly, as people (a) develop contacts with others who participate in the supernatural as consumers or practitioners, (b) experimentally venture into spiritual arenas, and (c) make investments or other commitments along these lines, they seem apt to become more intrigued with other variants of mystical beliefs about the future and practices thereof. Moreover, insofar as they find others who share these viewpoints, they are even more apt to become more convinced of “the realism of spirituality”—a process that seems to be heightened when they, themselves, successfully appear to persuade others to accept these viewpoints (a point clearly made by Festinger, Riecken, and Schacter 1956).

As Lucian suggests in *The Lover of Lies*, adherents may make some attempts to integrate skeptical associates into spiritualist practices and events, but those who more extensively question spiritualist claims in these settings are apt to be dismissed, excluded, and sometimes sharply rejected.

The realism of spirituality does not just exist at the cognitive, informational level of “beliefs” or the behavioral level of “practices.” *It is also embedded in people’s emotional experiences and their relations with others in the setting.* These consequential aspects of people’s spiritual realism also reflect (a) the more particular emotional experiences that they associate with spirituality—as in wonder, excitement, novelty, fascination, fears of the unknown, and anxieties about mystical essences or forces, (b) the broader range of emotionality that people might ex-

perience with any realms of activity, relationships, identities, settings, and accomplishments that they might associate with spirituality, and (c) the more particular senses of hope and direction, as well as fear and desperation associated with illness, trouble, loss, and so forth.³⁵ Relatedly (as Durkheim 1915 [1912] so instructively indicates), there are (d) emotional states associated with people’s senses of direction, answers to dilemmas and problems, and the collective experience of being part of a potent essence that not only transcends one’s own personal limitations but also those of other people. Both the collective events and the seemingly more routinized organizational activities in which people participate, thus, are not just sets of beliefs and behaviors but are contingent on the emotional states associated with “a minded awareness of involvement,” expressing oneself, managing difficult circumstances, and accomplishing something worthwhile *through and within a community of others.*

Even the aspects of entertainment that people associate within these contexts are not limited to (a) the conceptual contents, sensations, and emotionality associated with the things that others might say and do. Entertainment also reflects (b) people’s own involvements as performers in sharing matters of interest with others and, perhaps more importantly yet, (c) actively developing mutual

³⁵ Rather than envision emotionality as a “psychological matter,” I (like Mauss and Hubert 1964 [1898]; 1972 [1902] and Durkheim 1915 [1912]) have approached emotionality as a biologically-enabled but *socially constituted* (i.e., interactively achieved, conceptually informed, engaged, enacted, adjustive) process (see: Prus 1996; 2008a; 2010; 2013a) that is amenable to ethnographic inquiry and sustained comparative analysis.

intrigues in conjunctions with others in the course of ongoing collective events.

Although the interactionists have given relatively little focused attention to people's involvements in religion and spirituality,³⁶ some instructive research on these sectors of community life has been conducted within the interactionist tradition. This includes J. L. Simmons' (1964) account of people involved in an extrasensory perception cult; John Lofland's (1977 [1966]) depiction of conversion processes in the doomsday cult; E. L. Quarantelli and Dennis Wenger's (1973) study of a Ouija board cult; Prus' (1976) study of the recruitment practices of Christian clergy and some Jewish Rabbi; Samuel Heilman's (1976; 1983) work on synagogue life; Sheryl Kleinman's (1984) depiction of seminarians as humanist professionals; Gordon Shepherd's (1987) social construction of a religious prophecy; William Shaffir's (1991; 1993; 1995; 2000a; 2000b; 2001; 2002; 2004; 2006; 2007) insightful studies of Orthodox Judaism and prophetic events; Danny Jorgensen's (1992) account of the occult milieu and Tarot card reading; Alexander Chirila's (2014) insightful study of the extension of a folk Nigerian religion's movement into North America and other contemporary international contexts; and Arthur McLuhan's (2014) study of social production of character in two different Christian seminary contexts.

Also noteworthy are works that display strong affinities with the interactionist tradition. This

includes Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert's exceptionally detailed analysis of religious sacrifice (1964 [1898]) and spiritually enabled healing (1972 [1902]), as well as Marcel Mauss' (2003 [1909]) account of prayer as a socially engaged process; Emile Durkheim's (1915 [1912]) highly sustained ethnohistorical and conceptually astute study of religion; Leon Festinger and colleagues' (1956) and Tumminia's (1998) studies of the maintenance of failed prophecy in flying saucer cults; Marcelo Truzzi's (1971; 1972; 1975) analyses of the occult as a realm of popular culture; Charlotte Tatro's (1974) account of Gypsy fortune-telling; John Heeren and Marylee Mason's (1990) depiction of visions and spiritual readings; David Van Zandt's (1991) account of life in the Children of God; and Graham Jones' (2012) study of conjuring practices intended to generate interest in Christian theology.³⁷

In addition to an earlier statement from Lucian that engages other aspects of people's conceptions of knowing and their associated experiences with divinity (Prus 2015b) and the present statement

³⁷ Clearly, there are other materials in anthropology, philosophy, classical studies, religious studies, theology, history, and the broader humanist literature that offer valuable reference points for a fuller comprehension of people's lived experiences relative to the study of religion and spirituality. Still, the most valuable materials are those developed more extensively in detailed, pluralistic, activity-oriented terms, and more particularly discuss the materials at hand from the view of the participants. By contrast, researchers and analysts, as well as practitioners and others, who impose analytic frames on the participants, typically contribute little to the study of religion and spirituality as humanly engaged, humanly experienced life-worlds or the broader study of human lived experience. This includes most materials developed by (a) structurally-oriented psychologists and sociologists, (b) commentators striving to appeal to popular audiences and/or catering to other vested interests, and (c) those promoting activist standpoints. For an elaboration of these and related practices as discussed by Lucian and some contemporary interactionist scholars, see: Prus (2008c).

³⁶ In addition to her own work, Tumminia (1998) provides a brief review of some other ethnomethodological works pertinent to the study of prophecies and the maintenance of other spiritualist/religious viewpoints.

from Lucian that addresses (a) the life and practices of "Alexander the false prophet" and (b) the long-standing intrigues of people with the supernatural and their disaffections with those who would doubt their claims, readers also are referred to other pragmatist-oriented ethnohistorical materials on religion found in Plato's (420-348 BCE) considerations of the processes and problematics of defending and questioning religion within the enacted, moral, and organizational context of community life (Prus 2013b), Marcus Tullius Cicero's (106-43 BCE) remarkably astute analyses of the philosophy (and sociology) of divine and human knowing (Prus 2011d), and Dio Chrysostom's (40-120) insightful consideration of the processes and problematics of artistically representing divinity (Prus 2011c).

More work along these lines is important for achieving more comprehensive understandings of religion as a humanly-engaged realm of activity. However, given the still notably extended and detailed set of materials referenced in this paper, researchers and analysts would have considerable resources with which to tentatively but still more systematically examine, delineate, assess, and more precisely articulate concepts (i.e., generic social processes) pertaining to people's involvements in religion and spirituality as collectively achieved, enacted, and sustained realms of human lived experience.

Researchers and analysts attending to the interactionist tradition have an extended array of resources (theory, concepts, methodology, and nearly a century of conceptually-oriented ethnographic

inquiry) with which to establish the conceptual and methodological parameters of their inquiries. By examining people's activities, relationships, perspectives, identities, emotionality, collective events, and other organizational interchanges across wide ranges of community life, researchers are in a position to develop more extensive inquiries regarding people's involvements in religious and spiritualist life-worlds—both in our own time and through the ethnohistorical accounts of people's life-worlds that we encounter in the broader literature. Moreover, by approaching things in process-based, conceptually-oriented terms, students of the human condition also may begin to better appreciate the developmental, activity-grounded interfusions of various aspects of community life.

Lucian could have been more precise, thorough, and attentive to the fuller range of the experiences of those whose life-worlds he addresses in the two texts featured here. Likewise, Lucian's accounts may appear notably modest when compared to the work on religion provided by Plato, Cicero, and Durkheim, for example. However, we can be grateful to Lucian for extending our understanding of religion and spirituality as humanly engaged social processes. Not only do Lucian's accounts of *Alexander The False Prophet* and *The Lover of Lies, or The Doubter* provide numerous departure points for further thought and inquiry on religion and spirituality, as well as the associated matters of charisma and magic, but these two statements also offer a set of resources that could be used in developing more comprehensive understandings of human lived experience and interchange.

Appendix

On Studying Religion and Spirituality: Attending to the Realism of Elusive Essences

We have said that there is something eternal in religion: it is the cult and the faith. Men cannot celebrate ceremonies for which they see no reason, nor can they accept a faith which they in no way understand. To spread itself or merely to maintain itself, it must be justified, that is to say, a theory must be made of it. A theory of this sort must undoubtedly be founded upon the different sciences, from the moment when these exist [i.e., as conceptual understandings begin to emerge in any community context—RP]; first of all, upon the social sciences, for religious faith has its origin in society; then upon psychology, for society as a synthesis of human consciousness; and finally upon the sciences of nature, for man and society are part of the universe and can be abstracted from it only artificially. But howsoever important these facts taken from the constituted social sciences may be, they are not enough; for faith is before all else an impetus to action, while science, no matter how far it may be pushed, always remains at a distance from this. Science is fragmentary and incomplete; it advances but slowly and is never finished; but life cannot wait. The theories which are designed to make men live and act are therefore obliged to pass science and complete it prematurely. [Durkheim 1915 [1912]:478-479]

Recognizing the enduring importance of religion (as a collectively achieved and enabling overarching set of conceptual images and practices) for hu-

man group life (see: Durkheim 1915 [1912]), I have used this appendix to further address and hopefully clarify some issues pertinent to the study of people's experiences in religion and spirituality, as well as the potential that religion and spirituality (with their attentiveness to mystical elements) offer sociologists and other students of the human condition in their quest to more fully comprehend the nature of human knowing and acting. Reflecting my exposure to a related body of literature that developed by pursuing this statement on Lucian, I am grateful to have the opportunity to share these "working insights" with the reader.

Although some authors (Swatos 1990; Sharp 1999; Corbett 2009; Nartonis 2010) have observed that it is the "communication between living persons and (the spirits of) those who have died" that constitutes a centralizing, if not the essential, feature of "the 19th century spirituality movement," it is important to (a) acknowledge people's long-standing (and cross-cultural) intrigues with spiritual essences, as well as (b) recognize that the matter of spirit-human communication is just one aspect of spiritualism as a social phenomenon.³⁸

Thus, while recognizing that a large number of people (notably including Emmanuel Swedenborg, the Fox sisters, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Minot Jud-

³⁸ For a notably scholarly, early 20th century discussion of spirituality associated with the Catholic Church, see: Maher and Booland's (1912) "Spiritualism."

son Savage, and William James) assumed significant roles in the popularization of 19th century spirituality (see: Swatos 1990; Sharp 1999; Cheung 2006; Corbett 2009; Chirila 2014), it seems appropriate to consider people's broader, transhistorical, and cross-cultural attentiveness to seemingly active essences that transcend the recognized conditions and limitations of human mortal life.³⁹

There may be limitless variants of spiritualism, but one relatively encompassing spiritualist implication is that all humans (and possibly other life-forms and even seemingly inanimate objects) possess mystical qualities or essences that exist beyond the boundaries of the more generally knowable sensate world. Not only, thus, is there the possibility of a *spiritual afterlife* but also the potential for a co-existent *spiritual otherlife* involving "living mystical essences" that may be connected with other mortal creatures in ways that transcend normal human capacities. Whereas allegations of human encounters and/or communication with the spirits of deceased persons and other spiritual essences have achieved a great deal of public attention, claims of these sorts often are represented as compelling possibilities, if not also promoted as "proofs of the afterlife" by many spiritualists.

³⁹ Theresa Cheung's (2006) *The Element Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Hauntings* represents a valuable starting point for many topics pertaining to people's involvements in and intrigues with "the supernatural." Thus, her volume provides (a) a remarkably broad collection of commentaries on a great many better known individuals' participation in mystical essences, spiritualism, and the paranormal, (b) an extended assortment of accounts of better known mysterious events, and (c) a wide array of Western and cross-cultural concepts pertinent to the viewpoints, definitions, and studies of "supernatural phenomena."

Even though some spiritualists claim (one-time, occasional, or more sustained) lived personal contact with particular mystical essences, some also argue for more cyclical forms of spiritual communication through the transmigration of souls—as the same (enduring) spirit occupies a number of human bodies or other material life-forms in sequences of sorts (also see: Plato's 1997 *Phaedo* and "The Myth of Er" in Book X of *The Republic*).⁴⁰

Given the apparent inabilities of ordinary people to directly communicate with spiritual essences whenever they might like,⁴¹ spiritualists tend to place particular emphasis on the mediums or channels thought to provide human linkages with spiritual essences. These mediums may be (a) spirits that present themselves to people and/or (b) persons presumed in some way to have exceptional access to aspects of other life-world spirits. However, mediums also may (c) take the form of "events," "dreams," or other "signs" (e.g., images, sounds, or other sensations) that could be interpreted as *instances of spiritual essences communicating with humans*. In still other cases, people (as individuals and in groups) also may (d) assume more personalized roles as mediums by calling upon, initiating

⁴⁰ Interestingly, outside of some Catholic scholars (see: Maher 1909), comparatively few of those discussing spirituality appear to have referenced conceptions of the mortal-sensate / spiritual-otherworld *dualism* associated with Socrates' depictions (via Plato) of religion (see: Prus 2013b).

⁴¹ Despite its supposed capacity for connecting "everyday believers" and particularly consequential spiritual essences (Deities and related representatives), *prayer* is seldom referenced in this regard. For a partial but particularly instructive sociological analyses of prayer, see: Marcel Mauss (2003 [1909]).

contact with, or otherwise directing communication towards spiritual essences through linguistic expressions and associated activities. [Readers may note that these aspects of spirituality are prominent features of many conventionalized religions.]

Likewise, regardless of whether communications with spirits of “the afterlife” or “the otherlife” are seen as possibilities, probabilities, or actualities—or whether these communications are seen as desirable or undesirable kinds of contacts—conceptions of these sorts minimally suggest that people might avoid the finality of death. And, in some cases, these notions are explicitly referenced to avert some of the ambiguities and fears people might associate with death or other losses. Although not core elements of spiritualism, the related matters of forgiveness of sins or other transgressions also may be invoked to appeal to those who envision afterlife experiences as contingent on people’s honorable personal involvements in the thoughts, words, and deeds of the human world.

Another noteworthy theme that is sometimes incorporated into conceptions of spiritualism is the idea that “other world spirits” are more knowledgeable about things in the human world than are living humans and, thus, may be able to provide glimpses into the future. This aspect of spiritualism offers those who allegedly have contact with spirits (directly or through mediums of some sort) the potential to gain greater control over their lives and circumstances. Revelations obtained through spiritual contact, thus, represent opportunities for those who have access to this in-

formation to tactically reshape their own futures and those of their loved ones.⁴²

Part of the appeal of contemporary (19th and post-19th century) spiritualism appears to revolve around claims of spiritualism’s greater connectedness with, if not broader receptivity to, science than are the more traditional religions (Swatos 1990; Sharp 1999;⁴³ Nartonis 2010).⁴⁴ Thus, while relying on an assortment of mystical features and claims, some of those promoting contemporary spiritualism often profess to be on the most consequential and intriguing boundaries of science. Relatedly, supportive testimonies of people involved in science, medicine, and teaching professions are frequently invoked to authenticate spiritualist viewpoints. Nevertheless, many spiritualists also appear quick to dismiss the relevance of more routine empirical science and sustained conceptual analyses in favor of (a) “feelings” [allegedly

⁴² Although seldom referenced in contemporary discussions of religion and spirituality, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE) provides an exceptionally insightful and detailed analysis of the claims and problematic features of divination, revelation, fate, and determinism, along with the implications of these and related matters for subsequent choice-making adjustments (Prus 2011d).

⁴³ Sharp’s (1999) analysis of “the struggle for adherents among Spiritualists, Catholics, and Popular Religion in 19th Century France” provides a particularly instructive account of some of the issues and challenges that spiritualism represents for more established Christian churches. As Swatos (1990), Corbett (2009), and Chirila (2014) also indicate, spiritualism lends itself to considerable conceptual adaptation. Still, it should be appreciated (as history teaches us) that even highly articulated religions can be incorporated into, as well as modified within, wide arrays of cultural contexts.

⁴⁴ Interestingly, it is the position of Emile Durkheim (1915 [1912]) and his students, Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert (1964 [1898]; 1972 [1902]), that science has emerged not as a social phenomenon entirely onto itself, but as a longer-term derivative of people’s enacted and conceptual experiences with spirituality and religion.

heightened sensitivities—“You just feel it!”] that adherents have and (b) an emphasis on the position that “the possibility of human-spirit communication cannot be scientifically disproven”—thereby arguing for the viability of possibilities, probabilities, and claims of actual human-spirit communication.⁴⁵

That people’s experiences with spirituality may have elusive qualities does not mean that these experiences are inconsequential or that they should/could not be viably studied as genuine realms of human knowing and acting. Indeed, not only may inquiries into spirituality and religion—as realms of activity—better enable us to comprehend human knowing and acting more generally but they also can help social scientists better understand the fundamental, socially enabled features of “humanly experienced reality.”

Without making claims as to what is and what is not true, religion and spirituality, like other realms of community life, can be studied empirically (referring to the close, process-oriented ethnographic examinations of instances of some

⁴⁵ As a further indication of contemporary interest in spiritualism, the 20th and 21st century literature also suggests noteworthy popular intrigues with astrology, palmistry, numerology, Tarot cards, and Ouija boards, as well as the more dramatic variants of spiritualism signified by witchcraft and Satanism. Although public interest in spirituality and the supernatural seems to have waned somewhat in the first half of the 20th century, one might acknowledge a (media intensified) resurgence of interest in the occult in the latter half of 20th century and in the 21st century. Some parallels may be noted between people’s involvements in spirituality and people’s intrigues with contacts between extraterrestrial beings and humans. However, because the latter allegedly involves other *mortal beings* whose lives somehow might intersect with living humans, reference to extraterrestrial contacts of various sorts differs significantly from spiritualist communications.

phenomenon and sustained comparative analyses thereof). In the case of human group life, this can be done more effectively by (a) defining the terms of reference under consideration, (b) minimizing researcher/analyst moralism and/or dramatism, and (c) ethnographically examining the ways in which people make sense of all aspects of the phenomena under consideration (as in participant viewpoints, language, concepts, definitions, interpretations, explanations, dilemmas, comparisons, and analyses) and go about all of their activities (meanings, intentions, practices, relations, interchanges, emotionalities, objects, technologies, and adjustments).

It is by attending to the viewpoints, practices, relations, and situated interchanges of the participants in particular religious/spiritualist life-worlds (as well as their interchanges with outsiders), across a variety of contexts and over time, that we may be able to achieve a more viable, authentic—pluralistic, ethnographically and ethnohistorically informed—corpus of materials pertaining to people’s viewpoints and activities that can be subjected to more sustained instances of process-oriented comparative analyses. By developing comparisons *within* particular arenas of group life, as well as *across* other realms of community life, we may contribute to a fuller conceptual specification of the processes and features of human knowing and acting in these and other areas of human group life.

The existence of worshippers, beliefs and creeds, oral traditions and texts, sermons and prayers, incantations and spells, posturing and meditation,

practices and procedures, assemblies and celebratory events, material structures and other associated artifacts, as well as sacrifice and other modes of dedication—taken by themselves or in comprehensive combinations—does not prove the existence of god(s) or other spiritual essences. However, that other people might not give credence to particular religious or spiritualist life-worlds—or might more directly and intensively contest the viability of the viewpoints, practices, and associations therein—does not invalidate “the realism of believer views and activities.”

This is because (as Durkheim 1915 [1912] observes) it is *the group-based nature* of people’s focal points, beliefs, activities, interchanges, emotionalities, and organizational arrangements that serves as the foundational testimonies to *the realism* with which spiritual/mystical essences are viewed, as well as *the realism* within which the lives of the participants take shape—become enacted, inter-fused, experienced, organized, sustained, and modified. It is to these actively engaged features of community life and people’s lived experiences within that we as sociologists, as students of the human condition, might most productively attend. Relatedly, people’s religious and spiritualist life-worlds, along with the broader matters of human knowing and acting, will be best com-

prehended when researchers and analysts adopt (a) relativist/pluralist orientations, (b) embark on careful, extended, participant-oriented ethnographic inquiry,⁴⁶ and (c) subject these materials to both sustained context specific and extended cross-contextual comparative analyses, attending to the conceptual implications thereof.

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⁴⁶ On a very practical note, it is apparent that ethnographers are very much dependent on the willingness of these others to share their life-world experiences with researchers in open, extended detail. The ethnographic challenge, thus, involves “achieving intimate familiarity with the life-world of the other,” while still attending to a pluralist sociological agenda (see: Blumer 1969; Prus 1996; 1997; 1999; 2007d; Prus and Grills 2003).

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Experiencing a Call to Ministry: Changing Trajectories, Re-Structuring Life Stories

Abstract This paper presents a qualitative analysis of women's experiences of *call* to Christian pastoral ministry as a second career—a mid-life turning point. Drawing on 44 semi-structured interviews with pastors of different denominations, I look at women's stories of call through the lens of interpretive theory to analyze how women create meanings around this life altering event, and how they construct past experiences in light of these decisions. I employ George Herbert Mead's theory of time to analyze how women afford prior secular work experiences sacred meaning in light of their subsequent "pastoral call" experience. This paper attempts to arrive at a better understanding of women's experience of entering pastoral ministry, as well as their past and future life trajectories.

Keywords Identity; Narrative Work; Turning Points; Christian Ministry; Gender

"So... what brought you to the place where you wanted to do ministry, even at the very beginning?" It is a warm August morning and I am sitting with Reverent Shirley in a pair of rocking chairs next to the window

in her open concept living room. A small table between us holds a tray with coffee and banana muffins she had made for me, and I gratefully nibble and sip as we talk. It is early in our conversation when I ask Shirley the question about where her desire to become a pastor came from, and her answer takes us back in time several years to her college days of majoring in English and tracking towards a career in journalism. One day before class, a colleague's remark that she would "never make it" in that world changed everything, setting her off on a journey of self-exploration and seeking (as she describes it) after "God's will" for her life in the direction of ministry leadership.

I ask this same question—describe what led you to become a pastor—to Janice in her church office, and am transported into stories from her childhood

and teenage years growing up participating in the church and helping to lead. Pauline takes me to her twenties and her aspirations to become a missionary; Heidi takes me to her childhood home and to memories of her atheist father singing in a church choir and reading to her from literary classics—poets and theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr and John Donne; Patty takes me to her room kneeling at her bed at the age of six on the Saturday night when, she explains, she first "gave her heart to Jesus." Asking a female pastor¹ how she came to this profession is asking for the story of her life.

Traditionally, pastors enter their roles through a lengthy schooling, internship, and affirmation process involving the larger denomination they are affiliated with (i.e., Baptist, United Church, etc.) and their own church congregation. These regulatory bodies test and, through pastoral ordination, confirm and legitimize a candidate's suitability for church leadership (Oden 1987; Christopherson 1994). Until recently, this affirmation process was available to men only; however, over the past 50 years, careers in Christian ministry have become a realistic possibility for *women* as well as men in several denominations (Adams 2007). In light of their relatively recent inclusion in the field of pastoral ministry, I set out in my research to discover how women get into this career. Many of my participants were among the first women ordained in their denominations, and I wanted to understand what had attracted them to this role. On the cusp of major institutional changes

in the church, how did they choose to become pastors and how did this decision affect them?

Listening to their stories, I discovered that, for most of the women, the desire to serve God started early in their lives, but that with limited opportunities and so few role models to follow, they typically pursued other careers. Thus, for most of them, Christian ministry was a *second career*; before becoming a pastor, they were full-time mothers, social workers, teachers, administrators, businesswomen, retail workers, or any other manner of professional. I discovered as well that, while the paths that led them to Christian ministry were diverse, the decision typically involved great sacrifices—sacrifices they felt compelled to make in light of what they experienced as an irresistible "call" from God. In addition to the life changes that responding to these calls involved, the women also found themselves reassessing who they were, what their past experiences had been about, and who they were meant to be. In other words, responding to a call involved re-storying their lives.

My aim in this paper is to explore more deeply how women who have made the decision to enter Christian ministry experience what they define as "the call" and the routes their career transitions take. I am also interested in the identity-related implications of their decisions and in the transitions that they experience in connection with how they define themselves and come to understand their biographical trajectories. This paper contributes to a relatively sparse sociological literature on the new roles that women are assuming in Christian churches, particularly in relation to the lived experiences of these

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¹ The label "pastor" will be used throughout this paper to describe ordained or "called" Christian church leaders. Different denominations use different titles, but the title of "pastor" will be used throughout to refer to all priests, ministers, etc.

women. Theoretically, the paper is informed by, and contributes to, symbolic interactionist discussions of turning points in the lives of social actors and their impact on definitions of self. I begin, therefore, by discussing the substantive literature in this area, as well as the more theoretical literature that I am using conceptually to frame the paper's questions. This is followed by a discussion of the methods I used in conducting this qualitative study of women in Christian ministry. The findings section of the paper is divided into two parts. In the first, I discuss the ways women describe and experience the transition into Christian ministry. In the second, I discuss the way past life events and careers acquire new meanings in light of this significant mid-life transition. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings.

Women and the "Call" to Christian Ministry

The entrance of women into pastoral ministry has garnered significant scholarly attention. Most of the literature in this area, however, examines the historical changes in the church with respect to the inclusion of women (Chaves 1996; Chang 1997; Lummis and Nesbitt 2000; Adams 2007). For example, Chaves' (1996:842) survey of Christian churches established that "in 1890, about 7% of U.S. denominations gave full clergy rights to women; today, approximately half of U.S. denominations do so." That percentage has probably grown even more since the study was published.² Chaves concludes that the

entrance of women into leadership and clergy positions is one of the most salient transformations in religion in the 20th century. He attributes this historical change largely to the external pressures that the church has faced from secular institutions to abandon conservative practices and become more inclusive (Chaves 1996).

The literature also addresses the inequalities that women who seek positions of leadership in the church continue to face, arguing that gendered inequalities are still written into the fabric of most religious institutions. Stewart-Thomas (2010) contends that even as more denominations are accepting of female pastors, congregations themselves continue to be gendered organizations and place similarly gendered expectations on their pastors. Her study³ concludes that female pastors are often stereotyped in particularly gendered ways and expected to perform more emotional labor, like community service and care-giving. This suggests that even in those churches that have opened their doors to female ministers, barriers to their full participation in ministry leadership still exist.

The concept of a "stained glass ceiling" has been used to describe the subtler barriers to career advancement for female clergy (Sullins 2000; Adams 2007). Sullins' (2000) study⁴ of female clergy in the Episcopal church concludes that there is a disparity between the church's rhetoric of acceptance and the actual practices and opportunities afforded to

American clergy were men in 1996—suggesting it is still a gendered profession. Canadian numbers are not often reported in studies in this area.

³ Data drawn from the 1998 National Congregations Study.

⁴ Data drawn from the Episcopal Clerical Directory for 1999.

female pastors. He discovered that a higher percentage of female pastors still hold lower prestige positions than their male counterparts. While only 11% of ordained men held subordinate positions (like associate pastor, children's pastor, etc.), 32.5% of ordained women were in such positions. Sullins attributes this persistent, gendered inequality to unchanging cultural values operating within individual congregations, as opposed to denominational restrictions. Adams (2007) too uses the notion of a "stained glass ceiling" to describe his findings in a study on church practices of "symbolic conservatism."⁵ He concludes that female pastors are blocked from participating at the highest levels of church leadership and, that within some congregations, the stained glass ceiling is intended to be visible. Women's exclusion thus becomes a symbol of the institution's conservatism and their differentiation from secular norms and institutions.

There has been relatively little research on the perspectives of women themselves or on how they experience their ministries. More specifically, little attention has been paid to how women transition into such pastoral positions in the first place or what draws them to this profession. While there have been numerous studies on the concept of "call"—the impulse to become a pastor—most of this literature is theological in nature (Oden 1987; Christopherson 1994; George 2005; Bond 2012; Duffy and Dik 2013). Pitt (2012), however, offers an insightful exception. Pitt conducted a sociological analysis of call experiences among black Pentecostal pastors. Interviewing 75 female and 38 male pastors, he asked: "Would

⁵ Data drawn from the National Congregations Study and the 1998 General Social Survey.

you tell me about your call?" (Pitt 2012:13). He suggests that the legitimacy of his participants' pastoral identity is greatly increased by their ability to relay a conventional call story—and that each participant could readily provide a description of their own experience of call. Pitt discovered that "callees" (as he labeled his participants) experience both "vertical" (from God) and "horizontal" (from family members and friends) affirmations that they should enter pastoral ministry. In this way, he points to the call to ministry as a socially constructed phenomenon, and goes on to demonstrate how the actual *experience* of call can be broken down into two varieties: a "blitzkrieg" (Pitt 2012:47) call, experienced as a lightning-like, surprising supernatural intervention that interrupts one's normal life to redirect it, or a more "ordinary call" (Pitt 2012:46), that takes the form of a gradual realization and transition into a pastoral role.

Focusing specifically on women clergy, Zikmund, Adair, and Chang (1998) studied women in approximately 19 main-line denominations and include in their analysis a chapter on the pastoral call to ministry. These researchers conclude that many female pastors come to this profession later in life, as second career. The significance of this is that women enter ministry with a different set of life experiences to offer than men, but the impact of this difference on their ministry has yet to be fully explored.

While Pitt (2012) and Zikmund and colleagues (1998) pay close attention to women and men's experiences of being called into ministry, gaps in this literature remain. Pitt's sample draws from only one denomination; as it happens this denomination does not

fully ordain women to all responsibilities of pastoral leadership. Women in Pitt's sample are still barred from administering communion and marrying couples and have limited or otherwise labeled "preaching" opportunities. Also, Pitt's pastors were all still involved in their secular vocations, not having fully abandoned their "day jobs" to pursue a career within the church. Zikmund and colleagues (1998) devote only a small portion of their study to women's call experiences and do not elaborate on how these might impact identity or life trajectories after the time of the call. My research broadens Pitt and Zikmund and colleagues' contributions in two senses. First, I analyze the call stories of *fully* ordained women who *fully* transition out of their secular careers to become pastors. Second, I look beyond the call experiences themselves to analyze how being called leads women to look back on and reconstruct their lives and biographical trajectories.

Symbolic Interactionism and Adult Life Transitions

The questions I am raising in this paper are rooted in a symbolic interactionist perspective. Symbolic interactionism is a sociological perspective concerned with the ways in which social actors construct meanings. A fundamental premise of the perspective is that, through their interactions with each other, human beings engage in defining objects, situations, and people, and that these definitions then become the context for their actions.

A central concern of symbolic interactionism is how social actors construct meanings about *themselves* as objects—thereby constructing a sense of self and

identity (Cooley 1922; Mead 1934; Goffman 1958; Stone 1990; Prus 1996; 1997; Doucet 2008; Dunn and Creek 2015). Many symbolic interactionists have written about identity—how identities are acquired, managed, negotiated, changed, and shed. Particularly germane to this discussion are those who have explored the connections between identity and narratives.

Somers (1994), for example, talks about identities being socially constructed through the narratives we tell about ourselves. She is interested in identity formation as narrative accomplishment, as opposed to a direct reflection of the various statuses one holds (i.e., gender, age, race, religion). "Social life is itself storied," she posits, "and that narrative is an *ontological condition of social life*" (Somers 1994:613-614). Somers (1994:618) identifies four "dimensions of narrativity"—ontological, public, conceptual, and metanarratives—but it is the ontological dimension that addresses the questions most relevant to this paper. Ontological narratives are intersubjectively constructed stories that "are used to define who we are; this in turn can be a precondition for knowing what to do" (Somers 1994:618). Ontologically speaking, identities are formed through the stories people tell to themselves and others, and one's position within these narratives can shape how one behaves. Stories are told to create meanings for the actions of others, to explain one's own actions, and in an attempt to predict actions in advance. Somers (1994) argues that humans seek to maintain and act out stories of stability and coherence, plotting their biographies together in a coherent manner for the benefit of both themselves and others. Somers' work raises questions about how people achieve narrative coherence

in the stories they tell, particularly when they undergo significant transitions in their lives.

Strauss (1959) suggests that distinctive moments, or "turning points" are an unavoidable part of adult life. Events happen that lead individuals to realize that they have changed; they are no longer who they once were. Turning points are usually accompanied by feelings of surprise, anxiety, and tension as a new role and a new self is tested out and explored. Although transitions may occur gradually, when a life changing event (like a call to ministry) occurs, this comes to be seen as a milestone, and such "recognition then necessitates new stances, new alignments" (Strauss 1959:93).

Strauss' idea of adult mid-life transitions has been taken up by others, who have elaborated on how these transitions occur in relation to particular roles. Rose (1988) analyzes the steps that individuals go through in becoming an "ex" in relation to a variety of different professions and identities—ex-nuns, ex-spouses, ex-military, ex-teachers, et cetera. Van den Hoonaard (2001) draws attention to the moment widows realize their identities have changed. She suggests there comes a time when each widow experiences an "identifying moment" (van den Hoonaard 2001:38)—an instance when something happens and it becomes real to them, solidified, that they are now a widow instead of a "wife" or married person; their identity has changed.

Another theme in symbolic interactionism that I draw on in my analysis has to do with how social actors make sense of time and biographic trajectories. This line of inquiry has its origins in the work

of one of the perspective's founders, George Herbert Mead. Mead (1929) developed a theory about the temporality of human experience which some sociologists (Maines, Sugrue, and Katovich 1983) have argued has yet to be fully exploited in empirical studies. Mead's theory of time centers on his concept of the "specious present"—the idea that lived experience occurs only in the present. Past and future do not have an objective existence as independent entities; rather, they exist only through how they are experienced in the present. Using their current vantage point, social actors understand both past and future through the lens the present offers. This means, of course, that these understandings are continuously changing as individuals move through the trajectory of their lives (Mead 1929). Moreover, for Mead, these understandings are fundamentally social in nature—they are intersubjectively created and expressed. Mead (1929:236) also draws attention to the notion of "continuity" and "dislocation" (discontinuity), pointing out that the interjection of discontinuity into one's present position, created by unexpected experiences, allows the "past" to be distinguishable from the "present."

Maines and colleagues (1983:163) clarify a number of elements in Mead's theory, including the idea of the "symbolically reconstructed past," most relevant for the current analysis. Mead (1929) argued that "the past is overflow of the present." According to Maines and colleagues (1983:163), Mead was suggesting that "the symbolic reconstruction of the past...involves redefining the meaning of past events in such a way that they have meaning and utility for the present." Again, we see in Mead's work, as in Somers' (1994), the underlying premise that humans pragmatically

orient themselves towards creating and maintaining coherence and meaning, but within some sort of temporal, tangible “present” framework and position. The question remains—how is this agential narrative work practically accomplished in everyday life?

These are the threads I draw on in symbolic interactionist theorizing to conceptualize the movement of women’s biographical trajectories into Christian ministry as a series of continuities or discontinuities through their life-course. An identifiable moment of change or discontinuity generates dilemmas about what course to take, as well as questions about who we are or want to become. Such moments can also prompt reflection on the meanings of experiences (Somers 1994), and, as Mead (1929) suggests, a reinterpretation of the past. In the findings section of my paper, I show how these processes unfolded in the everyday life experiences of the women I interviewed for this study.

Data & Methods

I collected the data for this project by conducting a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews with 44 female ministers across Canada. Pastors ranged in age from 19 to 78. Their family situations ran the gamut from heterosexual marriages to single, divorced, and never married; some participants had parented (or were parenting) children either on their own or with a heterosexual partner, while others were childless. I interviewed pastors from seven different denominations, including Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist, Free Methodist, United Church, Congregational Christian Church, Mennonite, and

a few who identified as interdenominational. The majority of participants (31 out of 44) identified with Presbyterian, Anglican, or Baptist traditions.

The interviews ranged in length from about 30 minutes to just over two hours. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The majority of the interviews took place face-to-face, in either the participant’s church office or home, or my own. Some interviews were conducted over Skype, and two were conducted over the phone. Each conversation began with a discussion of the demographic characteristics of the participants and their current church communities. Participants were then simply asked to explain what led them to become pastors, and what the experience has been like for them. For confidentiality reasons, the names of the churches and the denominational affiliations of the participants have been omitted and all participants have been given pseudonyms.

The interview data have been collected and analyzed using a grounded theory approach, as derived from symbolic interactionist premises about the nature of human group life and behavior. I have relied on Charmaz’s (2014) approach which emphasizes participants’ perspectives, but also urges researchers to problematize their own taken-for-granted knowledge in the search for intersubjectivity with participants.

More specifically, I looked for themes in the data and coded while in the field interviewing, through a process of iteratively listening to, reading, and re-reading the data, making note of recurring themes or points of discussion in responses that continued to

emerge. This, in turn, shaped the questions I asked new participants as the interviews continued, until a point of saturation was reached. The theme of being “called” to ministry emerged early on, leading me to quickly catch on to the fact that asking about this experience at the outset of an interview led inevitably to lengthy, detailed, and rich responses.

Calls to Ministry

Starting Points

In her analysis of how individuals shed old identities and take on the identity of an “ex,” Rose (1988) observes that there can be a time before actually physically leaving a role when movement in that direction has already begun in one’s mind. So it was for the participants in this study. The path into Christian ministry began for all of the women with an inciting incident or experience which prompted a mental re-assessment of their current trajectory and the consideration of alternatives. Each of the women could identify a memorable moment, day, or period of realization that marked the point that started their journey towards Christian ministry. They describe these turning points as *sacred* in the sense that they experienced them as God reaching out to them—directly, vividly, undeniably—to communicate a plan for their lives in his service. This description of the turning points, in essence, captures how the women understood what it means to “be called” or to experience “a call.” For example, Selah recalled the moment when she made her decision to become a pastor in the finest detail and with great clarity, imbuing the day’s otherwise mundane occurrences with a sacred significance:

Sunday afternoon the boys were outdoors playing...I went home, my husband was in the living room—some things you always remember—Sunday afternoon, boys outside, went in, sat down on the chesterfield next to [my husband] and said, “I was down talking to Reverent C”—and he [the husband] said, “You’re going to get ordained.” We’d *never* had those words between us. And I said...“We can’t afford it.” And he said, “We’ll sell the house if we have to,” because we owned our own home. So that’s where it started.

Selah’s statement “some things you always remember” captures the women’s experiences aptly. All of the participants had the common experience of feeling “called” and looking back on these pivotal moments with reverential nostalgia. At the same time, their stories of call took on different forms. The calls came to them in different ways, and while some acted on the impulse immediately, others took months or even years to make a move. In the next section of my paper, I describe three different forms of call stories: “sudden revelations,” “mounting dissatisfaction,” and “anomie” call stories.

“Sudden Revelations”

“You wanna make God smile, tell him your plans,” said Dana. This was her way of introducing the story of her mid-life transition from teacher and department head to pastor and national leader in her denomination. For Dana, the call to ministry came as a complete surprise, as she had spent decades establishing herself as an educator. She and others talked about having their lives carefully

charted only to find themselves at a crossroad, being pushed in a different direction by God. While the meanings they attach to these moments are redefined after they make the decision to enter Christian ministry, some of the women admit to being not only surprised but unsettled, and perhaps even annoyed at the time. In the moment, they may experience these calls in terms of God “upsetting their plans.” After all, to act on God’s call means abandoning whatever career trajectory they had plotted out for themselves and dramatically changing course. These sorts of experiences are akin to what Pitt (2012) calls the “blitzkrieg” call, in which the message from God comes out of nowhere, producing a sense of shock and awe. Little wonder, then, that these sudden experiences of call are fraught with anxiety and angst as women wrestle with questions of whether they are suited for the pastoral role, especially in those denominations where the role is still relatively new, and whether they are willing to make the changes required of them and their families.

Lucy’s story provides an apt example of how dramatically call stories may be experienced. She, like many other participants, suggested her call story was atypical because she had already found her “dream career” before being called:

I don’t know that my story is terribly typical because I actually had my life charted out. I had done a master of applied science at McGill in speech and language pathology and so I, you know, pretty much had decided and, in fact, had worked in that field for 11 years, and I loved my work in that field, so I really figured that I had my life stream pretty set.

Lucy experienced her call at the end of what she described as a “very typical Sunday [church] service.” She was quick to point out that she is not someone who is “given to religious experiences” like hearing an audible message from God, so she was taken aback by what happened to her:

There was nothing particularly special or interesting about the service that I remember. If anything I remember it being a little bit harried, uh, getting our three kids ready for church and there and, um, it was...like this was a really weird thing for me, very much out of the ordinary. It was really an experience that I can only describe as having a sense that all of a sudden I was really actually in God’s presence and he was saying to me, “Here’s what you’re gonna do.”

Lucy was not unhappy with her current situation or thinking about making changes in her life, which, according to Rose (1988), often characterizes the early stages of career or role transitions. Nor was she undergoing a period of soul-searching. From her perspective, her life was well on track when she found herself on the receiving end of an abrupt, direct, and unsolicited message from God, asking her to do something that did not seem to make any sense to her at first:

I didn’t really have any idea how this [becoming a pastor] would happen, it didn’t seem probable to me. And my husband and I had pretty much got our lives—he was an audiologist, so our two careers were very much in sync. We had just built our dream home, you know, we had a young family at that point so it was, it didn’t look very likely, and so I really didn’t know what to think of this experience.

Reluctant to move and uproot her family, Lucy put her call experience “on the back burner” for two years. Then, one day, her husband handed her calendars for a theological college and suggested she apply. She describes no longer wanting to avoid what she had come to see as inevitable. She applied, doors opened, and “we just kind of decided to take the leap, and, yeah, the rest is history,” she says. For Lucy, God’s call represented a surprising and unwelcomed invitation when it first came. But, the experience planted a seed, a process of imagining what responding to the call would mean in both practical and spiritual terms, and eventually steps in the direction of turning call into action.

Shira shared a similar story. As a woman in a denomination where female leadership is still contested territory, she did not initially see pastoral ministry as a possibility. Shira went into social work, and was busy building her career and a life with her family when she experienced what she describes as a direct intervention from God while performing a mundane daily activity:

One day, I was walking my younger son back from having dropped my older son off to nursery school, and this is the word, like God like, the voice came—the only time in my life—and it said, “You will work for me.”

Shira had just accepted a promotion at the time and was one week away from starting her new position, but she decided instead to resign and take on a pastoral position immediately: “As opposed to a raise and a promotion I would come into this [pastoral] position and know that I would never move up in

anything else. But, I knew beyond...I knew that this was what I had to do. So here I am.”

Lucy waited two years before acting on her call experience, while Shira acted immediately. These differing responses highlight the fact that while the women may not experience the call as something they initiated or have any control over, they do exercise agency in deciding how they will respond and in working out for themselves what these calls mean in terms of re-orienting their lives. In fact, from the women’s perspective, there is an interaction that occurs between themselves and God, with God communicating—sometimes in a voice that they hear in a literal sense—his desire to see them working in his service, and waiting for their response.

The notion of God acquiring a real and active presence in individuals’ lives in a way that allows interaction is consistent with other studies that have looked at the experiential aspects of spirituality. Pitt (2012), in his study of black Pentecostal pastors’ calls to ministry, supports the assertion that religious people’s interactions with a “divine other”—whether it be imaginary or real—certainly do have *real* implications for their social behavior. As a researcher, he operates within the premise that “God is a person with whom they [his participants] can, should and do interact” (Pitt 2012:4). In her study of an evangelical Christian church called the Vineyard, Luhrmann (2012) observed how the community of believers who make up the church explicitly cultivate the skill of communicating with God (commonly called “praying”), changing, in the process, their neural pathways in just the same way as interactions with other individuals would. She,

like Pitt (2012), concludes that Christians' vertical relationship with their spiritual God parallels their horizontal relationships with family and friends and is just as real for them. The dimensions of this interaction are reflected in the ways Christians personify God in terms that emphasize how he is to be experienced relationally—God can be, to name a few: father, teacher, friend, or provider. He is experienced in the daily lives of believers as a being that exercises his own agency and with whom they can interact and have a relationship (Luhrmann 2012). For the female pastors in this study, as for Pitt (2012) and Luhrmann's (2012) participants, God speaks to individuals in audible, discernible ways. There may be a time-lapse between "call" and "action," but there is the sense that the decision is being made in response, and in some cases in obedience, to a higher power.

"Mounting Dissatisfaction"

Pastors like Lucy and Shira described hearing God's call in a dramatic and sudden fashion, but this is not the only way transition stories unfolded. Other pastors described their "call" as more of a gradual realization—the product of a series of encouragements and events over a longer period of time. This variation typically involved mounting dissatisfaction with the meaning of one's life or one's current career. The experience of these women seemed to better align with what Rose (1988:41) calls "first doubts"—a gradual and growing sense of unease with one's current role in light of organizational change, burn out, or other events. As with many of Pitt's (2012) participants, some of mine described their call experience as being a more "ordinary,"

gradual transition. For example, Stella, a former math teacher, described feeling that all was not quite right, despite the fact that her career was on track and that in most respects she had the life she wanted: "I had all of these outward things going, but inside I was empty, and so that's when I sort of made the commitment to follow God not just for a couple of months or a couple of years but for the rest of my life."

For these participants, the call to enter Christian ministry came as less of a surprise than it did for those who were confident and happy in their present careers. In their growing unhappiness, these women had been mentally moving away from their current career path already, and so the call merely provides the catalyst needed to consummate the change.

Cindy's story provides an example of a "call" experienced in the context of existing dissatisfactions. A former retail worker, Cindy, described feeling a mounting discontent with her work environment:

I was very discouraged in that retail kind of world and some of the things that I saw happening. I felt very ill at ease with, frankly, graft and fraud and things like that that I could see happening in the company that I worked for. So, I was a bit disillusioned and I met someone who at the time said, "Have you thought about pastoral counseling?" So I entered seminary.

Although Cindy came from a background where there were no female role models to follow in her church, and where she had never imagined herself in the role of minister, her dissatisfaction with her

former life and the reinforcement and affirmation she received as she started and then continued her seminary training encouraged her to keep moving in the direction of pastoral ministry. Cindy did not describe a surprising spiritual encounter with God. Instead, she experienced her call in what some participants describe as a "still small voice"—through the encouragement of friends and family, and a growing confidence that she had something to offer as a minister.

Pauline told a similar story about her mounting unhappiness as director of student services at an educational institution. Originally, the job was fulfilling and exciting, but new leadership brought changes she felt were detrimental to the organization:

Quite a lot of people left. My self-esteem went down so badly, um, and, you know, God's funny. At that time God spoke to me—I went up for prayer for my husband actually, for his career sort of choice, and had this little nudge that maybe I should be considering another career. Oh really? And a few weeks later while I'm having communion really sensed, wouldn't it be wonderful to be able to do this [serve communion] for people? And so that was sort of the start of my journey.

Pauline explained how she wrestled with problems at work, low self-esteem, and doubt. However, over the course of the next year, through a women's prayer and study group, she began to feel a growing pull towards a life in God's service. She described the steps she took to get into Bible college and then to go through her church's ordination processes to be like putting a leaf in a stream: "I'm doing the first

thing, and you're [God] gonna have to carry that down all the [way]...And then, one day, waking up and seeing that I have a collar on and going—I guess you [God] did it!"

The stories of call that involve mounting dissatisfaction exhibit a more gradual change in direction and begin well before the call is experienced. In a sense the stage is set in these cases with the women finding themselves unhappy, incomplete, uneasy, or feeling that something is missing in their lives. They are primed for change. However, this makes the decision to respond to God's call no less fraught with sacrifices and difficulties. These women too face challenges and choices as they reorient their lives. However, they differed from other participants in that they perceived that there was *less* to lose—and actually much to gain—in leaving an unfulfilling, as opposed to a rewarding or promising, career.

"Anomie" Call Stories

Finally, some women experienced their "call" in the midst of a tumultuous life event or a state of what I describe as *anomie*. Anomie is a term coined by sociologist Robert Merton (1957) to describe the consequences of moments of great societal change and upheaval. At these moments, Merton argued, individuals and societies may experience *anomie* or a sense of normlessness, where values and standards are shifting and there is little certainty about how to respond or behave. The term is apt in this case because some women go through precisely such an experience, finding themselves at a point of chaos in their lives and in need of new norms, guidelines, and direction.

Kierstie described one such moment: her daughter had married and moved away permanently. Kierstie's life had been so interconnected with her daughter's, and her identity so grounded in her role as mother, that she found herself at a loss:

I was 45 years old and my entire adult life I was parenting, and suddenly my official job as parent had come to an end and...when she got married and moved an hour away, suddenly I realized, about a month after that, I had a huge hole in my life because I wasn't actively participating in her life.

Determined to fill the hole, Kierstie began considering her options. One day, she found and started looking at some of her daughter's literature on Bible colleges. This prompted a recollection from God that nudged her forward:

I thought—well, that's kind of interesting. And then God reminded me that I, I never considered myself a college dropout, but I had completed one year of college and then I did not return, I got married instead... And I remember when I had done that, I thought—I can always go back. And so after—what was that, 25 years? Gee. It was 26 years. After that I was reminded [by God], “You said you could always go back.”

In spite of her insecurities about having been out of school for so long, this reminder from God about her own previous commitment to herself encouraged Kierstie to “take the plunge” and start taking classes. As she continued to work on her ministry degree part-time, she describes sensing God's “call” and encouragement with every step she took forward.

Another example was offered by Dana. After teaching for 11 years and becoming department head, Dana reluctantly applied for a new position of leadership in her school overseeing the math, science, and technology programs:

I had a significant Holy Spirit⁶ moment because, again, I was like I'm not gonna apply. The night before the applications were due, it was such a significant prodding by the Spirit that I just, I have to. I have to apply. And so I did and I interviewed—and I didn't get the job.

Being passed over for the promotion was difficult for Dana, all the more so because she was certain that she had been guided by God to apply in the first place. The fact that she did not get the position left her restless, questioning what the point had been and what she wanted for her future. A few months later, Dana learned about an opening at her local church. She started to wonder whether that was where she was meant to be and whether the promotion falling through was God's way of bringing her to a point where she was open for the change he had in mind for her. She decided to leave teaching and take the position at her church, which ultimately culminated in pursuing a career in ministry.

⁶ The Holy Spirit is also God in the Christian tradition. For Protestants, God is one being who expresses himself through three parts or persons—Father (God), Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit. It is believed that God speaks and works in the lives of his followers most directly through the person of the Holy Spirit. However, sometimes my participants talked about hearing *God's* voice as well, so there are different names or ways of referring to this same deity. Dana here clearly assumed, perhaps in light of my own Christian background, that I understood what a “Holy Spirit moment” meant within the Christian framework—that she was hearing from and being directed by God.

Samantha, a mother and therapist, also experienced a time of inner turmoil leading up to her “call” experience. Samantha was in throes of a marriage breakdown and divorce:

So as the marriage started to decline and I was getting more depressed and more like, ok, what? You know, I'm not going to work some stupid job and have my kids raised by other people so that I can get you [her ex-husband] a bigger boat—like, it's that sort of thing. So it was in the midst of that, 1994, during Lent that I woke up one morning and had this profound dream or vision that I had to be an ordained minister, and was hyperventilating and, you know, I phoned my sister and she said, “Well, we've all been waiting for you, you know, to be happy and figure it out.”

As she recalibrated and started to consider what life after divorce would mean for her and her children, Samantha found herself reassessing her priorities. It was in the context of this period of upheaval and reassessment that she heard the call, waking up one morning to an experience she describes as profound—a vision that left her feeling certain that she was meant to be a minister. Encouraged by her sister's positive reaction, she began moving in the direction of ministry.

Whether they involve a job loss, a child moving away from home, a divorce, a time of illness, or failing to receive a promotion, life-changing events can be the catalysts that leave women open to feeling called and propel them out of one career and into ministry. While anomie is generally connected in the sociological literature with negative out-

comes for individuals, outcomes such as suicide, deviance, and social disintegration (Durkheim 1897; Cloward 1959; Galtung 1996; Rosenbaum and Kuntze 2003), in the case of this study's participants, anomie provided fertile ground for more positive outcomes: the birthing of new possibilities, renewal, and a re-evaluation of one's life purpose.

(Re)Storying the Past

The paper has dealt thus far with how women are led to careers in Christian ministry. The data show that women feel compelled or “called” to ministry, though their experiences of call come in different forms. Whatever form their call experiences took, for all of the women, the decision involved a sharp break with life as they had known it. This raises the question of what the disruption in their biographical trajectories meant for them in identity terms. As Somers (1994) observes, in defining themselves, people seek continuity and engage in narrative work to achieve it, stringing together seemingly disjointed events in their lives to tell a coherent story about who they are. Abandoning established career paths—as a school principal, working in retail, working for the government, or running one's own business—to pursue a career in Christian ministry qualifies as a significant disjuncture. Once women make the decision to enter formal ministry, how do they make sense of their prior life experiences? In this section of the paper, I address how participants reconciled their past and present lives; namely, how they reinterpreted their pasts in ways that connected them directly with their current careers.

Prior Experience as Ministry Preparation

Many of the participants spoke about their prior careers not as missteps or what they did until they eventually found their true calling, but as an *essential* part of their journey to ministry. They came to understand the skills those lines of work gave them as assets in their current role as pastors. In this respect, too, the notion of call figured prominently, in the sense that they understood God to be working according to a grand plan, one that might have included preparing them for the role he ultimately had in mind by giving them life experiences they would be able to draw on and use.

Cindy, for example, observed that her seven years in retail stood her in good stead in comparison to most of her colleagues, since most pastors find it challenging to acquire the skills needed to manage the business aspects of running a church: “You have to be able to administer funds, you have to be able to supervise people. So I felt in some ways that that [my business experience] was a gift,” Cindy said.

Patty came to ministry after pursuing acting and theatre in her studies and as a career. Again, she uses her call to ministry to ground her understanding of why she first felt called to pursue acting. She framed these prior experiences as giving her the tools she needed to be an effective preacher:

So now I know what all that time in theatre was for—because, boy, did I learn so much! I learned about public speaking, how to speak well, you know, all the things that public speakers need to do to be good

communicators. So I am very grateful for my background in film and television.

Stella similarly defined her prior work training as actually being ministry training in disguise. As a high school teacher, her early life ambitions were centered around entering education administration, so she completed various leadership and development training programs, including a Master in Education, before entering ordained ministry. She currently works in denominational leadership and describes her previous leadership training as being just what was needed for her present pastoral role:

I thought I had it [my life direction] all figured out and it turns out I didn’t, but having that educational and leadership development piece certainly helped for this role because that’s a huge piece of what this role is. And so that was the piece—the two pieces really kind of fit together.

For Shira, it was her social work skills that helped her in her pastoral role; for several former teachers, it was the teaching skills they had acquired that they valued. In each case, the women redefined former life experiences as necessary training ground for their present ministries.

Prior Experience as Ministry

Another way that the women made sense of their prior work experiences was to redefine their former career as ministry in and of itself. They asserted that they were really “doing ministry” all along, though they and others may not have recognized it as such at the time. In other words, they maintained

the constancy of their identity as instruments of God, though at different points in their lives they may have enacted the role in and through different careers. They understood ministry as a devotion to God and a commitment to do his work in ways that need not necessarily involve formal ordination and the title of “minister.”

Pauline, for example, blurred the distinction between what she does as pastor versus her previous work in administration in a graduate program:

Even before I was ordained I really felt like I was in ministry. My previous position for 7 years...really had parts that, you know, were caring for people, so, yeah. And, you know, even when you’re a lay person, if you are open and willing, God can call you into ministry, you know, wherever doing whatever.

Pauline saw little fundamental difference in the work she has always done, though in one role she functioned as a lay person and in the other she is recognized as a minister. For Pauline, ministry is defined by the spirit in which one serves. To the extent that one allows oneself to be guided by God’s call to serve others, one is engaged in ministry.

Selah, a teacher for 15 years, saw her teaching role in similar terms. She described her decision to become a teacher as just as much a “call” as her subsequent “call” to pastoral ministry. For her, teaching was so much more than simply an opportunity to educate. She defined it as a way to minister to the needs of the children one teaches and their families, though this work is carried out outside of the confines of church walls.

Patty, too, defined her former acting career as a form of ministry, a chance to reach out to colleagues and audiences alike, to “speak” to them or touch them in some meaningful way:

I believe that the number of years that I did that [professional acting] the Lord opened up a million opportunities to be an example of a Christian in that environment which is very dark, a very dark world.

In all of these cases, the women gave their secular work a meaning they might not have at the time—a meaning that established continuity in their minds between past and present. They saw themselves as always having been an instrument of God in the world, positioned where He wanted them to be, doing what he wanted them to be doing all along. Pitt’s (2012) participants justified their *present* secular work in a very similar manner, suggesting that their call to minister to people reached far beyond the four walls of a church building.

“Now I Understand Why...”

A call to ministry may shape not only the way women see their prior careers, but also the way they attribute meaning to other significant, often painful, life events. There is a sense of “now I understand why that had to happen to me,” which comes after experiencing a call to ministry and living it out for a time.

One such case involved Dana, the “teacher turned pastor,” who did not get the department head position she had applied for. Though devastated at the

time, Dana looked back on the experience differently during the interview:

So, I'm in the middle of this thinking, what's all this for? And afterwards I could see, God had me go through this A) because it's his plan not mine, so there was an obedience check in there, but also this removed the "if only," the "what if," the "coulda shoulda"—all those kinds of things because I did it, I did the process, right?

In hindsight, Dana interpreted the experience as one that taught her that when God closes one door, he opens another.

Another example involved Patty, the former actor, who was forthright about the pain she had experienced in her past. She was diagnosed with uterine cancer at the age of 24 and went through a long stretch of infertility before eventually giving birth to a daughter. The prospect of not being able to conceive was a source of great anguish for Patty and her memories of the experience still sting. However, looking back, Patty observed:

I say it was, it was a determination on my part and I think a determination on the part of the Holy Spirit to keep me focused on Him and to keep me focused on ministry, and I think if I'd had three kids when I was in my 20's, I may not have had that focus...I felt the Holy Spirit's call on me the whole time, throughout my life, with regards to professional calling.

From her vantage point as a minister, Patty looked back and attributed meaning to what, at the time,

was a senseless experience of emptiness and sadness. She explained that she now appreciated more fully why God had put her through that period of childlessness. It was his way of steering her down the path he wanted her to take. Patty also lost several family members as a young woman, including her parents. She had spent a number of years providing care for her ailing parents and also an aunt. This experience, too, she looked back on as having served the purpose of preparing her for ministry. It taught her how to care for others and how to deal with death and dying, key aspects of her ministerial role. She saw purpose even in the story of resilience and perseverance that her life tells, offering others inspiration and hope as they dealt with their own trials:

Through all that suffering, my faith has never once shaken. So I don't—I'm beginning to think that God uses people profoundly when they have suffered because they can't—you can sympathize and you can even practice empathy, but until you've really walked through the valley of the shadow of death and come through it, I don't know how really well you can serve.

These stories and many others like them in the interviews demonstrate how the decision to move into Christian ministry was employed by the women to give meaning to events that occurred in the *past*, as well as *current* and *future* endeavors. They construct a narrative of call in line with the norms of other such narratives, but also weave their unique turning points into the story in a way that blends the past—sometimes surprisingly seamlessly—with the present.

Discussion & Conclusion

While there have been many studies that have looked at the history of, and barriers to, women's entrance into ministry positions in the Christian church, there is a paucity of literature on the perspectives of women who actually enter ministry. This paper has started to fill the gap by presenting a qualitative analysis of the stories women tell of their call to pastoral ministry. On a substantive level, the paper sheds light on what leads women to take up these roles in their churches—many of them among the first in their denominations to do so. The data show that women, like their male counterparts, feel "called" to ministry. While they see themselves as exercising agency in how they respond to these calls, they understand the calls as originating with God, though sometimes mediated or affirmed through family and friends. The calls come in the form of dramatic and unexpected interruptions to the smooth and on-going flow of their normal lives (as with "sudden revelation" call stories) or more gradual promptings or pulls towards ministry through experiencing "mounting dissatisfaction" with their current lives. A third possibility, one that Pitt (2012) did not find among the ministers that he interviewed and that perhaps warrants greater attention in future research, are calls that I have described as "anomic." In these cases, calls blossom in the context of major upheavals in the women's lives brought on by such events as divorce, the death of individuals close to them, or the loss of a job. The disruptions create a space for women to re-evaluate their priorities and goals, and from their perspective, to "hear" God's plan for them as they piece their lives back together in ministry positions.

The data also show that second-career pastors' decisions to go into ministry bring with them the dilemma of how to bring together the two disparate trajectories of their lives—secular and sacred—and how to organize their life stories as meaningful and understandable narratives for both themselves and others. Here, too, the experience of call figures prominently. The data suggest that it is the turning point itself—the experience of call—that allows women to accomplish the work of creating meaning and bridging the gap. The call to ministry becomes the fulcrum around which seemingly contradictory past and present experiences can balance and teeter to be reconciled without tipping. Women re-define their past careers in the secular world as ministry preparation or categorize them as ministry in and of themselves, with even painful past experiences being endowed with a meaning relevant to their role as ministers. In other words, their pasts are interpreted through the lens of the present and given a meaning that creates a smooth and coherent trajectory rather than a disjointed one. The women come to see their past experiences as necessary and inevitable steps leading them to where they were ultimately meant to be, though they may not have understood them in these terms at the time.

The need to re-story one's life, however, is a function of the fact that all of the women interviewed for this study were pursuing ministry as a second career. Whether, and to what extent, this process occurs among those who commit to a career in ministry early in their lives is another question for future research to explore.

Since it is more likely to be women rather than men who pursue ministry as a second career, this aspect of becoming a minister may be a key point of difference between female and male ministers.

There is a cautionary tale in attending closely to the perspectives of women in ministry and their own understandings of their life's journeys. Given the experience of women in relation to institutionalized religion, it would be easy to assume that their stories would be stories of exclusion, inequality, and marginalization. However, while the women in this study were quite prepared to point out the histories of exclusion and blocked opportunities that they themselves had experienced, there was little resentment or criticism of their churches. Instead of emphasizing exclusion, they focused on the advantages of having had the experiences they did prior to entering ministry. As one participant described it, her pre-ministry life was "a gift." To suggest that such framings are simply the women's way of rationalizing the sexism to which they were subjected or perhaps even of defending an institution they had finally succeeded in penetrating is to discount their lived experiences. To focus only on the "blocked opportunities" elements of their stories would have been to miss the broader and richer understandings they have of their trajectory of involvement with their churches. In any future work on women in ministry, there would be value in listening carefully and respecting women's stories, and in resisting the temptation to privilege alternate interpretations of the women's experiences over their own.

Also worthy of greater attention are the questions of how calls to ministry differ from impulses to make other types of career transitions, or any major mid-life transition for that matter, and how social actors who go through these transitions explain them to themselves and others. While there are certainly unique aspects to making the move into ministry—including the sense that one is not responsible for initiating the move, but simply responding to God's call—there are also probably more generic features of the process that characterize any significant transition. More comparative work involving transitions of various kinds would allow a clearer identification of the unique versus generic features of transition experiences.

Similarly, the usefulness in this analysis of Mead's (1929) concept of "specious present," combined with Somers' (1994) notion of narratively constructed identities, invites reflection on other cases where these processes are at play. Mead's theory of time in particular, while debated theoretically, has generated few case studies that look in empirical terms at precisely how pasts are constructed and reconstructed in the present. What prompts such reconstructions and how do social actors understand what they are doing, especially in cases such as this one, where there is an awareness of the fact that the past is being reconstructed. Bringing Somers' insights into the picture, how much do constructions of the past have to do with concerns about self and the need to constitute coherent narratives about ourselves and our identities? Future research would do well to attend to the temporal aspects of identity work and the construction of self through narratives.

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Considering Essays: The Social Construction of Subcultural Value

Abstract The article examines the social processes that accompany the social construction of value within subcultural settings. Taking the evaluation of university essays as the case-at-hand, this paper argues for the importance of attending to the generic social process of assigning evaluative meaning. Specifically, this article locates these processes relative to the themes of: 1) socialization of new academics, 2) contextualizing the essay pedagogically and pragmatically, 3) grades as currency, 4) recipes of action and meaning-making, 5) assigning grades, and 6) managing troublesome cases. The collective work that we do to rank, sort, evaluate, and determine the relative worth of social objects reflects a set of processes that are to be found in multiple settings. This article contributes to our understanding of these rather central everyday life activities.

Keywords Social Process; Value; Meaning; Grading; Symbolic Interaction

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The relative value of any social object speaks to the generic social process accompanying the attribution of subcultural meanings. But, how this happens is, to borrow Becker’s (2014) analogy, something akin to a black box. We may know what goes “in”—a painting, a performance, or written text—and we may know what comes “out”—the value at auction, a cinematic award, a Nobel prize for Fiction—but what goes on “in between” is what produces the evaluative moment. Reflecting an interest in generic social processes (Prus 1996; Kleinknecht 2007), this paper takes up a specific case at hand—defining the relative value of the university essay. Drawing upon formal interviews, participant observations, and field notes, this paper offers a modest contribution to the study of generic social process

and the creation of subcultural value. Specifically, I examine the social process of interpreting the student essay and the pragmatic work of assigning grades. Adopting a symbolic interactionist/Blumerian approach to the work and life of university faculty and their students, this paper attends to the actions of participants and their world views (Blumer 1969). It is not my intent to advocate for some pedagogical perspectives over others (Krause 2001), but rather I am most interested in the social process through which the essay moves from work that is submitted for evaluation on the part of students to a social object that is assigned a particular meaning within the context of a local culture.

An attentiveness to local cultures is important here; organizations may have surface similarities. If universities are viewed as an ideal type, there are some rather central notions that one could suggest that all universities share. However, it is only by coming to know the local culture of an organization that the researcher comes to more fully appreciate how situational and specific practices, definitions, and divisions of labor may play important parts in creating meaningful differences (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). For example, campus communities may vary considerably relative to the understanding of their academic purpose and the academic life carried out therein.

While not wishing to undertake a detailed review of the diversity of post-secondary institutions to be found in Canada and the United States, it is perhaps worthwhile to note that the interviews to be found herein represent the experiences of participants working in medical/doctoral universities, composite

universities (mid-sized universities with some doctoral programming), and smaller, primarily undergraduate universities. The relative importance and the institutional resources that universities may direct to the promotion of academic skills on the part of students vary greatly. Some students may quite deliberately adopt course selection strategies to avoid those with mandatory writing requirements, and some universities adopt no organizational strategies to limit students’ abilities to do so. Other universities have well-established writing intensive courses that are mandatory for all graduates. Simply put, a new Ph.D. who is accepting his/her first full-time appointment at a U.S. or Canadian university may find that their understandings of the work of being a junior faculty member (that were developed during a Ph.D. program at a larger research-intensive university) are somewhat different from those found within the local cultures of their employment (Epp and Spellman 2014). This consideration applies to essay assignments specifically, their perceived place within a program of study, their assignment, their evaluation/assessment, and teaching activities more generally.

Grading Essays: A Comment on the Socialization and Integration of New Academics

The processes of becoming an academic are not dissimilar from the processes of becoming a doctor (Haas and Shaffir 1987), hockey player (Vaz and Clarke 1982), or weather forecaster (Fine 2009). There are careers of involvement that are associated with acquiring perspectives, learning the ropes, developing performance competences, and learning the life (Prus and Sharper 1991).

The transitions from undergraduate student, to graduate student, to faculty member involve a series of status passages (Glaser and Strauss 2011). These status transitions may be marked by a variety of initial involvements—initial involvements in lecturing, original research, course responsibility, and the grading of written work and essays. And all of this matters and matters quite meaningfully to subcultural participants, for those with the subcultural authority to determine grades have the subcultural authority to determine the relative value of work. Although some may assume that universities (whose mission statements often include declarations about the value of teaching) might apply related principles to the preparation of evaluators, in reality, the extent to which members of the subculture engage in more formal, organized, and directive training activities in preparation to become *determiners of value* may vary greatly.

One of my first experiences with grading was with a large class set of essays. I was in the first-year of my doctoral program and I was assigned as one of two T.A.s [teaching assistants] to a large second-year course of about 450 students. The professor divided the class set of essays into three piles and told me he wanted to see me back in his office with the *A* papers in one hand and the *F* papers in the other, nothing else. So that is what I did, he took one look at the stacks in my hands and said, “Too many *As* not enough *Fs*.” Then he asked for one of the *F* papers read the first couple of sentences and asked what I gave this “pile of shit.” He turned to the back, saw my *F* with a grade of 30, and took a big eraser and removed the three, leaving a zero on the paper. I was to go away and grade to that standard. That was the

sum total of my instruction on how to grade essays. [T.A., Sociology]

Like with other forms of initial involvements, participants may come to develop fuller appreciations of the life and work. Entering evaluation roles in university settings may provide opportunities for participants to enter backstage regions that were otherwise unavailable. Students may anticipate or infer what the life and work of being a faculty member involve. However, lived, first-hand experience with evaluation work may allow for a more complete understanding and framing of the everyday life of professors. As one graduate student noted:

I started grading as a way to make some additional money, the pay was good and I could do it mostly when I wanted. But, some of the work I had to read was really terrible, there was no saving it. What can you write on some of these papers—“The Wikipedia article you stole this from was better” is not really helpful. I know some university students are bad, but who wants to spend their lives reading this. [M.A. student, Political Science]

Contextualizing the Essay Pedagogically and Pragmatically

At all of the universities that form the research basis for this paper, faculty members held relatively high levels of academic freedom relative to the determination of the pedagogical merit on the inclusion of any particular form of evaluation for their courses, the relative weighting of assignments, and the applicable rubrics for evaluation. Faculty rights in these respects were protected under collective

agreements (or their equivalents) and constrained, in some ways, by policies of Senate (e.g., policies pertaining to academic integrity, accommodations required for students with disabilities, policies pertaining to testing and testing procedures). But, while one may formally point to the exercise of academic freedom, in everyday life terms, faculty members may be quite attentive to: 1) the expectations of others (e.g., Department Chairs, Deans, tenure committees), 2) students’ resistance, 3) externally imposed *learning outcomes*, and 4) the management of workload in making determinations about the inclusion of essay tasks in their courses.

As social objects, essay tasks may come to hold a variety of meanings for multiple actors. For example, pedagogical meanings may be particularly helpful as a means of framing the in-order-to motives of faculty members (Schutz 1974). Faculty identified three themes that were of particular importance that framed and contextualized the essay relative to other forms of evaluation: 1) the evaluation of a student’s ability to work independently, 2) the evaluation of the student’s ability to construct a research question, conduct research on that topic, and develop an argument, and 3) the evaluation of the student’s ability to present thoughts clearly, concisely, and in a manner appropriate for the discipline (e.g., professional socialization). The essay may be understood as a form of essential skills development for the academic side of student life.

The main difference between the essay and having students write exams is that you are expecting the student to independently find sources of information that you wouldn’t have expected them to search out

for an examination written in class. You are looking for their ability to use reference materials, their ability to figure out the information on their own. [Faculty member, Psychology]

Mainly, the essay is my attempt to gauge how well the student can go beyond the material presented in the class. As a genuine skill, I don’t think you will find that [fully developed] until someone has been around here for a few years. It is just another aspect of their intellectual maturity that I am trying to assess. To me, it is just another academic skill that the student has to try to develop. [Faculty member, Psychology]

Mindful of these perceived pedagogical benefits, faculty members in the social sciences and humanities were also critical of the use of the essay. The educational benefits may be perceived as questionable, the appropriateness of the essay at differing levels of study may be raised, and the perceived academic preparedness of students may be considered in the process of determining course requirements.

When I started teaching, every class got an essay to write, from my first-year classes right on through. I was going to teach them all these essentials, I thought. And I trudged home with these stacks of papers and waded through them. Then, one day, I realized that most of them were pre-literate little fuckers and I said to hell with it. My time is more valuable than to serve as a proofreader for some poorly written essay. [Faculty member, Psychology]

I used to assign essays to my first-year students, in fact, to every class, but then that was twenty-five

years ago. I won't come out and say they were smarter then, but they certainly had a better command of the English language. They had had considerably more exposure to disciplined composition than our students have today. [Faculty member, Religion]

I really think that essays are not that much used at the beginning levels. I just don't think that the students have the maturity to draw out the information themselves...At the junior level maybe 10 out of 100 would even be interesting reading. [Faculty member, Psychology]

When I began my teaching career, there was no Internet, no Wikipedia, and no online paper writing services. I would not say that students were any more honest, but plagiarism was harder. Now it is cut, copy, paste. It is not uncommon for me to find that 20% of the papers I get in first-year courses have serious issues with plagiarism. I have cut back a lot on the written assignments and essays I give. I just have no confidence that I am reading the student's work anymore. [A member of my department] assigns what amounts to a diary to be kept during the course and last term student plagiarized that from a blog. Really, plagiarizing a diary, I thought, now I have heard everything. [Faculty member, Cultural Studies]

Faculty members may also be attentive to some of the unintended consequences of assigning essays. Some of which may include: 1) implications for student recruitment and retention, 2) decreased class sizes, 3) reduced numbers of majors/minors, and 4) demographic shifts in the classroom complement. An appreciation of the challenges here may be particularly acute where faculty members work

in departments with considerable variability in the assignment of essay tasks.

I continue to use a short research essay assignment in my first-year classes. But, a number of colleagues do not. By the end of the second week of class almost all of the international students from [a specific country] have dropped my course. If they stay in the department, they have moved to sections where there are no real writing requirements in the course. I am well aware that I could do the same things—evaluate using computer-based multiple-choice questions, bell my marks, and give up on teaching meaningful critical thinking. It would increase my enrolments, which tells you something about what students seem to want. But, I have not done that and have no plans to do so. [Faculty member, Sociology]

Meaning, Grades, and the Currency of the University

Grades in universities are a somewhat unique subcultural phenomenon. In the classic work *Making the Grade*, Becker, Geer, and Hughes (1968) argue for an understanding of the culture of the university that is rather centrally focused on value and grades. Grades are, in many respects, the currency of the university. As Simmel (1978) has so carefully argued, all forms of money and currency rely, to some extent, on the social construction of trust. As a social construction, money may serve as an exemplar of the construction of objective realities (Berger and Luckmann 1967), for money has the potential to serve as an *objectifier*—a means by which social and cultural differences are lost to the leveling effect of the money market (Zelizer 1996). While various

cultural types may be prompted by the concept of the *millionaire*, the only requirement for admission is a quantity of money.

In the context of the university, students are paid for *their* academic work not through money, but through grades. Unlike wage labor, where the monetary value of work is known before the work is completed (e.g., an eight-hour shift at twelve dollars an hour represents a fully monetized income), the work of university students rarely is associated with a knowable wage. This is particularly true in the case of the university essay; the subcultural value of the work is not knowable with any certainty until the graded work is returned to the student with a value attached (though, of course, students can and do construct anticipated value).

As Goffman (1959) has discussed, one of the challenges of interpreting any performance is that audiences are often excluded from backstage regions. The work, or lack thereof, that has gone into creating the presentation is concealed or otherwise unavailable to the audience. As a practical matter, the submitted paper is the product of human action, but what that action has been is to some extent unknowable. Much like a dinner in a restaurant, the person evaluating an essay has only partial information about the processes that went into the production of the social object before them. The amount of time that a student has put into a particular task, how that time was utilized, whether this is a team or more solitary enterprise, and the effectiveness of that work is not available to the evaluator. The student/author, however, has the lived experience of the backstage region available to

them. In everyday life terms, the essay, therefore, may be a very different social object for the various actors involved. The student may define the essay as a document that they “sweated over,” “poured their heart into,” and “spent hours on.” When these kinds of definitions are in play, students may anticipate that their work will be rewarded with the kind of pay that would be expected of such efforts in more monetized settings. If time is money, then the time put into an essay task should be rewarded. If the essay is associated with the self and the students enter into some type of positive emotive relationship with the document (e.g., pride, courage, attachment), then, likewise, the grading of the essay can be viewed, by extension, as an evaluation of the worth of the person, their commitments, and their work (Albas and Albas 1988).

Faculty members/evaluators are faced with the task of determining the grade-value of the work on the basis of the performance before them. Much like the audience in a theatrical performance, for whom it is that show, on that day, at that time, which constitutes their experience of the performance, the professor is engaging and evaluating a particular essay performance in a particular here and now. And the determination of value is of considerable subcultural relevance. If grades are currency, they are also subcultural gatekeepers. Grades have an influence on progression through majors, graduation, scholarships, funding, and admission of programs. Given the subcultural relevance of grades and grading, how do professors go about assigning a value to the work before them? How are papers determined to be of differing values?

Recipes of Action and Meaning-Making

Consistent with Schutz' (1974) notion of recipes of action, faculty members may develop generalized frames of reference with respect to grade-point categories. The distinction between *A* and *B* papers is a subculturally meaningful one in that it implies identifiable and distinguishable qualities between social objects. In my experience, it is not uncommon for hiring committees to question job candidates on their understandings of the content and differences between grade categories. The interest in the answer to such questions implies that there may be a problematic quality to the answer—that these pre-established definitions are salient to job performance, shared meanings, and collegiality.

I give very few *A*'s. I reserve those for the truly exceptional papers. They are the ones that are fully researched, they haven't missed tackling a classic statement in the field, and, most importantly, they have understood what they have read and are able to go beyond it. They are the students who are creative, who see the implications of what they are reading and can articulate them. *A* papers have a definite sense of purpose—they tend to give you the feel that the student would have written it even if they were not in your course. [Faculty member, History]

*B*s are for people who do not screw up. They don't do anything exceptional either, but fundamentally they don't screw up. They do the work that is required of them, they answer the question, they read the material, and you can read it because they have found that the use of sentences is helpful. But, after you've

read it, you feel like taking them aside and saying, "So what?" because they usually haven't said much, but they have reported a lot. They've got the tools there, but they haven't figured out which side is really up. [Faculty member, Philosophy]

Generally, I would say that my papers are some of the hardest to get an *A*+ on, but at the same time they are the hardest to fail. Good philosophy requires a great deal of skill, but bad philosophy anybody can do. If they write on the page and give some sort of background to their thought, I have trouble failing that because, however badly, they've given it a shot. Clearly, if they don't hand anything in, they get a zero, if they hand in a paper that they basically wrote for last year's psychology course or whatever they were in, that fails too because it is so far off the mark. [Faculty member, Philosophy]

Assigning Grades

Despite strong pedagogical support for assigning essays, and the development of typifications of grade categories, the process of applying these meanings to cases at hand remains problematic. In contrast to the grading measures that some define as more objective (e.g., multiple choice questions and short-answer questions), the grading of essays requires more interpretive work to address the diversity of assignments before them. Given the variability in essay writing and subject materials, faculty members may adopt a range of strategies to respond to this diversity.

If I were religious, I would say that as I begin to read a paper that God whispers in my ear, "This is

a *C* paper." My students would die if they heard me say that, but, to some extent, it is true. I think that after you have marked for a while, you get a sense of the quality of the paper right off the start. The thing just sounds like a *C* paper or whatever...In order to give them room to be creative, you have to give them some rope, and that's often just enough for them to hang themselves with. [Faculty member, Psychology]

If you set all the *A* papers aside, they can be quite different as well. They are all creative, but they often go in very different directions, you are always going to get what you did not expect. I do not have a marking key or anything that I can show you how I mark. You really just have to take them as they come. [Faculty member, Philosophy]

Given the variability, diversity, and work required to apply typifications to cases at hand, faculty members/evaluators may adopt a range of strategies to frame and inform the grading process. It is important to stress that these strategies are not mutually exclusive and that members may express various commitments and dissatisfactions with these strategies over time. Bearing these concerns and limitations in mind, it is perhaps useful to distinguish between grading strategies that emphasize relative comparison and those that emphasize grading by some form of fixed standard.

Relative Comparison

Here, faculty members may attempt to address the challenges of the interpretive work of grading essays through an approach to grading that is cohort-based.

That is, there is some attempt to engage in the work of rank-ordering the essays received for a particular task.

The best papers in my classes get the top marks. They are the ones that get the *A*'s. So, over the years I would guess that I have given out *A*'s for a very wide range of papers. But, all of them were the best in their class. A number of things go into producing the quality of papers you are going to receive. Sometime you have to look at the assignment you gave out and ask if it was expecting too much, maybe it was, but the *A* papers are the ones that got the biggest part of it. [Faculty member, History]

Such approaches may quite explicitly attend to the interests that faculty members may have in being perceived as fair and equitable in the distribution of grades. Given the subcultural importance of grades, grading may involve the practical work of distributing scarce resources.

One of the most important things in marking is being fair so that people are treated equally across the board. To do that, you have to be sure that all of your *A* papers are better than your *B* papers and all your *A*'s are better than your *B*+. To do that, I mark by piling the papers up into their...groups, so that I have a pile of *B* papers and a pile of *B*+ papers, and so on. So you pick up a paper and read it over and say it is better than this lot here and not as good as this group, so it ends up on the pile in between. When I am finished sorting, I go through each pile and see if there is a paper that seems particularly out of place one way or another, and if there is, I move it up or down. [Faculty member, Sociology]

Grading via relative comparison may be perceived to have the relative advantage of attending to unique circumstances that may come into play in any given class, term, or assignment. To some extent, if creativity is linked to typifications of excellence, then advocates of grading by relative comparison may perceive such strategies as being true to that commitment.

I tend to have a look at things as they come. It is not as though I have set out anywhere what the definitive A paper will look like when it crosses my desk. I just don't see how you can do that because then the highest marks go to the mind readers. [Faculty member, Psychology]

Marking by Fixed Standards

Where faculty members attempt to grade by fixed standards, there is some directed attempt to objectify the assignment of grades and to do so in a way that transcends the variability that may be present in the cohort at hand. There is some attempt here to codify, quantify, or otherwise make the measurement of the value of the essay increasingly objectified. In this context, grades may be defined as the outcome of a process of measurement. In some cases, faculty members have developed a kind of *score sheet* that awards points for particular outcomes and then these various points combine to determine the final grade on the task at hand. Here, various tasks associated with essay writing, like preparing a title page, numbering pages correctly, length, bibliography, introductions, conclusions, and the like, are evaluated for presence, completeness, and correctness to create a final grade.

I want students to understand that the grade they get is not arbitrary and that a grade in the humanities is as rigorously determined as one in chemistry. I give students the reference point prior to them submitting the paper, so that they know what I expect and what each part of the essay is worth. They know, for example, that the reference work they do is worth ten percent of the paper. Even if their thesis statement is weak, it is still possible to earn all of those ten marks. They also know that there are marks for sourcing material properly. There are technical and research aspects of writing an essay that even students with little creativity can do properly, and they should be rewarded in some small way for that. It also says to the bright students that details matter, creative is good, but an essay is an essay, and you better know the difference between *it's* and *its*. [Faculty member, Philosophy]

Faculty members may utilize a number of strategies to apply fixed standards to the evaluation of essays. In some cases, faculty members may require students to submit written work electronically and may utilize various web-based or teaching software based resources to assist with the grading process. There are currently numerous resources available to assist students/authors and faculty members/evaluators in the evaluation of student essays. While the comparative sophistication of these programs varies, some do, in fact, offer the determination/recommendation of a grade as part of the software application. One such site, however, offers the following advice to those applying such an algorithmic-based grading tool to tasks at hand:

The grade above is NOT complete!...[T]his grade takes into account spelling, grammar, word choice, style, vocabulary, and more; but it does NOT examine the meaning of your words, how your ideas are structured, or how well your arguments are supported. We should also mention that our automated grader doesn't always get things right. So, please consider this grade to be one facet of your paper's overall grade. [See: paperrater.com. Retrieved May 09, 2016]

While such electronic supports may provide various types of assurances to faculty members, such software solutions are problematic in some important ways in that they cannot (yet) evaluate the kinds of learning objectives that faculty members spoke to when discussing the pedagogical import of the assignment of essay tasks in the first instance. Reflecting this, some faculty members rely rather centrally on previously established meaning sets in the social construction of fixed evaluation standards.

The essence of the way I mark is summed up by that chart on the wall. Each of those four boxes outlines the basics for each of the main grades—A through D. If it falls outside the boxes, it is an F. I leave this chart on the wall through most of the semester. When I mark, I read the paper through and decide which one of those boxes it falls into, then give it a plus or minus accordingly. One of the real advantages with this is that you are surer of the mark you give, your criteria are very clear...So, if a student wants to know how you came up with the mark, you show them the requirements for the next letter grade up and give them a chance to argue that their paper does those things. [Faculty member, History]

Troublesome Cases: Plagiarism and Other Deviant Definitions

Like others involved in evaluative work, faculty members may come to define student essays in terms of the normal paper. As Jeffery's (1979) work on normal deviance in emergency wards demonstrates, members of subcultural associations develop shared understandings of the normal, routine, and everyday, within that subcultural context. It is sociologically meaningful to talk of the normal armed robbery, the normal expression of road rage, and the normal prostitute-john interaction. While those outside of the subculture may view these activities as being anything but normal, and may, in fact, imbue them with a deviant mystique, these practices take on an aspect of normality for those who experience them on a more routine and sustained basis (Prus and Grills 2003).

Confronting those instances that are outside the normal may be defined in highly problematic terms by members. In terms of grading essays, two understandings of troublesome papers were particularly salient to respondents: 1) the off the mark paper and 2) the plagiarized paper.

Those papers that are defined as *off the mark* are assignments that are submitted which appear to have little or no relevance for the task at hand. While faculty members may develop well-established typifications relative to grading scales, some assignments fall well short of: 1) anticipated presentation expectations, 2) course requirements, or 3) what the member may have considered fairly clear performance requirements.

It doesn't happen very often, but every once in a while you do get an assignment that comes at you completely out of left field. I remember one where the student submitted a short series of haikus for their research essay. I looked at them quickly and simply assumed that the student had submitted the wrong assignment to me. So I contacted the student and it turns out no, the poems were for me. I received a long email talking about the artificial constraints of the conventional essay and the expressiveness of poetry and the like. What do you do with this? [Faculty member, Education]

I had given the class two specific essay topics to write on. This was a summative assignment in a senior course that was in lieu of a final exam—a bit of a hybrid between a research essay and a take-home exam. Every student was to give me two short essays; instead, one student gives me one long one and does not attempt the second question. When he hands it in, he tells me that the second question did not speak to him so he would not be true to his own inquiry to answer it. I was completely taken aback, nothing like that had happened before so I talked with a few colleagues about it and they were divided. One said I should respect his intellectual courage and grade the paper and waive the second one, another said just the opposite—that the most he should get would be 50% because he did not do the task. [Faculty member, Sociology]

Papers may also depart from the normal essay under circumstances where the faculty member comes to define the paper as plagiarized—as reflecting the work of someone other than the student. Recognizing that plagiarized work can be-

come normalized in its own right, that is, faculty members may develop understandings of normal trouble—even everyday examples of plagiarism may be defined in particularly unwelcome terms.

Nothing messes up your grading like hitting one that is plagiarized. I dread it; it takes so much time, because once you get a feel for it, then you have to find it. It is no one thing that can make me think I have a problem, sometimes it is phrases and words, sometimes it is irregular sources, sometimes the paper seems beyond the skill level of the student. But, once I start to wonder, then I need to follow through on it. [Faculty member, Philosophy]

You expect to deal with plagiarism at the first-year level. I talk about it in class, put the policy on my course outline. Talk about it again, but still it happens. But, by the time students get to third- and fourth-year, this should not be happening. I had a student in a fourth-year class who handed in a paper that had been lifted off of the Internet. She was a good student, and pleaded not to have this dealt with formally because it would affect her chances of getting into the Faculty of Education, but I went ahead with it. She was crying and saying that I was ruining her life. I did point out that I was not the one who tried to steal my degree. These things are hard on everyone, but do you really want a cheat as a teacher? [Faculty member, English]

In a contemporary context, everyday plagiarism is often associated with materials that students have ready access to through web-based sources and these materials are then inserted, for the

most part verbatim, into the submitted work. Where this occurs and where the faculty member attends to these acts and elects to act upon them detection is often not particularly problematic. The lower the lack of sophistication on the part of the deviant actor, the greater is the ease of detection. However, like the appreciation that may be expressed relative to high quality art forgeries (Briefel 2006), some troublesome papers are such fine examples of plagiarism that they may be held in certain esteem by faculty and those responsible for the administration of related policies.

The best plagiarized paper I ever saw was one done by a philosophy student. The philosophy professor was sure that the paper was not original, but the evidence was hard to come by. So, I spent some time with it and we eventually figured it out. The student had used two different strategies to cover their tracks. In the first case, they had used a thesaurus to great effect, strategically replacing words to make a simple Internet search harder. Secondly, they had replaced every empirical study within the paper with a Canadian equivalent. It was based upon a paper from a journal that was published in the United States, the argument presented was entirely that of the original author, but the context was shifted to Canada. It was stolen work, no doubt about it, but you do have to appreciate the skill that went into the deception. [University Administrator, Arts]

Conclusion

Faculty members/evaluators play a central subcultural role in the determination of the relative

value of the work of students. Whereas grades serve as the symbolic currency of the university, faculty members determine the value of work and that valuing has extensive and far-reaching subcultural import. The work of grading essays is particularly problematic in this respect, as faculty members attempt to undertake the interpretive work of defining an essay as holding some relative subcultural value. In undertaking this work, faculty members may employ a number of strategies to make the determination of grades reasonable and reportable within the subcultural context. This work, as challenging as it is, is further complicated by those instances where the essay they are attempting to evaluate deviates from expectations of the normal paper, and comes to serve as an exemplar of the troublesome case that demands or requires alternative strategies to manage cases-at-hand.

While faculty members may individually eschew or otherwise resist the monetary analogy made here (adopting, for example, a *learning-for-learning's-sake* worldview), the social organization of the university generally requires of faculty members their participation in this process of the determination of value. This is a rather central generic social process—the collective work that we do to rank, sort, evaluate, and determine the relative worth of social objects. This paper has contributed to the study of the practical work that accompanies the creation of subcultural value, and by so doing sheds some light on the process through which the rather central activity of making evaluative meaning is made in everyday life.

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Institutional Ethnography as a Method of Inquiry: A Scoping Review

Abstract The purpose of this scoping review is to examine the extent, range, and nature of the use of institutional ethnography (IE) as a method of inquiry in peer-reviewed journal publications. Fifteen databases were searched between the years of 2003 and 2013. Relevant data were extracted from 179 included articles.

Findings relate to nine key areas including year of publication, authorship and geography, types of journals, format of resources, authors' descriptions of how they used IE, approaches used in conjunction with IE, data collection methods, standpoint, and institutional relations. Institutional ethnography was diversely conceptualized as: a (sociological) method of inquiry, methodology, research approach, feminist sociology, theory and methodology, framework, lens, field, perspective, and form of analysis. Inevitably, authors applied IE differently across their research and writing, ranging from direct usage or close adherence to IE in a comprehensive manner; to indirect usage or loose adherence to IE by drawing on it as inspiration, guidance, or influence; or borrowing from a certain facet of IE such as a particular theory, concept, method, tool, or analytic strategy. Additionally, some authors adapted IE to suit a specific purpose, which entailed using modified versions of IE to fit a given context or objective, while others strived to extend existing understandings of IE through critique, explanation, review, elaboration, or reflection.

The results from this study are useful to both beginning and experienced institutional ethnographers, as the insights gained provide clarity about the use of IE, identify trends in its application, and raise additional questions.

Keywords Institutional Ethnography; Method of Inquiry; Scoping Study; Standpoint; Institutional Relations

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Developed by Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987; 1990; 1996; 2003; 2005; 2007; 2008), institutional ethnography (IE) is an established, formal, empirically based, and scholarly alternative sociology (Mykhalovskiy and McCoy 2002). Dorothy Smith's (2005:1) seminal text *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* "explicates institutional ethnography as a sociology that translates that concept into a method of inquiry" with distinct ontological orientations, theoretical influences, and guiding concepts. At its core, IE uncovers the social organization of knowledge through its materialist method for mapping out what happens to people, and operates under the assumption that social organization occurs through texts (Campbell and Gregor 2002).

Institutional ethnography uncovers and attempts to help others understand the relations that orga-

nize individuals' experiences, and is based on the notion that people participate (both knowingly and unknowingly) in processes of organization of their lives (Smith 1987; 1990; 1996; 2005). This feminist inspired "sociology for people" requires a move in thinking towards what Dorothy Smith (2005:209) has called "the ontology of the social...; meaning that what institutional ethnography is aiming to discover really happens or is happening, and it can be explored and explicated."

Grounded in a Marxist-feminist approach (Smith 1996), Dorothy Smith rejects the dominance of theory and takes up "standpoint" as an orienting concept guiding the inquiry. Her use of "standpoint" serves as a point of entry into the social that "does not subordinate the knowing subject to objectified forms of knowledge of society" (Smith 2005:10). IE

“is a method of inquiry that works from the actualities of people’s everyday lives and experiences to discover the social as it extends beyond experience” (Smith 2005:10).

“Institution” in an institutional ethnographic sense does not denote a physical organization or an establishment such as a school or hospital, but rather serves as an abstract reference to an embodied complex of “ruling relations that are organized around a distinctive function such as education, health care and so on” (Smith 2005:225). Organized by texts, ruling relations are the complex practices that coordinate people’s actions locally and “translocally” in ways that people are often not fully aware of (DeVault and McCoy 2006). Although the ethnographic research may begin with their experiences within an institutional setting, people’s experiences are not the objects of inquiry; rather, aspects of the institution that are pertinent to the organization of people’s experiences comprise the focus of the investigation (Smith 2005). The institutional dimension of institutional ethnography guides the researcher’s analytic move from the local ethnographic description to the explication of the ruling relations that coordinate people’s knowledge and activities (Rankin and Campbell 2009).

The inspiration for this scoping study emerged from our (the three authors’) individual experiences applying IE as a method of inquiry within our own research projects. Despite coming from different disciplinary backgrounds and academic settings, we share the belief that IE is being utilized with increasing frequency, and is taken up in varying ways. We also recognize the existence of debates and dif-

fering perspectives regarding the methods and approaches that are more or less congruent with IE. The purpose of this review is to apply Arksey and O’Malley’s (2005) scoping study methodology to explore the extent, range, and nature of the use of institutional ethnography (IE) as a method of inquiry by systematically mapping various features of IE publications from peer-reviewed literature.

To accomplish the aforementioned objective, we identify key concepts, approaches, and methods employed by institutional ethnographers. Our aim is to establish the types of IE research published, and to provide an overview of how IE has been applied. In doing so, this study will build upon existing understandings of this method of inquiry, highlighting key trends, questions, and gaps. To our knowledge, this is the first comprehensive review of the use of IE on an international scale. Recently, an occupational therapy-specific IE scoping study was published in a non-blind, peer-reviewed professional magazine (Carrier and Prodinger 2014). A large-scale review such as the one we have undertaken is important, as it records a vital part of IE history and chronicles the method as it has spread globally and across disciplines. Understanding how IE is being conceptualized, employed, and written about can inform professional and scholarly institutional ethnographic practices, identify notable tensions, and signal avenues for continued exploration. Moreover, it may reassure novice institutional ethnographers to know that others encounter similar challenges and questions, and support their grasp of relevant orienting concepts and methods. Our intention for this study is to encourage scholars, researchers, and other IE practitioners to find supportive spaces and

opportunities to make meaningful contributions within the diverse and vibrant institutional ethnographic community.

The scoping review method is congruent with our quest to understand the varied usages of IE. Both scoping reviews and institutional ethnographies (a) recognize mapping as a useful analytical device, although how they employ mapping differs (e.g., Arksey and O’Malley 2005; Smith 2005); (b) utilize similar terminology to label their approach to analysis, such as “‘descriptive analytical’ method” (as stated by Arksey and O’Malley 2005:26), and “analytic description” (as stated by S. Turner, personal communication, June 17-24, 2011); and (c) receive calls from the research community to make the details of their analytic processes visible and accessible to others (e.g., Levac, Colquhoun, and O’Brien 2010; Walby 2013).

Methodology: Process Challenges of Conducting an IE Scoping Study

This scoping study follows the protocol set forth by Arksey and O’Malley (2005), incorporating the recommendations for enhancing the methodology suggested by Levac and colleagues (2010). Moving through the six stages of this framework (as described later in this section), we summarize features of studies included in the review, and organize key characteristics systematically. The irony of categorizing and organizing the content of IE studies is not lost on us. There are inherent tensions in applying a primarily quantitative method that relies on “arbitrary and reductionist categorizations to explore qualitative research” (O’Shaughnessy and Krogman 2012:504). We would be remiss, if we did

not openly acknowledge some of the challenges and incongruities that surface and share our strategies for reconciling these differences.

Specifically, the work of conducting a scoping study involves coding, categorizing, and reduction (Arksey and O’Malley 2005), which contrasts with how institutional ethnographers do research (Campbell and Gregor 2002). For example, we found it challenging to code or categorize complex, multi-dimensional information central to institutional ethnographies, such as “standpoint.” Campbell and Gregor (2002:16) state that IE “takes the standpoint of those who are being ruled.” Identifying and retaining a standpoint is critical to the practice of IE (Smith 2005; Bisailon 2012). It is an orienting concept that gets at the intricacy of people’s multi-layered or intersecting identities, which shapes how they see and understand the world. To depict the range of standpoints across the articles, we chose a visual mapping schema (Word Cloud) reflective of a mode of description and analysis that is more in keeping with institutional ethnography than a quantitative representation of standpoint such as a numerical table. Institutional ethnographic work is critical of institutional forms of power that tend to “objectify” complex people through the use of narrow, inflexible categorizations (Smith 2005). In the spirit of preserving human diversity and utilizing inclusive language, we are mindful that the people whose perspectives and experiences form the “starting point” for the research (Bisailon 2012:619) are more than the labels often ascribed to them.

Designing our data extraction chart, drafting the manuscript, and attending to feedback from

expert consultants involved an iterative approach to (a) clarify the utility of the findings, (b) contemplate potential reactions from a diverse readership, (c) adhere to the journal's publishing guidelines, and (d) remain committed to preserving our own interests and voices. Ultimately, we sought to strike a delicate balance between integrating orienting concepts from IE, utilizing terminology associated with methods of inquiry, and employing procedures consistent with scoping reviews, which necessitated ongoing negotiation, prioritization, adaptation, and compromise.

As our inquiry evolved, so too did our working protocol. Consideration was given towards project feasibility and complexity, as well as available resources and expertise. We found ourselves supporting Daudt, van Mossel, and Scott's (2013:35) suggestion to "remove the term 'rapidly' and replace it with the need for scoping studies to be done thoroughly and thoughtfully," as this kind of work "take[s] time." Refining multiple iterations of charts, procedures, and operational definitions proved tedious, but necessary, given our requirement to develop a unified language and process. We necessarily modified procedures in an effort to troubleshoot difficulties, set reasonable limits, and maintain momentum. The initially projected 1-year, 2-person side-project turned into a 3-year, 3-person research collaboration.

Our literature search proved challenging; upon consultation with library services, we realized that certain search terms we hoped to include (e.g., mapping, problematic, feminist, and sociology) were extremely broad and would yield numerous

false positive results. Thus, we refined our list of terms by utilizing key words identified by authors familiar IE articles (for example, Campbell 2003; Pence and McMahon 2003; Rankin 2009; Bisaillon 2012). Although we originally left certain search parameters open-ended, such as the year and type of source, which is typical practice for scoping reviews (e.g., Pham et al. 2014), after retrieving tens of thousands of hits, we determined that conducting a more focused investigation was in order. Given our resource constraints, we limited our sources to one decade, which mirrored a number of recently conducted scoping reviews (e.g., Redvers et al. 2015; Watson, Zizzo, and Fleming 2015; Webster et al. 2015). The 2003-2013 timeframe was selected because it represents a pivotal decade in the development of IE. Dorothy Smith's seminal text was published in 2005, thus providing us with a period that would reflect the impact of this work; as well as a solid indication of recent trends in, and contemporary usage of, IE. We further restricted our charting to peer-reviewed journal articles, a strategy occasionally employed by other scoping reviewers (Pham et al. 2014). Given the frequent comments we heard from institutional ethnographers (at conferences, in workshops, via feedback, and during informal conversations) of the challenges they face getting their work published in peer-reviewed journals, we opted to explore this rich source as the basis for the review. Our assumption was that authors would likely face similar difficulties navigating the web of ruling relations associated with academic publishing (i.e., journals' specific word count, format, and structure regulations; the peer-review process; and the inevitability of having to explain their work to both IE and non-IE audiences). Peer-reviewed jour-

nal publications provided us with fruitful grounds for drawing comparisons. However, journal publications may not always reflect cutting edge, or innovative information in a given field; thus, our scoping review provides only a partial view of how IE has been taken up as a method of inquiry. Nevertheless, we hope that our findings will generate rich discussion and debate.

We followed the five stages of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005:22) framework, which entailed: (a) identifying the research question; (b) locating relevant studies; (c) establishing study selection criteria; (d) charting the data; and (e) collating, summarizing, and reporting results. We also included the optional sixth stage of consulting with experts.

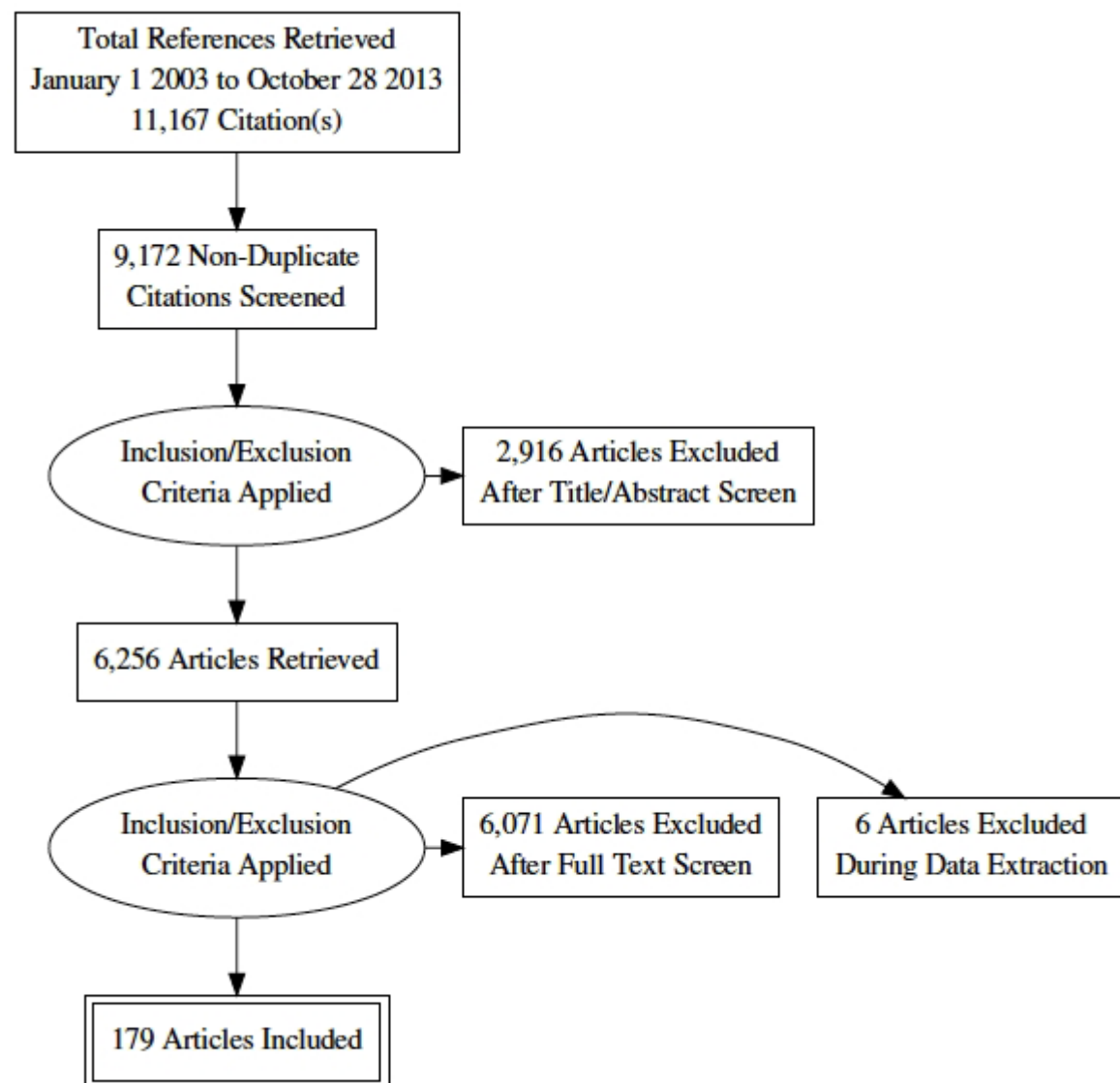
Stage 1 of the framework requires the development of a clear research question that will guide the scope of inquiry (Levac et al. 2010). In seeking to better understand the uptake of IE, we posed the following research question: *What does the existing peer-reviewed published literature tell us about the extent, range, and nature of the use of IE as a method of inquiry?*

Stage 2 involved identifying relevant studies through a systematic review of the peer-reviewed literature published between January 1, 2003 and October 28, 2013. Specifically, we used (a) the OvidSP search platform in the following five databases: MEDLINE, EMBASE, and EBM Reviews—Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, PsycINFO, and ERIC; (b) the EBSCOHost search platform in the following two databases: CINAHL and H.W. Wilson Social Science Abstracts; and (c) the ProQuest search platform in the following eight databases: Arts & Humanities

Full-Text, Canadian Research Index, PAIS International, Philosopher's Index, ProQuest Social Science Journals, Social Services Abstracts, Research Index, and Sociological Abstracts indexed. To ensure comprehensive coverage of the literature, we also conducted a Summon platform search. Combinations of database-specific and free-text terms were used in the search. All searches contained variations of terms utilized frequently in institutional ethnography, including "institutional ethnography," "ruling relations," "text-mediated," "disjuncture," "visible/invisible," "social ontology," "shape/shaping," "intertextual/intertextuality," and "organization/organizational."

The search retrieved a total of 9,172 references (including the references that were identified by hand searching IE-related special issues of relevant journals, and reviewing the reference lists of the articles that met our inclusion criteria, as well as a random assortment of 30 journals that were likely to publish IE articles). All references were saved in an Endnote library, which was then used to identify and remove the 2,916 duplicates. The remaining 6,256 unique references were reviewed against the inclusion criteria described below. A total of 5,992 articles were excluded after the title and abstract screening. We retrieved 265 full-text articles against which the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Eighty articles were excluded after the full text screening, and six articles were excluded during data extraction; resulting in a total of 179 included articles that became part of the final review (see: Figure 1 for a Flow Diagram depicting the flow of information through the different phases of the review).

Figure 1. Flow Diagram of Review.



Source: Self-elaboration.

When locating the studies for inclusion during Stage 3, two of the researchers independently reviewed all titles and abstracts for prospective inclusion. The reviewers met at the beginning, midpoint, and final stages of the review process to discuss challenges and refine the search strategy as required. Disagreement arose in relation to nine specific studies; therefore, a third reviewer deter-

mined final inclusion. In order for an article to be included within the study, it must have (a) referenced at least one work by Dorothy Smith, (b) explicitly used the term "institutional ethnography," (c) applied IE as a method of inquiry or advanced the approach, and (d) been published between January 2003 and October 2013. Sources not (a) written in English, (b) available in full-text, or (c) published

in journal article format were excluded from the review.

It should be noted that some of the omitted articles appeared to use IE-consistent terminology, approaches, strategies, and sources; yet the authors did not label their work as IE, or acknowledge explicitly that they were drawing on aspects of IE. Other excluded articles made reference to IE, but did not cite Dorothy Smith; thus, these sources were also left out of the review. We maintained a consensus that the inclusion of these basic elements (such as referencing Dorothy Smith's work) were integral and would allow for cross comparison of the included publications.

When charting the data in Stage 4, we utilized an Excel spreadsheet to identify key items of information obtained from the primary source under review. This technique for synthesizing qualitative data included sifting, charting, and sorting material according to the following key categories: year of publication, number of authors, journal of publication, country of primary author, country of co-author(s), geographical location of research/interest, format of resource, author explanations of how IE is being employed in their work, methods of inquiry and other approaches used, data collection methods, standpoint, and institutional relations under investigation. The data chart was refined multiple times in an iterative fashion with the project's purpose and research question in mind to ensure extraction of the information necessary to fulfill the study's objective.

Due to the difficulties inherent in coding such diverse information, we relied on operational defini-

tions to standardize the criteria for data extraction. These definitions were generated by reaching consensus, and by applying our own working knowledge and judgment of the key criteria. There were several challenges in extracting relevant data from the articles connected to the divergent uses and intended meanings of IE-related terminology. For example, some authors did not take up a standpoint within their work, while other authors cited multiple standpoints from a variety of perspectives and positions of power. Furthermore, there were some sources that examined numerous institutional relations, or the intersections between them, making categorizing and coding these relations impractical.

After the data extraction stage was complete, information was collated. We recount the comprehensive sense-making process we employed for one specific data column below, in order to provide an example of our methodological and analytic work.

Contents from the data extraction chart column related to "other approaches used" were itemized in list form. Items were then organized into connected clusters. The iterative, messy, and tentative process of grouping related items involved making continuous refinements by readjusting category labels and shifting contents. Various books and online resources were consulted (e.g., Campbell and Gregor 2002; Creswell 2005; 2007; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Smith 2005; Schwandt 2007) as we operationally defined categories and developed a working understanding of other approaches used in combination with institutional ethnography. Schwandt's (2007) *Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* (3rd ed.) proved to be a particularly valuable source. For a list of our operational definitions, please refer to Table 1.

Table 1. Operational Definitions for Other Approaches Used with IE.

TERM(S)	DEFINITION(S)
Concepts	A concept “point[s] the inquirer in a general direction but do[es] not give a very specific set of instructions for what to see” (Schwandt 2007:292).
Theories, perspectives, philosophies, or ways of knowing	According to Schwandt (2007:292), “a theory is a unified, systematic causal explanation of a diverse range of social phenomena.” Schwandt (2007:292) goes on to state that: “A step up the ladder of sophistication, one finds theoretical orientations or perspectives (e.g., functionalism, symbolic interactionism, behaviorism...). These, more or less, are social theories that explain the distinguishing features of social and cultural life, and thus, they serve as approaches to identifying, framing, and solving problems, and understanding and explaining social reality.”
Methodologies or research traditions	A methodology or research tradition encompasses: “a theory of how inquiry should proceed. It involves analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry (that, in turn, governs the use of particular methods)...[It] occupies a middle ground between discussions of method (procedures, techniques) and discussions of issues in the philosophy of social science...[It] defines the object of study and determines what comprises an adequate reconstruction of that object” (Schwandt 2007:193). Some examples of methodologies include: quasi-experimental, survey, ethnomethodology, grounded theory, case study, social phenomenological, ethnographic, naturalistic, and narrative (see: Creswell 2007; Schwandt 2007).
Analytic approaches and procedures	The “activity of making sense of, interpreting, and theorizing data...a variety of procedures that facilitate working back and forth between data and ideas” (Schwandt 2007:6). Some examples of analytic approaches include: constant comparison method, analytic induction, and grounded theory analysis (Schwandt 2007).

Source: Self-elaboration.

Through the process of further (a) consulting multiple original articles to see how authors defined and employed specific approaches, (b) sub-grouping and counting related approaches, (c) eliminating redundant items that were an obvious part of institutional ethnographic or qualitative research practice, and (d) dropping outliers, eight initial categories were distilled to the following three categories:

- Theories, perspectives, frameworks, ways of knowing, guiding concepts, and models;
- Methodologies or research traditions; and
- Analytic approaches and procedures.

Although there were numerous ways that the approaches could have been clustered, the focus of our scoping review (exploring the use of IE as a method of inquiry) directed our gaze to research-oriented categories that would best enable us to answer particular facets of our research question. Each member of the team independently reviewed the draft Table (including its categories and contents) using both operational definitions and expert judgment as a guide. Discrepancies were identified and discussed collaboratively in order to reach an agreement.

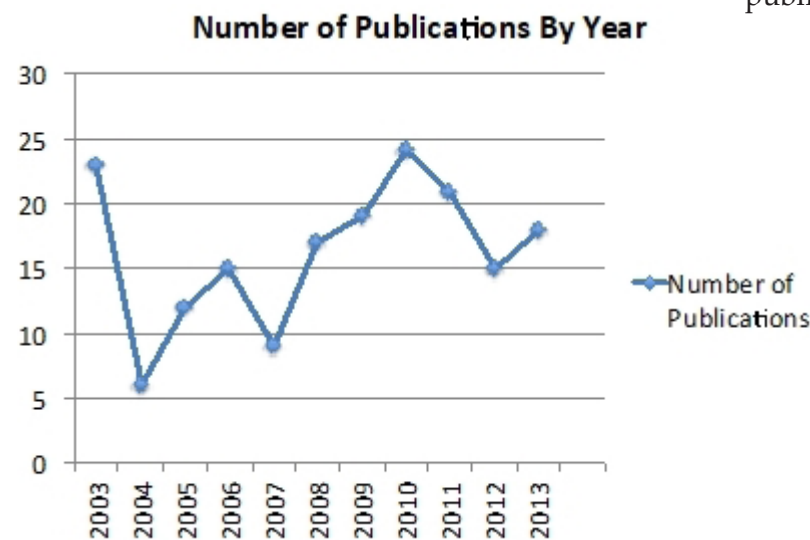
Three challenges arose while attempting to categorize approaches. Firstly, some authors provided very general information about the additional approaches they used, while other authors provided very detailed information. When comparing and contrasting available approaches, we realized that multi-leveled groupings would be

required to accurately cluster connected items. Secondly, encountering contested terms including contradictory definitions, labels, or understandings within and across the various resources we consulted made it difficult for us to pinpoint within which category a particular item best fits. It became apparent that like institutional ethnography, certain approaches could have easily fit across multiple categories, as they had theoretical, methodological, and analytic underpinnings. In such instances, we strived to place the approach within the category that most closely mirrored how the author(s) defined or used it. Thirdly, there were inherent tensions involved in coding or categorizing these data, as such reductive practices are typically not regarded as consistent with IE approaches to analysis (Campbell and Gregor 2002).

Results

One hundred seventy-nine peer-reviewed journal articles published between January 1, 2003 and October 28, 2013 were included in the review. Interestingly, between 2003 and 2004, and again between 2006 and 2007 there was a significant drop in IE publications; however, between most other years there was an increase in the number of IE journal articles (see: Figure 2 for details). It is important to remember that IE researchers are also choosing to publish their works in other formats such as books or edited book chapters. Since such sources were excluded from our scoping study, we cannot speak to the broad trends across the diverse landscape of IE literature.

Figure 2. Number of Publications by Year.



Source: Self-elaboration.

Authors and Geography

The majority of the publications in the review were single authored papers (93, or 52%) (e.g., Good-Ginrich 2003; Jung 2003; Mykhalovskiy 2003; Rusted 2006; Walby 2006; Nichols 2008a; Quinlan 2008; Hicks 2009; Fisher 2010; MacKinnon 2010; Bisailon 2011; Deveau 2011; Murray 2012; Ross 2013). There were fewer publications with large numbers of authors and as the number of authors increased, the number of publications decreased. Specifically, 48 (27%) of the publications had two authors (e.g., Jakubec and Campbell 2003; Scott and Thurston 2004; Luken and Vaughan 2005; MacKinnon and McIntyre 2006), 19 (11%) had three authors (e.g., Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein 2007; Lane, McCoy, and Ewashen 2010; Malinsky, DuBois, and Jacquest 2010; Braaf, Manias, and Riley 2013), 12 (7%) had four authors (e.g., Sadusky et al. 2010; Marshall et al. 2012; Mumtaz et al. 2012; Moll et al. 2013), and only seven IE publications (4%) had five or more

authors. This trend may reflect discipline-specific publishing practices. For instance, five of the seven papers with the most authors were related to healthcare issues in religious, nursing, midwifery, and occupational therapy contexts (Townsend et al. 2006; Hamilton et al. 2010; Kennedy et al. 2010; Muñoz-Laboy et al. 2011; Sinding et al. 2012). In healthcare settings, mixed methods are often employed, large inter-institutional investigative teamwork is prevalent, and co-authorship practices that acknowledge the involvement of all stakeholders remain the norm. Another two articles were related to health and transitional issues in educational contexts (Aldinger et al. 2008; Restoule et al. 2013) where collaborations between members of universities, schools, communities, or unit partners frequently occur. Four of the seven articles involved international collaborations. Interestingly, each of these articles had at least one author affiliated with the United States. Other countries represented across the international collaborations included Brazil (Muñoz-Laboy et al. 2011), Canada (Hamilton et al. 2010), China (Aldinger et al. 2008), and England (Kennedy et al. 2010). The remaining two articles involved national collaborations between individuals with Canadian affiliations (Townsend et al. 2006; Sinding et al. 2012).

Primary authors on 150 (or 84%) of the articles had North American institutional affiliations. More specifically, 106 (or 59%) of these articles identified the first author as holding a Canadian institutional affiliation, and 44 (or 25%) identified the first author as being affiliated with an American institu-

tion. Subsequently, first authors on eight (or 5%) of the articles held institutional affiliations from the United Kingdom, and first authors on seven articles (or 4%) had affiliations from Australia. There were five publications (or 3%) with primary authors from Scandinavia, including Finland (Husso and Hirvonen 2012), Norway (Widerberg 2004), Sweden (Nilsson et al. 2012), and Denmark (Høgsbro 2010). The remaining primary authors were affiliated with institutions in South America—Brazil (Gómez and Kuronen 2011); Africa—Nigeria (McNamara and Morse 2004); or Western-European countries—Austria (Prodinger et al. 2012), Switzerland (Prodinger and Turner 2013), and the Netherlands (Klaver and Baart 2011).

To better understand the geographical location of (a) the research, or (b) interest, we grouped the articles according to Global North and Global South designations. Global North included North America, Western Europe, and developed parts of East Asia; whereas Global South was comprised of Africa, Latin America, and developing Asia, including the Middle East. In total, 14 journal articles (8%) were based on work completed in the Global South, including research conducted in countries such as Ecuador, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Brazil, Pakistan, Nigeria, and South Africa. Of the 14 articles, only three (2%) had first authors from the Global South (one of which was the sole author, while the other two papers had co-authors from the Global North).

Types of Journals and Format of Resources

Out of the 179 articles, 59 (or 33%) were published in health-oriented journals (e.g., Paterson,

Osborne, and Gregory 2004; Lynam 2005; McCoy 2005; Winkelman and Halifax 2007; Mykhalovskiy 2008; Limoges 2010; McGibbon, Peter, and Gallop 2010; Rankin et al. 2010; Sinding 2010; Godderis 2011; Veras and Traverso-Yeppez 2011; Lowndes, Angus, and Peter 2013; Melon, White, and Rankin 2013), followed by 40 (or 22%) in sociological journals (e.g., Cleeton 2003; Luken and Vaughan 2003a; 2003b; Knaak 2005; Harrison 2006; Parada, Barnoff, and Coleman 2007; Leonard and Ellen 2008; McNeil 2008), and 15 (or 9%) in education journals (e.g., Salmon 2007; Comber and Nixon 2009; Hamilton 2009; Nichols and Griffith 2009; Shan 2009; Comber and Cormack 2011; Maher and Tetreault 2011; Comber 2012). The remaining 65 (or 37%) articles appeared in journals that addressed various facets of policy (e.g., David 2008; Barry and Porter 2012), youth (Pence and McMahon 2003; Kushner 2006a; Nichols 2008b), social work (Kushner 2006b; Hicks 2009; Pozzuto, Arnd-Caddigan, and Averett 2009), aging (e.g., Brotman 2003), law (Goodman 2008), geography (Perreault 2003; McNamara and Morse 2004), agriculture (Tarasuk and Eakin 2005; Eells 2010), ethics (Truman 2003; Fisher 2006a; 2006b), communication (LaFrance and Nicolas 2012), and management (Lund 2012). The *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* was the most prolific publisher of IE articles (n=10; including a special edition with nine IE publications in 2003); followed by *Nursing Inquiry* with six publications; and *Gender, Work, and Organization* with five publications.

The most prevalent formats of papers included empirical research, followed by conceptual papers and experiential pieces. One hundred thirty-one articles (73%) were based on empirical research (e.g.,

Townsend 2003; Luken and Vaughan 2006; McCoy and Masuch 2007; MacKinnon 2008; 2011; 2012; Lane 2011; Maher and Tetreault 2011), while 12 articles (7%) fell into the category of conceptual papers, meaning that IE was utilized to explore issues, and to develop concepts and ideas (e.g., Smith 2003; DeVault 2006; Walby 2013). Cumulatively, the educative resources (e.g., David 2008; Deveau 2008; Quinlan and Quinlan 2010) and experiential pieces (e.g., Grahame and Grahame 2009; Janik-Marusov et al. 2011; LaFrance and Nicolas 2012) accounted for 22 of the publications (with 11 publications or 6% each). Refer to Table 2 for operational definitions pertaining to the 7 formats of reviewed resources and their respective percentages.

Table 2. Operational Definitions for Format of Resource.

FORMAT OF RESOURCE	#(%) OF ARTICLES
Empirical research— <i>draws on data generated from direct and indirect observation(s) or experience(s) that are analyzed quantitatively or qualitatively to make a claim</i>	131 (73%)
Conceptual— <i>provides explanations and accounts of IE and its development; uses IE as a framework to explore issues, develop concepts and ideas; may draw upon empirical research based on IE approaches to support an argument, but the primary objective is not to report on findings</i>	12 (7%)
Educative resource (e.g., toolkit)— <i>provides clarification of, or assistance with, EXISTING theories, concepts, or approaches in order to help others learn how to think, write, or research in a particular way</i>	11 (6%)
Experiential account— <i>Relating to, or derived from, experience</i>	11 (6%)
Advancing IE theory/methodology/analysis— <i>presents a NEW perspective or practice that alters, modifies, or extends existing work</i>	5 (3%)
Literature review— <i>an evaluative report of information found in the literature pertaining to IE</i>	5 (3%)
Social critique— <i>a critical analysis, argument, or commentary about contemporary social life, or social organization, which points out existing flaws, challenges, or problems in society</i>	3 (2%)

Source: Self-elaboration.

Authors’ Descriptions of How They Used IE

As IE has evolved and grown exponentially across disciplines, it has been taken up variably (a) as a sole approach/methodology, (b) as a guiding framework or foundation, (c) in combination with other methods, and (d) in other ways that are uncovered later in this review. To get a snapshot of how authors described and used IE, we extracted from the articles the specific phrases related to explanations or descriptions of how authors drew on IE in their work. The phrases were then categorized as indicating one of the following: directly using IE; indirectly or loosely adhering to IE; adapting IE to suit authors’ own purposes; extending authors’ own and others’ understandings of IE; and finally, drawing from IE studies.

Authors mostly described IE as “an approach” (e.g., Yan 2003; Campbell and Teghtsoonian 2010; Mumtaz et al. 2012; Bruch 2013), “a methodology” (e.g., Rankin 2003; Medves and Davies 2005; Parada, Barnoff, and Coleman 2007; McCoy and Masuch 2009), “a method of inquiry or study” (e.g., Brown 2006; Luken and Vaughan 2006; Quinlan 2009), and “a framework” (e.g., McNeil 2005; Traverso-Yepetz 2009). In a few instances, IE was referred to as the “work of Dorothy Smith” (e.g., Winfield 2003; Kushner 2006a; Janik-Marusov et al. 2011), including her “feminist sociology” (e.g., Berkowitz and Marsiglio 2007) and “theory of ruling relations” (e.g., Kushner 2006b). It was also described broadly as a “field” (Aldinger et al. 2008), “lens” (e.g., Dyjur, Rankin, and Lane 2011), and “theoretical perspective” (e.g., Townsend 2003).

Direct use of IE was most prevalent in nearly two thirds of the reviewed articles (102 or 57%) where it

was typically employed as the main methodology, or as a framework to examine a body of literature or to reflect on a concept (e.g., Grahame 2003; Adams 2009; King 2009; Baines 2010; Campbell and Kim 2011; Hamilton and Campbell 2011; Krusen 2011; Bisailon 2013; Lowndes et al. 2013). Indirect use of IE occurred in approximately 43 (or 24%) of the articles. Phrases such as “based on” (e.g., McGibbon and Peter 2008), “informed by” (e.g., Scott and Thurston 2004), “draws from” (e.g., Tummons 2010), and “shaped by” (e.g., Butterwick and Dawson 2005) suggest that the authors were using only the principles of IE as “inspiration” and “guidance,” or only certain aspects of IE in their research or writing, such as a particular concept, method, or form of analysis (e.g., Cormack and Comber 2013; Gerrard and Farrell 2013). Other authors in a smaller subset of articles (11 or 6%) described using a version of IE such as “multi-sited” (Fisher 2006a), “longitudinal” (Breitkreuz and Williamson 2012), “comparative” (e.g., Sobo, Bowman, and Gifford 2008; Gómez and Kuronen 2011; Muñoz-Laboy et al. 2011), “political activist” (e.g., Bisailon 2012; Hussey 2012; Bisailon and Rankin 2013), or “transnational” (Grace 2003). The remaining articles were primarily non-empirical and either (a) extended authors’ own and others’ understandings of IE (9 or 5%) through critique (e.g., Walby 2007), explanation (e.g., Deveau 2008; Smith 2008), review (e.g., Kushner 2006a; 2006b), elaboration (e.g., Wittman 2010), or reflection (e.g., Malinsky, DuBois, and Jacquest 2010); or (b) drew from other IE empirical studies (5 or 3%) for the purpose of substantiating an argument or reflecting on and exploring a particular concept (e.g., Rankin 2009; Marshall et al. 2012). The remaining articles (9 or 5%) were not applicable for this type of categorization (e.g., David 2008; Bisailon and Rankin 2013).

Using IE and Other Approaches

Of the 179 articles in our scoping study, 100 (or 56%) appeared to utilize IE exclusively, while 79 (or 44%) appeared to utilize IE in combination with at least one other theoretical, conceptual, methodological, or analytic approach. Table 3 provides a comprehensive picture of 90 other approaches that were extracted across the 79 sources. Forty-four (or 49%) of the 90 approaches constituted various theories, perspectives, frameworks, ways of knowing, guiding concepts, and models; while 30 (or 33%) were methodologies or research traditions; and 16 (or 18%) encompassed analytic approaches and procedures.

Authors employed anywhere from 1 to 7 additional approaches, with an average of 1.5 other approaches. The use of 1 other approach was most prevalent across the articles, while the use of 7 other approaches was least prevalent across the articles. Most frequently cited theories that were used or explored in combination with IE included a diverse range of feminist perspectives across 6 of the articles, followed by a symbolic interactionist perspective in 6 of the articles. Most frequently cited methodologies that were used or explored in combination with IE included 9 different types of ethnography across 11 of the articles, 4 types of case study across 7 of the articles, and 2 types of grounded theory across 6 of the articles. Most frequently cited analytic approaches that were used or explored with IE included 2 kinds of discourse analysis across 7 of the articles and thematic analysis across 6 of the articles.

Articles were evenly divided in terms of authors who gave some reasoning for merging other theo-

ries, methodologies, or analysis strategies in concert with IE, and authors who did not provide an explanation. Occasionally, more than one rationale for combining various approaches was cited. However, authors employing multiple additional approaches within the same paper or project sometimes only offered a partial justification, describing why one (but not all) of the approaches were utilized. Typical explanations included brief statements suggesting that the combination of approaches enhanced findings by providing the addition of useful “conceptual tools” (Ross 2013), a “more theoretically informed perspective” than is currently available (Butterwick and Dawson 2005), “robust” (Kennedy et al. 2010) or “sensitizing lenses” (Berkowitz and Marsiglio 2007), and particular contexts that IE could not provide on its own, such as historical (Murray et al. 2012) and biographical (Shan 2009). Moreover, the addition of IE (and sometimes other approaches) served as a mechanism for (a) addressing gaps and needs in specific fields (Murray, Low, and Waite 2006; Moser 2009; Bruch 2013), (b) solving problems identified by theorists (Hart and McKinnon 2010), and (c) supporting necessary change (Restoule et al. 2013) through the concretization of strategies, analyses, evaluations, or conclusions with increased specificity, practicality, and utility for actual people (Murray et al. 2006; Moser 2009; Hart and McKinnon 2010; Restoule et al. 2013), and the development of “holistic understanding[s]” surrounding a given process (Murray et al. 2006).

Conversely, other approaches were added to address areas authors claimed that IE alone could not meet, such as making the research accessible by using arts-based methods (Slade 2012), understanding

Table 3. Other Approaches Used or Explored with Institutional Ethnography (IE).

THEORIES, PERSPECTIVES, FRAMEWORKS, WAYS OF KNOWING, GUIDING CONCEPTS, AND MODELS	METHODOLOGIES OR RESEARCH TRADITIONS
Actor network theory	Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) methodology
Adapted partnership framework (Scott-Taplin)	Arts-informed research using reader’s theatre
Autobiographical occasions (Zussman)	“Biomedical technography”
Bourdieu’s theories and concepts	Bourdieuian field analysis
Forms of capital	Case study (3)
Theory of practice	Extended case method (2)
Conceptual frame of policy sociology (Ball)	Collective case study
Critical perspective	Comparative case study
Critical realist perspective	Critical qualitative methodologies*
Critical success factors	with attention to reflexivity and power
Culture of work enforcement (Piven)	Ethnobotany
Decision analysis/Risk-analysis models	Ethnographies
Decolonial knowledge	Activist ethnography
Disability	Autoethnography
Domains of scholarship (Boyer)	Critical ethnography
Dualism paradox (Durkheim)	Cross-cultural ethnography
Embodied care (Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu, Goffman)	Hospital ethnography
Feminist perspective(s)	Medical anthropological ethnography
Feminist critical theoretical framework	Political activist ethnography* (3)
Feminist materialist intersectionality	Psycho-social ethnography of the common-place method*
Feminist standpoint theory	Transnational institutional ethnography*
Intersectionality theory	Ethnomethodology
New and feminist materialisms	Conversation analysis
On social and gender inequalities	Grounded theory (6)
Foucault’s theories and concepts	Modified grounded theory
Panopticon metaphor	Life history methods
Power and governmentality (2)	Mixed methods (3)
Institutional phase theory	Naturalist approach to sociology
Interorganizational relations theory	Participatory action research (2)
Interrogations of an audit culture (Ball and Morley)	Feminist participatory research methodology
Model for the evaluation of rural sustainability	Safety audit methodology
New literacy studies theoretical perspectives	
Outsider/within status (Hill-Collins)	
Performance and visual culture	
Politics and the public sphere (Ardent)	
Pragmatism	
Symbolic interactionism (6)	
Procreative identity framework	
Relational psychoanalysis theory	
Rhetorical spaces (Code)	
Sociology of science theoretical perspectives	
Structuralism	
Structuration theory from cultural studies	
Texts (Titchkosky)	
Transgender theories	

ANALYTIC APPROACHES AND PROCEDURES	
Constant comparative strategies of concept development	
Content analysis	
Critical social science analytic frame	
Crystallization (Janesick)	
Discourse analysis (3)	
Critical discourse analysis (4)	
Historical analysis	
Listening guide method of analysis	
Narrative analysis (2)	
Open and axial coding	
Phenomenological analysis	
Interpretive phenomenological analysis	
Secondary analysis of survey data	
Social network analysis including mappings	
Standard anthropological text analysis techniques	
Thematic analysis (6)	

Source: Self-elaboration.

how texts arrived at their locations through Actor Network Theory (Tummons 2010), or enhancing the study of sensitive issues with increased attention to people’s emotions and researcher’s positioning via a proposed approach called biomedical technography (McGibbon and Peter 2008). Finally, Taber (2010) makes a case for employing autoethnography in her IE study because she could not obtain organizational access to conduct interviews.

Individuals also acknowledged various sources of theoretical (e.g., Nichols 2009), ontological (Satka and Skehill 2011), identity (Bain 2010), representational (Restoule et al. 2013), and design (Moser 2009) inspiration (or influence) that informed their projects, scholarship, or researcher positioning. Specific authors located themselves as being “in the middle of [certain] disciplines,” striving to achieve “a balance between [multiple] positions” with the goal of ensuring that findings are of mutual relevance to different groups (Klaver and Baart 2011:691).

Notes. Approaches within each column are presented in alphabetical order. Repeatedly cited approaches are followed by parentheses and a numerical value indicative of the total number of articles across which they were employed. Specific subsets of broader approaches (such as various types of feminist perspectives, case study methodologies, ethnographies, and so on) are marked by the use of indentations.

*Approaches marked with an asterisk were regarded by authors as related to IE.

Importantly, IE was viewed as an ideal companion to other approaches because together, they “support and complement one another” (Daniel 2005) with respect to their “philosophic assumptions” (Kushner 2005); “interpretive nature” (Murray et al. 2012); “standpoints” (Dergousoff 2008); “emphases,” “concerns,” or “conceptualizations” (Gerrard and Farrell 2013; Restoule et al. 2013); orienting concepts or foci (Moser 2009; Høgsbro 2010); and similar groundings in the study of oppression, marginalization, power, and/or knowledge (Murray et al. 2006; Salazar 2008). Notably, multiple “other” approaches (marked with an asterisk in Table 3) were regarded by authors as either “heavily based on;” “emerging from;” or a “specialized form,” “extension,” or “expansion” of IE. These interconnected branches comprise political activist ethnography (Bisaillon 2012; 2013; Hussey 2012), psychosocial ethnography of the commonplace method (Gibson, O’Donnell, and Rideout 2007), and transnational institutional ethnography (Grace 2003). One of the experts we consulted pro-

vided important historical information regarding the origins of political activist ethnography, stating:

This approach is based on a paper by George Smith called “Political Activist as Ethnographer” which was written and published before the name “institutional ethnography” was invented; yet it can be viewed as an early formulation of IE as an activist approach. [Expert Consultation, October 5, 2015]

IE was also located under the umbrella of critical qualitative methodologies (Bruch 2013).

A few authors provided in-depth rationales for using IE in combination with other tools, particularly when they employed it in concert with the ideas of major theorists such as Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Hannah Arendt (Mykhalovskiy, McCoy, and Bresalier 2004; Nichols 2009; Gerrard and Farrell 2013). Such authors typically pinpointed the opportunities resulting from marrying the approaches, and acknowledged direct implications for their findings. For instance, Mykhalovskiy, McCoy, and Bresalier (2004) articulate:

While Smith’s project and Foucauldian work each has its own intellectual specificity, we draw them together as resources that help us to think about power as multiply sited and exercised through relations of knowledge. From this location, our analysis of interviews with people living with HIV, community-based HIV health information and the current biomedical research literature suggests that in the context of HIV much more is at work in people’s relationships to treatments and medical advice than the power of medicine over patients. [p. 317]

Likewise, authors juxtaposed approaches for comparative purposes, often outlining the varied contributions to a given field (David 2008); or they troubled (a) taken-for-granted notions such as “Foucault’s Panopticon metaphor” (Walby 2005), or (b) researcher identities (Bain 2010) in ways that unearthed complexities and contradictions.

In some cases, authors conveyed Dorothy Smith’s criticisms of particular theorists’ assumptions (Gerrard and Farrell 2013), and acknowledged the challenges inherent in mixing methodologies that were not aligned with IE’s epistemology and ontology (Nichols 2009; Quinlan and Quinlan 2010) and that, in fact, Dorothy Smith viewed IE as a framework for inquiry as opposed to a research methodology (Tummons 2010). However, according to these and other authors, the strength of the commonalities shared between IE and other approaches were enough to balance the disparities in ways that led (or might lead) to innovative, expansive, and clarified methods for examining social phenomena (Mykhalovskiy et al. 2004; Eveline, Bacchi, and Binns 2009; Nichols 2009; Quinlan and Quinlan 2010; Gerrard and Farrell 2013). Ultimately, when attentive to multiple approaches’ strengths, shortcomings, and subsequent reworkings (e.g., Husso and Hirvonen 2012) and committed to building “bridges” or “locating intersections” (e.g., Restoule et al. 2013), authors saw themselves as “working with and between” the approaches, conceptualizing each as being “in dialogue with” the other (e.g., Dergousoff 2008; Gerrard and Farrell 2013).

When explicit explanations for using multiple approaches were not obvious, implicit rationales

could sometimes be surmised from the contextual, content, or procedural clues embedded within the articles. Authors appeared to have chosen a combination of approaches (including IE) to (a) offer a different or extended perspective; (b) advance a case or develop a critique; (c) demonstrate innovation by making new contributions; (d) achieve pragmatic needs or personal desires; (e) support reflection, reflexivity, or participation; (f) provide a way to organize, structure, present, or frame the analysis; (g) draw upon preferred or most familiar research methods; (h) conform with disciplinary or scholarly knowledge, training, or conventions; or (i) adapt to the in-situ challenges encountered over the course of the inquiry.

Data Collection Methods

The majority of manuscripts (132 or 74%) used multiple data collection methods such as interviews, texts, and observations. Twenty-one articles (or 12%) used only one source of data, and the most frequent single data collection method was interviews. The remaining 24 articles (or 13%) did not collect data. Additional methods of data collection captured in the “other” category included shadowing, drawing on archival data, gathering community demographics, employing a “think out loud” technique, and incorporating participant journaling. Figure 3 denotes the frequency of the data collection methods used across publications.

Authors of 21 publications appeared to draw on material obtained predominantly through a single method of data collection. More than half of these publications (12 or 57%) relied primarily on inter-

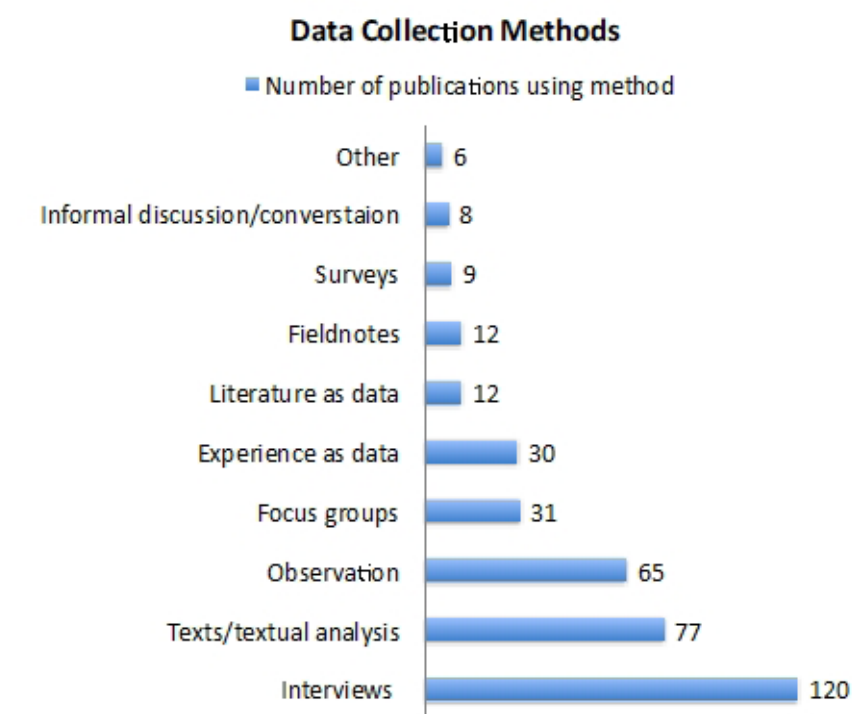
view data (Harrison 2006; MacKinnon 2006; Murray et al. 2006; Weigt 2006; Berkowitz and Marsiglio 2007; Breitzkreuz, Williamson, and Raine 2010; Reimer and Ste-Marie 2010; Husso and Hirvonen 2012; Nilsson et al. 2012; Beck et al. 2013; Haneda and Nespor 2013; Taylor 2013), which is consistent with some claims that interviewing is one of the most commonly used data collection methods in institutional ethnography (DeVault and McCoy 2006). Importantly, some of these authors did situate key issues within an historical context meant to serve as a complement and comparative reference point to their interview data (e.g., Murray et al. 2006). Authors of 3 publications (respectively) drew largely on literature (Folkmann and Rankin 2010; Dyjur et al. 2011; Dale et al. 2013) or texts (Bell and Campbell 2003; de Montigny 2003; Harrison 2012) as their primary data sources, while authors of 2 publications (Butterwick and Dawson 2005; de Montigny 2011) relied on their own experiences as data. Finally, authors of 1 publication (Stooke and McKenzie 2009) used participant observation as their key method of data collection, although informal discussions also occurred during some of their observations.

At first glance, authors’ extensive reliance on a single data source in 23 or 13% of the publications may seem curious considering that multiple and diverse methods of data collection tend to be the norm in IE (Campbell and Gregor 2002). However, a handful of articles were identified as either critical literature reviews or experiential pieces (Butterwick and Dawson 2005; Folkmann and Rankin 2010; Dyjur et al. 2011; Dale et al. 2013), where drawing largely on a single data source seems appropriate. In the case of empirical investigations, the need to

adhere to specific word count restrictions requires that authors select only a portion of a larger project to explore, a potentially challenging task for institutional ethnographers, because of the scope and complexity of their work, and of the institutional

relations being explicated. Some authors strategically focused on providing a detailed analysis of a key text, textually-mediated process, or relevant discourse (e.g., Bell and Campbell 2003; de Montigny 2003; Harrison 2012).

Figure 3. Data Collection Methods.



Source: Self-elaboration.

Standpoint

In reporting the standpoint of the research, our quest was to preserve and present the messiness and the multi layers of people’s lives through the varying locations that authors took up in their work. This notion of standpoint humanizes the starting point of the research and speaks to how IE typically begins from the margins or from the experiences of people located outside the ruling apparatus (Bisaillon 2012); individuals bereft of the authority to make policy or

funding decisions, often occupying multiple levels of disadvantage and vulnerability in society. However, accurately categorizing the diverse and varied standpoints across publications proved awkward and unmanageable. Instead, we opted to present the range of standpoints as a word cloud (see: Figure 4 for details). This method provides a general overview and an idea of the most commonly reported standpoints as indicated by the size of font. In our word cloud, “nurses,” followed by “occupational therapists,” and “people with HIV” were the most prominent,

suggesting that they were the most frequently cited standpoints. When possible, we maintained the authors’ original wording.

Figure 4. Overview of Standpoints.



Source: Self-elaboration.

Institutional Relations

Next, we examined the primary institutional relations that were addressed within each publication (see: Table 4 for details). We developed a series of operational definitions based on the results

of a qualitative content analysis of reported data. Category clusters were then created to describe the primary institutional relations discussed in each paper, and we subsequently quantified these clusters by counting the number of times each relation occurred across the range of publications. A total of 23 publications were excluded because authors did not examine particular institutional relations, or the papers were deemed to be conceptual (e.g., articles coded as “educative” or “toolkit”).

Fifty articles (or 28%) addressed institutional relations related to health-care systems, service delivery, diagnosis, treatment, or prevention. The next most prevalent

institutional relations addressed were educational (in 30 or 17% of articles), social services (in 26 or 14% of articles), and governmental (in 22 or 12% of articles). Interestingly, 16 articles (or 9%) were classified as exploring “other” institutional relations related to religion, gender mainstreaming,

anti-oppressive practices, North American cowboy culture, the discourse of black mothers, research, international development, and housing or home ownership. The remaining relations included community organizing, immigration, humanitarian work, and agriculture.

Table 4. Operational Definitions of Institutional Relations.

INSTITUTIONAL RELATION (OPERATIONAL DEFINITION)	#(%) OF PUBLICATIONS
<i>Healthcare</i> —Any relations regarding healthcare systems, healthcare service delivery; or relations related to diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of disease, illness, injury, and other physical and mental impairments	50 (28%)
<i>Education</i> —Any relations addressing formal learning in which knowledge, skills, and/or habits are transferred (including daycare, schooling/schools, university, continuing education, fieldwork placements, on-the-job learning, etc.)	31 (17%)
<i>Social Services</i> —Social work, homeless shelters, battered women’s services, disability support, etc.	26 (14%)
<i>Government</i> —Any relations connected to systems by which a State or community is governed (including legal, court, or prison systems; military; and municipal, provincial, or federal governance)	22 (12%)
<i>Community Organizing</i> —A process where people who live or work in proximity to each other come together into an organization that acts in their shared self-interest	4 (3%)
<i>Immigration</i> —Any relations addressing the immigration, settlement, or arrival of people	3 (2%)
<i>Humanitarian work</i> —Aid and action designed to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of emergencies	3 (2%)
<i>Agriculture</i> —Farming, food production, and the cultivation of animals, plants, and other life forms for food, fiber, biofuel, and other products used to sustain and enhance human life	2 (1%)
<i>Other</i> (including religious institutions, gender mainstreaming, anti-oppressive practices, North American cowboy culture, the discourse of black mothers, research relations, international development, housing and home ownership)	16 (9%)
<i>N/A</i> —Did not investigate institutional relations (e.g., educative resource or conceptual paper)	22 (12%)

Source: Self-elaboration.

Because we chose to identify the most prominent or focal set of institutional relations central to the research or writing, which required distilling information into a single category or term, the richness and complexity of these relations is oversimplified.

Discussion

Our findings reveal the expansive scope of IE across disciplines, sectors, and countries including the breadth of ways it is being conceptualized and applied in practice. IE is diversely conceptualized as: a (sociological) method of inquiry, methodology, research approach, feminist sociology, theory and methodology, framework, lens, field, perspective, and form of analysis. Inevitably, authors applied IE differently across their research and writing, ranging from direct usage or close adherence to IE in a comprehensive manner; to indirect usage or loose adherence to IE by drawing on it as inspiration, guidance, or influence; or borrowing from a certain facet of IE such as a particular theory, concept, method, tool, or analytic strategy. Additionally, some authors adapted IE to suit a specific purpose, which entailed using modified versions of IE to fit a given context or objective; while others strived to extend existing understandings of IE through critique, explanation, review, elaboration, or reflection.

Importantly, when used as a method of inquiry, IE supported authors to: explicate the social organization of knowledge; depict textually-mediated relations; highlight contradictions between authoritative knowledge and practical knowledge and experience; make the often invisible work of particular people visible to others; show how ruling relations,

discourses, and forms of institutional power organize and regulate people's lives; map out particular work processes; demonstrate how people's work in certain spheres of contemporary society is changing or being reorganized; question taken-for granted assumptions, practices, or knowledge; and provide an alternative analysis that shows or tells something new or different from previous work.

A key finding from our review is the significant extent to which IE is being used in combination with other theories, methodologies, or analytic tools. This issue reflects what appears to be a growing debate within the IE community—whether IE is amenable to being used in concert with other approaches. In fact, one of our expert consultants indicated that our Table 3 “opens up a can of worms” (Expert Consultation, October 5, 2015). At the core of this debate is IE's unique ontological position that continues to generate points of tension and ambiguity (Smith 2006; Walby 2007; 2013). Practitioners of IE are required to make the “ontological shift,” which refers to a move from the “generalized world of conceptual and theoretical explanations” (Smith 2006:51) to the material world of people's everyday activities (Smith 2005). This distinction in IE is evident in every facet of its methodology, beginning with its rejection of theoretical supremacy, and the particular ways that methods are executed and data are analyzed. With such strong claims to a particular way of seeing the social world, and the directives around how its methods and analyses are carried out, the question of how other theories, methodologies, and methods can work in tandem with IE is tantamount to asking whether we can mix ontologies/epistemologies, which some researchers liken to a kind

of “ontological gerrymandering” (Giacomini 2010). Yet, as Guba and Lincoln (2005:206) note, the paradigmatic controversies are mostly occurring at the borders, “the places that show the most promise for projecting where qualitative methods will be in the near and far future.”

The tensions inherent in mixing ontological and epistemological differences are familiar in the burgeoning mixed methods/mixed research¹ debates (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, and Collins 2009; Hess-Biber and Johnson 2013; Morse and Cheek 2014; Howes 2015), which can inform how we think about “mixing” IE with other approaches and methodologies. At the core of the mixed research debate is whether methods, purposes, kinds of data, and levels of analysis from differing philosophical perspectives or paradigmatic stances can communicate with each other and be mixed or co-exist (Hess-Biber and Johnson 2013; Howes 2015). In response to this issue, proponents of mixed research have increasingly situated their projects within the construct of metaparadigms such as pragmatism and dialectical pluralism (Howes 2015). Similarly, Quinlan and Quinlan (2010) locate their pairing of IE and Social Network Analysis (SNA) within the pragmatist paradigm, using Habermas' theory of communicative action. While some of the authors in our review positioned their blending of IE with other methodologies/methods as a “mixed methods” design, few provided details or explications about the basis for their decisions, including, most importantly, the

¹ The term “mixed research,” as opposed to “mixed methods research,” indicates that mixing can occur at levels outside the quantitative and qualitative dyad to include philosophical stances, data collection, and analysis (Howes 2015).

philosophical underpinnings. This lack of methodological and philosophical clarity is at the forefront of the critique that mixed methods research has not, in the past, been sufficiently justified (Howes 2015), and continues to pose a significant barrier to rationalizing the mixing of IE with other approaches/methods, as our review demonstrates. Explicating the reasons behind choosing to use IE as a “mixed design” can contribute to the development of institutional ethnographic research in innovative and promising ways.

The potential to cultivate relevant and effective methodological practices and designs that can answer research questions more completely is recognized in mixed research as occurring precisely in those spaces created by the “turbulence” of crisscrossing paradigms (Guba and Lincoln 2005; Hess-Biber and Johnson 2013; Howes 2015). Similarly, in our study, the intent to address complex political, educational, health, and other social research questions that could not be answered with IE alone was explicitly and implicitly the over-riding rationale authors gave in this category. They spoke of needing to “push methodological boundaries” (Taber 2010:6) and “contribute to the development of an innovative methodological approach” (Satka and Skehill 2011:192). Although the rationales provided were mostly convincing to us, we questioned what the implications might be if we are to take Dorothy Smith's (2005) stance that IE is not a methodology, but rather a “sociology.” This is an important question to consider as Dorothy Smith's *raison d'être* for developing IE stems from her intent to provide an “alternate sociology” moving from an approach where people are typically considered as the objects

of inquiry to an approach where aspects of the institutions relevant to people's experiences are the focus of inquiry (Smith 2005). Dorothy Smith (2005:2) cautions that although she has described IE as a "method of inquiry," it is in fact "a bit misleading" because "it is not just a methodology." Based on our review, it is evident that in its combination with other methodologies/approaches, IE is frequently being taken up as a methodology and as a method. The extent to which it is used as a methodology/method is particularly apparent in how authors described their rationale for combining IE with the work of other major theorists such as Foucault, Arendt, and Bourdieu (Mykhalovskiy et al. 2004; Nichols 2009; Gerrard and Farrell 2013). Authors highlight the "methodological" and "pragmatic tools" that IE offers, implying in some cases, that with its materialist grounding, IE can deliver the empirical instructions where other theorists and ideas cannot. The tension accompanying this rationale is evident throughout Nichols' (2009:63) paper, which she positions as "the outcome of my work to reconcile a loyalty to theory with a desire to use IE as an activist (and materialist) qualitative research strategy." Nichols (2009:72) reports on how she draws from Hannah Arendt's political theory, "easily anathema to IE" to provide the conceptual basis of the project, while moving forward with Dorothy Smith's standpoint concept that offers the "concrete place from which to investigate the social world" (Nichols 2009:64). In other projects where IE intersects with a Bourdieuan framework, IE is positioned as bringing "methodological clarity" (Gerrard and Farrell 2013); whereas within a Foucauldian perspective, the methodological approach "is shaped by Dorothy Smith's notion of institutional ethnography" (Butterwick and Daw-

son 2005) and contributes an "empirical sociology of 'ruling relations'" (Mykhalovskiy et al. 2004).

The question remains, if IE is being taken up as methodology, is the research project truly an "institutional ethnography" as outlined by its founder, Dorothy Smith, and does it matter? It matters in IE's call to work with other institutional ethnographers who in sharing the same ontology can bring together their separate studies of different institutional complexes. By illuminating the meta-discourses that cross organizations, institutions, and societies, deeper and far-reaching changes may be effected (DeVault 2006). Despite the potential merit of such a synthesis of institutional ethnographies, we did not come across any examples of this kind of work in our review. If we consider the impetus behind Dorothy Smith's creation of a "sociology for the people"—to help individuals understand how they are oppressed—the resolve as to whether IE can be taken up as a methodology leans in the affirmative direction. Institutional ethnography is a highly technical and complex practice demanding a kind of scholarly attention that requires sufficient research time to implement and translate in ways that are useful to changing people's lives. This challenge, identified as a constant and real struggle for institutional ethnographers (Campbell and Gregor 2002), is being addressed by the myriad ways that authors applied a specific aspect of IE to uncover the actualities of people's work, and relied on "practical" and "recognized" sources to help them analyze institutional ethnographic data (Expert Consultation, July 25, 2014), with varying needs, goals, contexts, resources, and expectations in mind. This actuality suggests IE's usefulness as a methodology across

disciplines, at least for the scholars and researchers who continue to take it up in innovative ways.

Limitations and Recommendations

The challenges of conducting an IE scoping review are reflected in the limitations and subsequent recommendations we have outlined below. Given that IE is currently not a formal subject heading or an indexed term across databases, we were restricted to conducting a textword-specific search, which presented many difficulties. For example, using the textwords "institutional ethnograph*" captured a number of irrelevant sources, including ones that (a) used "institutional" and "ethnography" in the same sentence, but not in reference to IE as a method of inquiry, (b) contained "institutional ethnography" in the title of one of their references, (c) cited an IE study, but did not actually employ Dorothy Smith's IE as part of their own approach, or (d) used the phrase "institutional ethnography" in reference to conducting an ethnography of or within an institution, which is not synonymous with employing IE as a method of inquiry. Consideration should be given to making IE a formal subject heading or indexed term across databases in order to support the further tracking, cataloguing, and study of this important body of work.

Categorizing and coding content from IE papers proved difficult, as the purpose and intent of IE is to resist categorization and classification. Our attempts to distil complex content into simple categories resulted in a loss of the richness and complexity that IE emphasizes. Additionally, restricting the scope of this study brought about several limitations. First,

the timeframe of the data search did not capture all relevant works, such as the many formative studies seminal to the development of IE prior to 2003. Second, our decision to focus this scoping review strictly on peer-reviewed journal articles limited the breadth of information that could be gathered. During the investigation, we noted numerous book chapters, dissertations, conference abstracts, and front/back matter that directly addressed the utilization and application of institutional ethnography. Our review presents a very specific and detailed overview of trends and developments from the peer-reviewed journal article publications only, and omits summarizing the rich content from various types of IE works published elsewhere. Third, because of time constraints, we opted not to re-run the search after charting the sources, a practice that occurs in a small percentage of scoping reviews (Pham et al. 2014). As such, one of the significant limitations of this project is that the most recent manuscripts published after October 28, 2013 were omitted from our review. Fourth, a number of articles were excluded from this study because they were not available in English. Other languages in which these works were published included (but were not limited to): French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. Collaborative international projects aimed at translating IE research across multiple languages are urgently required in order to build a shared understanding of how IE is being taken up around the globe.

Although some authors appeared to draw on an IE-informed analysis and cite works by Dorothy Smith, they did not explicitly use the terminology "institutional ethnography" to label or position

their work, and consequently these sources were excluded from our study. In an effort to maintain a transparent research process and clear inclusion criteria, we refrained from reading between the lines to determine whether authors utilized institutional ethnography. Thus, the number of peer-reviewed IE journal publications may be higher than what we have captured. To ensure that IE work is included in future reviews which can advance the field, it is important that authors label their research and writing as institutional ethnography.

Additional omitted sources (a) described their work as conceptually, theoretically, methodologically, or analytically rooted in IE; and (b) referenced other institutional ethnographers; but did not (c) cite Dorothy Smith's work directly. One of our Expert Consultants suggested that "as a field matures the method rather than its founder is identified" (October 5, 2015). Learning about the origins and history of IE as developed by Dorothy Smith is essential to understanding IE's key tenets, ontology, orienting concepts, and associated commitments and politics. Whether taken up on its own or with other approaches and methodologies, IE is best and appropriately utilized when it is sufficiently understood. Citing Smith in a project that entails using IE, indicates a continued acknowledgement and commitment to the core principles of IE.

While Step 6 of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework (involving the optional consultation with stakeholders in the field) was extremely beneficial, we felt that it came rather late in the course of our research process. Some of the consultants' requests were addressable, such as the provision of

further clarifications, contextual details, and rationales; elaborations associated with IE terminology, our process, and the tensions we encountered; and an articulation of the main "take away" messages. However, other important comments and queries (such as attending to points of particular interest to seasoned institutional ethnographers, relevant historical details, and key concerns in the field) were difficult to tackle, since our data collection had already occurred. We suggest the inclusion of an additional optional stakeholder consultation prior to Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) fourth step of charting the data so that researchers can receive preliminary feedback in regards to: their research question, inclusion and exclusion criteria, operational definitions, and proposed chart headings. Such a consultation would enable teams to ensure they collect the appropriate data required to address key issues, and to make necessary adjustments to strengthen their research process and the utility of their findings.

Although it is beyond the scope of this review specifically, and of scoping reviews more generally, which traditionally refrain from judging the quality, appropriateness, or rigor of the research and writing of selected articles (Arksey and O'Malley 2005; Levac et al. 2010), there were instances when we engaged in informal debate with each other regarding the (in)compatibility of particular approaches that had been paired. The limited information, lack of explanation, and ambiguous rationales for combining IE with other methodologies/methods is a weakness we identified in numerous articles. We urge authors to clearly explicate how and to what degree they are drawing on IE and other theoretical, conceptual, methodological, or analytical tools in their

research and writing (e.g., as primary approaches, secondary approaches, equivalent approaches, etc.). Rationales for, and the processes of, utilizing multiple approaches should be provided upfront with attention to opportunities and tensions. In addition to making an argument (or claim) for why the merging of specific tools is acceptable and worthwhile, offering an open discussion of the difficulties, dilemmas, and divergences encountered would prove helpful. We also suggest that experienced institutional ethnographers work together to create a concise but comprehensive resource that addresses (a) necessary features of institutional ethnographies, (b) common errors made in IE research and writing, and (c) the appropriateness of employing a range of tools in conjunction with IE.

Future Research

Considering the limits of what our project can answer, we propose numerous avenues for further investigation. For example, examining IE as a method of inquiry across the comprehensive body of grey literature (conference presentations, reports, magazines, newsletters, dissertations, etc.) and published literature (books, edited book chapters, handbooks, encyclopedia entries, etc.) will contribute to a deeper and expanded understanding of how IE is taken up as a method of inquiry. Future scoping studies should also document (a) the IE-specific analysis steps that were employed; (b) whether or not the project was funded (and if so, the funding source); (c) authors' professional positions (graduate student, professor, community activist, etc.) and disciplinary affiliations; and (d) type of IE (e.g., predominantly textual, discursive/ideological, change-oriented,

historical, and so on). Such documentation will provide important information about the IE analysis process, the funding bodies or sources that support IE research, the people who employ IE, and the range of IE works that exist.

Moreover, we recommend that prospective reviews trace the historical evolution of IE. Mapping Dorothy Smith's connection to authors by decade, based on (a) a direct relationship (such as colleague, advisor, committee member, external examiner, instructor, etc.); (b) an indirect relationship (for instance, one of Dorothy Smith's former advisees is now an advisor or committee member to the author); or (c) no known relationship, might enable the identification of authors as first-, second-, third-, fourth-, fifth-, or new-generation IE users. Data could be examined for patterns based on how different generations of Institutional Ethnographers have referred to, utilized, and taken up IE over time. Such a study might offer a novel picture of the IE community, the proliferation of IE, and the future of IE. Indeed, questions remain as to whether certain orienting concepts and tenets have become muddled or misused over the years, and whether there is an immediate need to clarify and preserve the shared language that cuts across disciplinary divides, so that it remains intact and well-understood long after Dorothy Smith and first-generation institutional ethnographers have stopped teaching, researching, and mentoring new scholars in the field.

Examining ruling relations based on public and private sector groupings in order to uncover noteworthy distinctions, interrelationships, and changes (as was suggested by one of our Expert Consultants)

fell beyond the scope of this project; however, it is another important area for future inquiry. Finally, exploring the uptake of IE in particular areas identified in our review, such as healthcare and education, could reveal important key trends and patterns of ruling relations.

Conclusion

The strength of IE as it is variously taken up as a method of inquiry is evident in the range of scholars, researchers, professionals, and activists engaging with IE across a myriad of disciplines, countries, and sectors. The question of whether it is appropriate to use IE with other theories, methodologies, methods, and analytic tools continues to be of growing interest and warrants ongoing discussion. Regardless of the answer, it is clear from our review that authors are applying IE to their research and writing projects

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in both conventional and unexpected ways. We urge the IE community, in all its forms, to fully know and explicate IE, however they choose to take it up.

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Rescuing the Error: A Methodological Note on the Use of Reflexivity in the Research Process

Abstract This article explores the opportunities of a research strategy that integrates both the observation of the object and the observation of the subject (researcher). In a research about shopping centers' workers, the researchers tried to show how the methodological misfortunes experienced by them, sometimes seen as errors, supported the inquiry on the very experiences of workers. Moreover, such misfortunes enabled an increased awareness about the effects and limits of the conceptual and technical instruments then used. In fact, only the integration of reflexivity in the course of the research enabled further knowledge about workers' social profiles and the temporal structures of their work activity. Thus, this article highlights the advantages that exist in evidencing and reflecting upon the methodological adversities as a preliminary step to their sociological exploration and shows how the theory is not something to be applied to others, but also that helps the researcher to keep his/her work under close scrutiny.

Keywords Qualitative Methodology; Reflexivity; Error; Sociology of Work

The purpose of this article is to present a reflection on the importance and feasibility of the integrated use of self-observation procedures in sociological

research. Based on a research about shopping centers' workers (Cruz 2010), this article shows the importance of submitting the work of the researcher to observation procedures normally used to objectify the reality under study. Usually relegated or only raised according to the impersonality conventions in force in academic writing (like the ritualized use of "we"), preserved, and transmitted through an intellectual tradition sometimes going back to the point of view that springs in the European medieval universities (Durkheim 1990), the researcher sees an enthronization of his/her role as a neutral and innocuous instance in the actualization of scientific work occurring. As Franz Breuer (2003) poignantly states on the impacts of the subjectivity of the researcher on the research itself,

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frequently the solution found in the social sciences was to understand the contrarities of the research praxis as errors that must be minimized or, ideally, eliminated. On the contrary, this methodological article advocates the subjection of the subject to the same procedures of observation usually used to frame the object of research. Avoiding granting any status of epistemological exception to the researcher, it rather allows the subject of the objectification to submit, voluntarily and consciously, to the procedures of explanation and justification he/she uses on the "external reality" (Canguilhem 1983:366). In this particular case, the methodological constraints faced in our conducting empirical research served, in the first place, as starting points for the review, the correction, or the enlargement of the knowledge that the researcher had about the studied realm. In the second place, as a variation of the original version of the negative-case method (Emigh 1997), whose virtualities of self-checking and self-correction of the research program were tested in this case, the methodological impasses not only encouraged this correction of the theory (Bunge 1986), as they also brought implications for the clarification and enhancement of the epistemological perception of the researchers about their own practices.

Bringing Reflexivity to the Contexts of Work: Epistemological Concerns and Methodological Issues

We meet the recommendation of Gaston Bachelard (1960:232) about the need to introduce an "epistemological vigilance of himself," a surveillance whose nature has less to do with the exercise of in-

trospection or contemplative meditation than with the systematic and reciprocal criticism between scientific fellow-workers and the practical application of concepts, instruments, and styles of thinking of the science in question. Instead of being ignored, omitted, or overlooked, the methodological obstacles served just as well as access roads to test and inspect, in a theoretically controlled fashion, the applications and limits of the conceptual and methodological options. At the same time, they allowed to question the social vulnerabilities inscribed in the individual and collective experiences of the social workspace. Instead of tolerance and contentment towards the theses that deny or relativize the use of conceptual schemes in intellectual activities (Davidson 1974), the inspection of gaps or unforeseen empirical misconceptions, that seemed to counter, in a partial or generalized way, the previously accumulated theoretical knowledge, allowed for the reorganization, the extension, and precision of that knowledge (Lecourt 1975). In this sense, we reassume previous suggestions towards the "participant objectivation," that is, the mobilization of the sociological practices in order to constitute the researcher himself/herself in an "observed observer" (Bourdieu 2001). Through this systematic "objectivation of the subjective relationship with the object," we make explicit and use the very limitations of the research, its contrarities, and resistances as a means to overcome them. Therefore, in this case, the sociology of work is not only centered in the activities performed by workers or their organizational contexts (i.e., the "object"), but it also puts the work of the sociologist himself/herself (i.e., the "subject") under the scope of sociological reasoning. This article proceeds, in

particular, as were the gaps, hesitations, and setbacks along the research process that provide the pretext and the fulcrum to renew, in succeeding advances, the sociological knowledge about the fragilities that punctuate the profiles of shopping centers’ workers and the temporal dimensions of their labor reality.

The research supporting this article has designed an eclectic methodological strategy, articulating the statistical data sources, collected in order to analyze the structure of employment in trade and restaurants, with the realization of semi-directive interviews, focus groups, and direct observation (Cruz 2010). The intention to undertake an intensive analysis of the social profiles of the workers and their social work contexts triggered the option by the technique of semi-directive interviews. Simultaneously, the interest in replicating and capturing in the context of a conversation the universe of representations of the working population of shopping centers, and in understanding to what extent it would be indicative of convergent and divergent understandings among those workers, implied the later technical operationalization of the focus groups.

The starting point of the interview process benefited from privileged contacts that the research team had with university students working in shopping centers in Porto (Portugal). Such contacts were essential, since not only the student workers readily made themselves available to be interviewed, as they later facilitated a significant number of other interviews by mobilizing their networks of interpersonal relationships. These privileged con-

tacts certainly filtered the interviewees’ selectivity through the characteristics of the research team networks, such as age or academic qualifications. The need to diversify the interviewees’ profile generated other options, in which the research team approached the workers directly at their workplaces. Such strategy includes some pattern to observe people: searching female and male workers with a higher age (more than thirty years old); finding proportion between the two types of analyzed shops and, within them, obtaining the gender balance; visiting shopping centers in Porto during different moments of the day and of the week (morning, afternoon, and night) in order to determine whether new workers’ profiles could be found. In this process, we presented ourselves and the main aim of our research and then questioned workers about their availability for an interview (scheduling then the day, hour, and place of the encounter). In total, there were sixty workers interviewed in eight shopping centers in the Porto Metropolitan Area, a number that was reached when the so-called “principle of saturation” was attained (Glaser and Strauss 1967:61), in other words, a strategy that provides for the collection of information until the moment it becomes redundant. This concept is considered important as it addresses whether research is based on an adequate sample to demonstrate content validity. Besides the debate about this topic (O’Reilly and Parker 2012), we consider in this research that data collection stops because there are no new or further insights. Two types of shops were analyzed, namely, restaurants and clothing, because they correspond to the most represented activities within the shopping center (see Table 1.) Of the sixty respondents, about 58.3%

were female and 41.7% male, and 62.9% of the women interviewed were concentrated in clothing shops and 37.1% in restaurants, while 60% of male respondents labored in the second type of shops and 40% in the first.

Table 1. Information about the sample.

	Restaurants		Clothing shops		Total	
Female workers	13	37,1	22	62,9	35	100,0
Male workers	15	60,0	10	40,0	25	100,0
Total	28	46,7	32	53,3	60	100,0

Source: Self-elaboration.

Concerning focus groups’ technique, at an early stage we decided by the completion of four focus groups, two in restaurants (of different brands) and two in clothing shops (of distinct brands), with a number of six to ten participants of both genders and with different jobs in shops. However, this had not been materialized due to the significant difficulty of bringing together all the various workers. The finding of this methodological adversity, immediately revealing the strong turnover of working hours, involved altering the design provided for the application of this technique, not its abandonment. Actually, instead of abandoning the technique of focus groups altogether by reference to the generally agreed conventions of focus group application (Macnaghten and Myers 2007), we decide to introduce a reflexivity stance to problematize the specific intricacies arising from the focus groups conduction in our research, since it promises important insights for the research itself. There-

fore, two focus groups were held, one in restaurant *Hot Point*, and another at the clothing shop *Space*. In the first, nine workers participated, five women and four men, the second incorporated only three female workers of the five (three female and two male workers) that had agreed to collaborate. Not all participants of the focus groups were previously interviewed individually, which meant that after each of the focus groups, elements of characterization about their profiles were collected. The empirical information from the interviews was analyzed through the software *NVivo7* that allowed, in the first moment, for the vertical analysis of the same and the capturing of singularities underlying each one of them. Subsequently, it enabled its horizontal analysis, so as to discuss, for all the interviews, the analytical dimensions contained in the script of the semi-directive interview. In relation to focus groups, we deepened dimensions not contemplated originally by the design of interview. In fact, the initial guide proposed for the focus group was intended to get the participants to explore their beliefs and values about their working experiences in shopping centers. Actually, the two focus groups revealed the particular ways participants set up, in conversation, opinions and topics one does not usually talk about with a stranger to their shared work environments. The focus group was transcribed and the analysis of the transcripts was centered on performed interactions between the participants as they responded to the questions (Macnaghten and Myers 2007). The emergence of an interpretation based on this analysis will be discussed further in this article, especially related to the mandatory use of uniform in the working context of restaurants and clothing shops.

Noticing the importance that prosaic transactions have for the constitution of scientific knowledge (Latour and Woolgar 1986), we will expose the moments of disturbance we felt along the search to a methodical treatment analysis. However, instead of joining in an uncontrolled tendency to “invent” (Bouveresse 1984:16), we will insist on the potential that the sociological observation has to circumscribe and appreciate the historical and social constraints that weigh on the research, such as the vicissitudes in scheduling and conducting the interviews or the search for solutions in order to circumvent the limitations of the set of respondents. It was, therefore, to transform the provoked and, sometimes, tense encounters that the researcher maintains with his/her “objects” of study in an explicit “instance of interrogation about his practice and his assumptions” (Canguilhem 2000:72). When we deal with times, places, and acts of research that are generally repressed by the significations, standards, and principles in force in scientific communities, the use of explicit epistemological operations conferring visibility and awareness to them becomes relevant. In this case, we put under systematic reflection, first, the stages of research, then the whole mass of routines and beliefs that constitute “the spontaneous philosophy of the intellectuals,” as upon a time Louis Althusser (1992) calls it. Such habits of thought and action of the researchers that, while historically constituted, were meanwhile naturalized and therefore tended to function more as implicit assumptions than to be consciously articulated by the researchers, constitute the school unconscious (Bourdieu 2000) of a particular academic community. They may, however, be treated by a re-historicizing therapy,

by which the past and present social constraints that affect the sociological observation were focused, including those most directly acting on the situation of interaction between the researcher and the researched. In these terms, this article aims to show the potentialities that accompany the exercise of “reflexivity” as a “mode of objectivation of the subject of objectivation” (Bourdieu 2001:174). Seen here in its more technical and restricted fashion, applied to the most vivid routine of scientific activity, this reformist conception of reflexivity allows the researcher to examine the relationship—usually taken-for-granted—that he/she keeps with his/her objects and with his/her instruments, possibly giving him/her a wider margin of conscience (and freedom) over his/her own practice and over the respective effects and limits.

Questioning the Research “Handicaps,” Not Ignoring Them, or: How to Grasp the Methodological Constraints through Self-Reflection

In this section, we will present two points of tension with the empirical data that apparently seemed to menace the “technical” scruples of our research process. First, our initial purpose of obtaining a transversal presence of the workers’ age profiles was countervailed by the inability in supplementing older interviewees. Primarily stated as miscarry of the research, it helped to show the importance of such age cleavages inside the very social universe being studied. Then, the constant problems in scheduling interviews showed, lately, more than a personal incompetence or a management issue in the research: they revealed a very

important propriety of the work universe of these workers, their uncertain and volatile workloads. So, our labors to deal with such “problems,” which promised “errors” in the technical frame of the research, meant primarily not to repress or obliterate them to the backstage of the inquiry, but to reflect upon their conditions of production, turning them into illuminating points for the researchers’ self-reflection practices. That self-reflection helped to improve the research, at least by knowing its empirical and epistemological limits, and, thereafter, to tune the analysis. Therefore, it is crucial not to label the methodological constraints as excrescencies to be omitted in the analysis (or as lacks and handicaps to be corrected through technical procedures), but to integrate them in the very process of research as a way to reveal unsuspected and promising venues of inquiry. In this sense, we try to apply techniques of decentration and self-reflection in order to extend the plea for another socio-scientific methodology, voiced by Franz Breuer (2003).

Tracing the Workers’ Social Profiles

The difficulty experienced in carrying out the work of finding interviewees with a higher age profile was translated in revealing data to the research. Motivated by this impasse, we had to operationalize a work of direct observation that would supplement the existing interviews and those which were initially planned. The attempt to safeguard the maintenance of proportionality between age groups had to be interrupted, taking into account, on the opposite, the expressiveness of the empirical findings. Indeed, with the direct observation conducted in shopping centers we perceived that

the population that worked in shops, in particular those who served at the counter, were mainly young. The analysis of the age composition of the population interviewed highlights precisely this tendency for the juvenilization of these workplaces (approximately 77% of them located in the age group of 18 to 29 years of age).

The age issue thus proved to be particularly relevant to understand the configuration of the recruitment patterns carried out in these universes of work. More than half of the population surveyed did not face any educational and professional requirements. If we withhold the scenario of recruitment in restaurants and clothing shops, it is apparent that, at first, the level of school demands is slightly higher, while the scenarios of shops are closer to what concerns the low professional requirements. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that there is not a homogeneous scenario within restaurants and clothing shops. We cannot neglect the fact that, inside of each universe of shops, there are segmentations resulting from the commercial brands, anchored in the symbolic value that customers and employees give to them and which produce special effects of social distinction.

In addition to these requirements, two others proved to be relevant: “being more than 18 years” and “being a student” in contextualizing the techniques of recruitment for the clothing shops and restaurants in shopping centers. In these contexts of work, the condition of being a student may be required, which from the outset explains the fact that significant shares of respondents assume this condition. It explains, also, that it built a strong network of social

relationships that work as a pool of juvenile self-recruitment within the shopping center. In spite of the students finding themselves in the labor market for several reasons, in the present study they were there for financial needs (especially related to the imperative of financing their studies, but also with the maintenance of a certain style of life, for example, the acquisition of their own car), which motivated the labor inflows of these young people. This condition implies a strong logic of juvenile segregation that can be observed, for instance, when the workers consider that being more than “30 years old” could be a deterrent personal attribute to work in clothing shops, that only “want young girls, with pretty faces,” as an older worker (50-years-old) of a restaurant refers to it. In fact, after reaching twenty or so years of age a person is considered “old” for work in these shops, for various reasons. In the case of restaurants, it happens because people do not have “the necessary rhythm” to perform various tasks, especially in fast-food restaurants. In self-service clothing shops, the “young” image does not fit with the context of work and, ultimately, the fact that those shops prefer more juvenile segments of workers, in order to capture customers in the same “juvenile” condition as the workers. It should be noted that this situation also occurs, but with other settings, in customized service clothing shops, as the *Elite*, in which “are not admitted very young girls, but more between 27 and 35-years-old” because “they have more of a sense of responsibility at work,” according to the interviewed Micaela and Paula, working in that shop.

The interest of employers in resorting to student youth labor signals the desire to control costs, be-

cause here is offered a very low hourly payment: in the analyzed cases of restaurants and clothing shops, these values are about 2.16 Euros and 2.88 Euros, respectively. It also signals the desire to maximize the numerical flexibility, in terms of the number of hours of work and the functional flexibility, translated in mobility between jobs. This advantageous situation for the employer can cause two types of effects for the young students. On the one hand, the worker-student is challenged to do more hours and ends by complying, because it means more money at the end of the month. Notwithstanding, this situation interferes negatively in their everyday school life. Let us look at the testimony of two female, student workers who attend higher education schools.

I have difficulties in reconciling work and the college, I have an excessive workload, when they ask me to do hours, I do, because it means that I will also earn more at the end of the month and this is bad...a person gets used to the money and then the study is left behind...if I had a financial situation that would allow I would abandon the work, because I think that at this time...I have made a great effort to come to the study, they say that it is more difficult to get out, I hope that this does not happen, if I could, I would dedicate myself only to the study. [Rute, sales assistant in the restaurant *Hot Point*, shopping center 1]

I do extra hours that eventually affect the college, it could be in the last year finishing the course and I am not for the sake of the hours and the money that I receive more by working more hours in addition to my time...but I think that does not compensate because nobody recognizes us really at work and I am only

harming my path. [Carolina, sales assistant in the clothing shop *Orange*, shopping center 4]

It can be said that for these respondents, the negative effects of a greater workload on university performance are more significant than their benefits. That ends up by contributing to fragile and weakened school trajectories, which in turn augments the need to prolong working experiences in order to fund the longer periods at the university. The work was initially seen as strategic and for short duration, but it becomes essential over time for a precarious survival.

Finally, the demand for intensive student labor by employers in these contexts of shopping centers assumes the construction of an image for this universe of work, where “remuneration” is combined with “fun.” This intentionally built image is particularly relevant for the attraction of young students, who want to earn some money while studying and who are not indifferent to the appeals of “having some fun.” It is frequent for the interviewed population to invoke the positive material dimensions related with this labor universe (financial compensation, need to acquire professional experience) together with others of a positive social nature, such as the establishment of networks of friendship and learning with work colleagues. So, to many of them, what is appealing is not exactly the nature of the task itself, but the opportunity to work with others of the same age, of meeting new people, and to occupy their time earning money, even if little. This is particularly significant because the most painful moments of labor eventually are transformed into moments of “fun” or competition by the manage-

ment strategies of the shops. Let us look at the following testimony of the interviewee, Arlindo, who was challenged together with his colleagues of the night shift to win a playstation, if they could gather more money in the box in the hours of greatest movement (“rush” hours, which are the periods of greater influx of customers and, therefore, the more demanding ones in terms of work) than their colleagues of the morning and afternoon shifts:

The staff of the morning made 2500 Euros and would win a playstation, so the employees at night were a bit upset because we usually make more money than them and they made it first and then we made 3500 Euros. We left tired, but we seemed crazy running in there, it was just cash in the cash boxes that barely fit, then we had to start making beads called cash withdrawal that there has to get there, we take that money, then the box says that the money was missing because it was taken by the manager...Cash withdrawal. We did several cash withdrawals because money no longer fit in the same cash box, the faster cashiers are basically five employees, I am one of them, we are the locking personnel, the staff of the closure is usually always faster on the cash box, the money did not fit, we had to take it, “Look, I have to do a cash withdrawal, there is no place for more money.” And then there is that naughtiness that often comes with these contests, we are all happy, but then after two days no one wants to run, since they start being angry with us, they say this and that, it becomes a bit tiring. [Arlindo, operator in the restaurant *Royal*, shopping center 1]

The promotion of competitions is a strategy of mobilization of workers capable of breaking with the

tiresome work routine, particularly evident in the context of fast food restaurants. It also allows the active participation and a stronger involvement of the workers, because they search for the counterpart of their effort (in this case, the playstation, but in others, it may be an additional dessert, or, in the case of clothing, a discount on the purchase of a product or a commission on the sales).

Together with these requirements there is a set of individual characteristics that are valued in this working population. Highlighted are those based on the “have such-and-such” and on the “know how to be.” The categories that point to the “have such-and-such” correspond to: “have good physical image,” “have ability to dialog with the customer,” and “have good presentation.” As for the “know how to be,” the most valued are expressed by expressions as “be responsible,” “be friendly,” and “be fast.” This is what some authors refer to as *soft skills*, which basically include the social knowledge of workers. A particularly interesting aspect pointed out by the respondents is the need to “learn to control emotions,” of “knowing how to smile,” which refers to the issue of emotional labor. Often is reported the need to have a “perpetual and sincere smile” in the course of interactions with customers (Macdonald and Sirianni 1996:9). As Hochschild (2003: 8) put it, “smiles are a part of work... that requires...coordinating self and feeling so that the work seems to be effortless.” Furthermore, the value of a personal smile is groomed to reflect the particular shop’s orientations. Such characteristics are in harmony, first, with the fact that it is not required to have any specific educational and vocational training and, then, with the preference for

the recruitment of a student and young workforce, selected by its flexibility (Bettis 1996) and availability. These aspects point to a management model that is based on relational skills at the expenses of professional qualifications. This model intensifies the vulnerability of workers, placing them at risk when situations of disagreement emerge in the social work space.

Given these characteristics, it is pertinent to emphasize that these work contexts cannot operate a clear distinction between the product that is being sold, the work process, and the worker himself (Gadrey 2002). The employers will eventually claim authority on the most varied subjective aspects of workers, trying to adjust their physical appearance (work) and the aesthetic way of behaving (emotional labor). What is being sold is in the last analysis a set of emotions. The work process is standardized, in particular with regard to the ways of doing, being, and communicating. For this standardization or “harmonization” contributes a set of requirements drawn up by the shop or brand, in accordance to which the workers should follow certain routines in their relationship with customers, with each other, and with the supervisors. In some cases, such requirements also request the engagement in social gatherings outside the workspace, precisely because they also shape workers’ behaviors and attitudes. See, for example, the practice of weekly sport encouraged by the *Hot Point* restaurant, involving workers in weekly soccer games, or the organization of an annual gala organized by the clothing shop *Vip Shop*, which brings together all workers that operate in the brand across the country.

That standardization or harmonization effort extends over to the customers themselves, in order to organize their consumers’ experiences. The strategies to organize them include, for example, the design of the physical setting and the layout of the shopping spaces (Simmel 2001), particularly evident in the self-service devices of the garment outlets and of the fast food restaurants. If in the case of fast food restaurants, the customer does not ask about the available meals, in the self-service clothing shops, he/she does not ask about the existing pieces.

The demand for standardization, in particular in case of the emotional labor, has been analyzed in several investigations and viewed as an instrumentalization framework undertaken by employers. However, it lacks the dimension of retributions the workers could extract from the social space of work, as we noted in the previous section of this article. According to Leidner (1993) and Bolton (2006), the aforementioned standardization can be capitalized by workers, who can use it tactically, not transforming them necessarily in “alienated subjects.” It is necessary to inquire into the meanings that this standardization triggers, in particular the advantages that could be extracted from it. Indeed, routines can enable the workers to have a more effective control of interactions and to allow them to protect themselves from the lack of respect sometimes felt in the relationships with customers and colleagues. If the management delivers strategies of standardization that protect them in the interaction with customers, or that allow an increase of their relative power, workers are not inclined to reject them. Bolton (2006) considers that emotions or expressions of emotions can be oppressive to

workers, but there is room for maneuver to allow them to have some control, albeit occasional, in the social workspace. There are always uncontrolled areas where spontaneous behaviors of relaxation are exhibited, for example, when young workers of the restaurant *Kuanto Baste* throw sugar packets to each other on the counter, during periods of lower flow of clientele. We think that the standardization does not imply that the management of the shop will be able to always impose unilaterally its routines. In the case of the work carried out by workers in restaurants and clothing shops, the issue of emotional control does not arise in terms of linear antagonism of interests between the management and the operation areas, because there are several parties and interests involved.

Temporal Structures of Work Activity

Another methodological constraint that emerged during the empirical research was related to the appointment of the interviews. Actually, it has proved to be more complex than originally envisaged and triggered episodes that deserve a special reflection, in particular the following three. In a shopping center in the city of Vila Nova de Gaia, was firstly contacted a worker; she provided the phone number of her place of work so that we could contact her later and appoint an interview. The meeting was scheduled for a Tuesday afternoon in the store. After some failed attempts to confirm the interview on the day before and the very day of the interview, we took the decision to go to the store at the scheduled time. The worker was in the store and told us: “Today I cannot. We have too much work.” Another situation happened in a shopping center in the city

of Porto, and involved a worker who provided her personal contact. The next day, when we called, we receive the following response: “My boss doesn’t authorize me and said that I should not have given my phone number without her permission.” A third case involved a woman working in a shopping center also in the city of Vila Nova de Gaia. The worker was contacted at her place of work and gave her phone number for the subsequent interview. This was scheduled for a Thursday afternoon at the *Teatro Rivoli*, a famous theater in the center of Porto, and confirmed the day before by phone. Arriving at the scene, and after ten minutes of the scheduled time, we received the following message on cell phone: “I’m sorry, but I had to go to the store because the other store manager failed...I have to do her shift! Thank you.”

These three cases are surrounded by very different circumstances. However, it is not excessive to say that on the basis of the impediments lay similar professional reasons, commonly related to aspects that are beyond the control of the workers and that reveal some underlying dynamic work activity in analysis: overwork; exercise of power by a hierarchical superior; and, finally, the need to replace a colleague. In addition to these cases of failure, it is important to point out that there have been other situations in which the interviews took place, but that entailed a considerable waiting period in view of the strong rotation of schedules in clothing shops and restaurants, more pronounced in the latter than in the former.

This constraint has opened clues to the understanding of the activity of work in analysis. Issues

such as the weight of primary sales and stepping up the pace of work emerged in the context of the discussion of this methodological difficulty. There is a set of goals and business rules that are defined by the shops and for which the interviewed population has to work. The imperative of making “sales” that meet approximately three quarters of the “objectives” is identified by interviewees as particularly important, almost compulsive. The perspective of the interviewee, Cristina, is revealing in this regard:

As goals, the essential is “sell, sell, sell,” the numbers and store invoicing are valued at the end of the month. [Cristina, responsible for the clothing shop *Space*, shopping center 8]

To the goal of selling emerges the closely associated need to “beat the budget store,” that is, make more “results” on a given day or month compared with the same period of the previous year. Consider the following discourse of respondents about existing objectives in the restaurants:

We have daily targets to achieve: we have post...we have, ah...posted in...in, in the table, ah...the money that they...that they think they can, that we can do, ah...this day equal to the same day of the previous year, is hitting the budget from the store, it is good for us. [Filipe, collaborator in the restaurant *Kuanto Baste*, shopping center 1]

Goals are like that they depend, every month they give us an objective and every day we have an objective and each shift has a goal. For example, today my goal was very low, only 310 Euros for lunch time. Normally, by

day is 700 Euros, 800 Euros. Often, we fulfill and, other times, we do not achieve half. Everything depends on the shopping. [When asked about the ease or difficulty in achieving the objective, the interviewee responds:] Depends on the month. The past month was a month to forget, February was a month to forget. This month has improved a little, but still did not achieve the objective. Our aim was 15 000 Euros, we only achieved 13 000. Therefore, there is no prize. But, it depends. There are objectives that are also very high, which are very difficult. This month the goal was low. But, it did not, even then did not. [Madalena, shift manager at the restaurant *Victoria*, shopping center 6]

A person reaching the objectives in terms of sales budget, at the level of product deviation, a person fulfilling these objectives, a person receives an award, it is like if we were managing the shop by ourselves. [Alberto, shift manager at the restaurant *Bonanza*, shopping center 5]

The “objectives” of the shops sustain the economic aims that workers must pursue and achieve in their everyday work. The discourse of the interviewees about sales suggests the existence of a managerial practice that seeks to articulate the individual benefit and the financial results of the store, which can generate contradictory impulses. Like Aubert and Gaulejac (1991) refer, individuals are struggling between the tendency to work less in order to protect themselves from the requirements of the store and the inclination to work more to increase their financial contributions and constantly improve the collective results of the store.

From the point of view of the commercial mandatory rules, the interviewed population highlights

the issue of compulsory wearing of uniforms in the restaurants and clothing shops, although with less weight in the latter. There are several accessories that make the uniforms, some of them, very detached from the normal forms of self-presentation. In restaurants, especially, the number of accessories is, compared with those of the clothing shops, more complex and more detailed than the cloths the workers usually use in their everyday lives. Actually, the focus group with restaurant workers showed the extremely revealing exchange of opinions regarding the mandatory use of uniform. Here is an excerpt:

Rodrigo: We are young and with this ridiculous uniform nobody gives us credibility. Rarely a person aged 18 is selling in a Mercedes or BMW stand... You must be at least 40...37 years for the Mercedes or 40 years for the BMW.

Ruth: You do not see anyone in a restaurant where only people of 37 or 40 years are to serve, you do not see anyone go to the counter and say, “So, do not meet here?” It’s all talk. Nobody talks like that...Only the cap, wear that cap...For now, just the fact that the bosses have blue shirt and we have the green shirt differentiates us. OK. But, also our uniform is not a uniform that conveys respect, distinction...I do not know...It’s really that young thing of fast work...The client does not treat us with any respect. The whistling and...

Patricia: Sometimes clients start to whistle to call for us.
Ruth: “Oh, Carla, get me this. Carla, do not take cola with ice.” I do not know this person from anywhere. I’m serving him. It has to be a service with respect.

Gabriela: That’s what I said a while ago. Increasingly we are disrespected for being young, for being in

a fast food restaurant. [Focus group, restaurant *Match Point*, shopping center 1]

The mandatory use of uniform is used to build a corporate or brand unified image, but it is also linked with the existence of a professional hierarchy inside the shops. As the participant, Ruth, refers, the fact that the “store managers have a blue shirt” and other workers use a “green shirt” is perceived and functions as an interpersonal and institutional device of differentiation. However, according to this same worker, the uniform does not transmit “respect” or “distinction,” it appears, by contrast, to be felt as highly stigmatizing and undignified. Still, according to Ruth, it symbolizes “that quality of quick work” associated with the “youth,” which leads the customers to not treat them with dignity and, quite the contrary, seems to propel the emergence of disrespectful practices among customers, such as “whistling” or using the informal treatment titles (“you” in the singular, “missy,” etc.). According to the participant, Gabriela, workers are then “disrespected for being young” and also for being at a “fast food restaurant.”

The forms of treatment here described are indicative of the existence of asymmetric powers (Wolf 1990; Sennett 2003) within the interaction between workers and customers, since they have respectively very unequal social capitals. This inequality suggests the question of the relational dimension of dignity, discussed previously in this article. Possessing and feeling “dignity” is, in itself, a publicly recognized mean of being treated like a person and not being merely used as a means to an end by another person (Sayer 2007). If the employee feels they are being

treated in an undignified way, he/she tends to react in order to show his/her indignation, in a silent or audible mode, as in the case of the worker, Bruno, who, immediately after the client has addressed him as “boy,” counter-questioned, “which boy?” The issue of dignity, or rather its threat or loss, is associated with the lack of seriousness with which many clients face these young workers and the clear lack of autonomy (Hodson 2001) that they have their social space in the workplace.

If it is the brand itself which pays for the uniform, the workers must take care of it, ensuring that it maintains an immaculate appearance during the time it is consigned to them (which could comprise a time period of six months). In the case of clothing shops, workers wear branded garments of the place where they work, which exhibits a symbolic distinctive value, as in case of the garments of restaurants. In addition to the maintenance of the uniform, they must follow another type of rules, in particular, be careful with hair and nails, wear bijouterie and make-up; these last two applied to clothing shops and are prohibited in restaurants, by issues of hygiene and safety at work. The non-compliance with the rules ultimately deserves comments and reprehension from the managers. One interviewee recounted an episode which just happened in the shop where she worked, in which, during a visit to the workplace, the commercial director of the shop had directly addressed a worker who had fattened and called her attention to be especially careful with the weight she gained meanwhile.

The question of the use of uniform was also an object of discussion in the focus group of the clothing

shop. For many, the uniform has a positive meaning and, transmitting the brand image, transfers advantageously to the worker its symbolic value, such as professionalism or presentation. At least, it grants the worker with the protective surface of the brand, dismissing him/her of enacting personalized interactions with the customer. Notice the following opinions expressed during the focus group:

Francisca: For me, the uniform is important, transmits a brand image for whom we are working. Is seen as some organization and care for the image.

Conceição: I agree, it is a positive image to customers.

Ricardina: It seems to me also, incidentally, in addition to the uniform, I think that we should use an identification plate with our name...so the customer knows our name, but the uniform is very important for a certain professionalism, we only used t-shirts and jeans, but still I think that it is important. [Focus group, clothing shop *Space*, shopping center 8]

It is possible to point out that from the set of collected speeches understandings about the use of uniform assume various configurations and reveal fragilities in the working context of clothing shops and restaurants. To discuss these fragilities within service activities it is important to underline that they make use of employees’ looks, personalities, and emotions. Regarding emotions it is worth underlining the conception of emotional labor introduced by Arlie Hochschild (2003). Meaning “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (Hochschild 2003:7), emotional labor “calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuali-

ty.” Such analysis focusing on the standardization of emotions has tended to examine the alienation side of emotional labor. However, it does not always mean alienation (Bolton 2006). The standardization of emotional labor can be either overwhelming or positive for shopping centers’ workers in a sense it allows them to have some control over their social space of work. Actually, the aim of standardizing emotional labor has to be understood not only as managerial practices implemented by brands to achieve sales and profits, forcing employees to control, reshape, or suppress their selves (Ritzer 1998), but also in relation to how employees face the social space of work and try to re-appropriate it (Leidner 1993). In the latter sense, the standardization can be advantageous from the point of view of workers because it helps them to better control interactions with customers. The increase of standardization can also be used by the workers against the “lack of respect” shown by customers or the pressures from the management. Meant as tactics to sustain the “sense of one’s self” (Lüdtke 1998) against the pressures from the management or the customers, these workers’ leverage protecting practices are through the strict compliance with the managerial norms to deal with customers without affronting the norms and rules of the workplace.

The workers are operating at an accelerated pace that is justified by the logic of “bigger, better, and faster,” widespread within these labor universes. This logic is associated with the promotion of a sense of team that is strongly anchored in the ideology governing the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999). It is an ideology that promotes, among other aspects, the idea that everyone should always be

giving the maximum, finding himself/herself emotionally involved in pursuit of the same goals. There is thus an emotional labor, as mentioned above in this article, that sustains this fast pace. From the one side, the daily presence of leadership in the area of the shop, working together with the remaining workers, and performing the same tasks, and, from the other side, the more or less constant flow of customers, although more pronounced in some periods of the day and night, both contribute to a rhythm of work predominantly high—and that is to be *accelerated*. Additionally, the system of rewards offered to workers promotes the constant search for high performance, sometimes causing a spirit of fierce competition that contributes to disseminating a climate of tension in daily working. It suffices to see the following statements:

Very fast. It has to be. In shops who charge much has to be. Or are we doing the rhythm or after we ended up leaving...If we do not correspond to, or the person leaves the brand, or the brand invites you to leave. There are certain people who cannot work in the brand even, it is not for any person, there is a very strong pace of competition, it is very demanding... [Leonor, responsible of clothing shop *Mon Ami*, shopping center 7]

The pace is fast, the system of cross-selling is as well...I'm in the box, I'm registering...the person begins to look and behind me has bijouterie, have wallets, have glasses...ask me, and I sell, of course, to make my sales, I make proposals, suggestions, and after the customer of a few laps in the store, and my colleague thinks that the customer is hers...I don't need to go there stressing...have days, the environment is highly competitive...sometimes I arrive and I reach the goal,

the other colleagues are saying, "You arrived now and you are already first in sales!" I think that it is the stress and the wanting to sell. [Carolina, sales assistant in clothing shop *Orange*, shopping center 4]

According to interviewee, Leonor, there are some people who do not fit in, or that simply do not resist these accelerated rhythms, and eventually abandon the work in the shop, especially in clothing brands that reach very high levels of daily turnover. The accelerated work pace associated with overwork contributes to some workers being unable to stand any longer and to be "asked to leave" or to "go out" on their own initiative. Both factors, often associated with mismanagement and abuse from superiors, may cause a deficit of decent work and/or the performance of meaningless work (Hodson 2001). Associated with the fast pace of work is also the "competitive" work environment, according to the interviewees. In these two cases, the system of individual commissions strongly contributes to the construction of this highly competitive scenario.

It is also important to underline, in relation to the work pace, the fact that few work situations may trigger moments so accelerated and so tiring as the periods of increased work. The addition of stress caused by the constant monitoring of the managers, who are responsible for ensuring that all workers are always "doing something," constitutes a reality captured during the empirical work of this research. Finally, it is interesting to underline that these temporary work structures associated with peculiar workers' profiles frame the discourse on labor activity, often yielding a naturalization of the constraints that underlie it.

Conclusions: Considering "Controlled Errors"

This article seeks to reflect on the extent to which methodological adversities in driving the empirical research about shopping centers' workers reveal dimensions associated with the vulnerabilities in the material contexts of these workers and the temporary structures of their work activity. It gives to researchers the opportunity to articulate the conclusions brought about by the sociological knowledge of the observed social reality (the workplaces of the shopping center) with conclusions regarding the social and intellectual conditions that regulate the production of sociological knowledge itself. In fact, the whole of this article suggests the need for a convergence between the "theory of fact observed" and the "theory of own observation," or "theory of the instrument" (Koyré 1986:44).

The difficulty in finding older interviewees indicates that the juvenile condition seems an essential attribute for working in shopping centers. Those young people are prone to early insertions into the labor market in economic activities, such as clothing shops or restaurants, which could mobilize an effective significance of young unskilled labor, since they do not require high or specialized professional qualifications. Employers also expressed a preference for young people who are studying, by the flexibility that characterizes them. For the interviewees, to be young, a university student, and a worker at the same time may be, simultaneously, positive and negative, because if such conditions allow them to earn money, it also makes it difficult or impossible to dedicate more time to the school uni-

verse. The conditions for exercising the daily work suggest intense daily routines, with a constant flow of work combined with a very labile organization of work schedules, visible, for example, when workers had to change previously scheduled interviews due to variations, often unexpected, in the work schedules. Young workers seem to be exposed to accelerated rhythms of work and to situations where abusive managerial practices, that undermine their dignity in the social workplace, are frequent. The discourses of the interviewed population about work denote an apparent inconsistency, particularly when the topic is the degree of (dis)satisfaction experienced in their working lives. In spite of the majority of the total population being reasonably satisfied, it appears that there are more student-workers than workers that are satisfied. The situation of biographical and relational transiency (Dubar 1997) that characterizes the student-workers' condition helps to explain this fact. This student transiency is reinforced by the existence of a background of underprivileged social origins and early entries into the world of work, which explains focusing on activities without high professional or educational requirements and with precarious working conditions. It is therefore absolutely crucial to point out that although this transitional situation constitutes a temporary phase, it can also mean the absence of security and the beginning of an uncertain and precarious future that, therefore, could assume a structuring nature for the subjects' future life. However, organizations such as the shopping centers tend to treat their workers as a means to their own ends (Sayer 2007), especially within the ideology governing the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999), which tends to pressure

for the iterative creation of situations perceived by the workers as compromising their dignity. Dealing with the emotional work includes, therefore, consideration of workers' dignity. Maintaining one's dignity or having one's dignity recognized "is to be treated as an end in oneself, at least in part, and not merely as a means to someone else's end, or as substitutable for someone else" (Sayer 2007:19). In the context of shopping centers, the question of the relational dimension of dignity is highly centered on the relationship between workers and customers, the locus of contact that truly structures the organization of labor inside these workplaces. So, questioning the conditions of emergence of dignified status for these workers involves taking into consideration the common assumption regarding the "non-qualified" nature of their work. Moreover, the public perception of these jobs also conveys assumptions regarding the age of these workers: as much as they are seen as "young people," thus "inexperienced," they also tend to be perceived as "undeserving of respect."

These findings were only possible, as we explained, in virtue of a research strategy that incorporated both the observation of the object (i.e., the workers of the shopping center and their work experiences) and the observation of the subject (the sociologists) of the research. What this article thus shows is that there are benefits to make visible and then to scrutinize the sociological and methodological obstacles faced during the research. Such obstacles are not simple "cemeteries of errors" (Koyré 1986:80). Extending to this case the expression that Pierre Duhem (1991) has used for history of science, in order to save the phenomenon we need to save the error,

the "unexpected" results or the "failed" encounters, instead of using maneuvers to obnubilate and erase the setbacks encountered during the sociological research. First, because the supposed "error" is the motive and the opportunity to rectify the accumulated knowledge, is an opportunity to increase the clarity about the limitations of the concepts and the instruments used by the researcher. Then, because the difficulties encountered during the research stimulate further formulation of alternatives. The empirical "anomalies" observed served, therefore, for the creation of "new" theoretical assumptions and for the extension of the research work (Salmon 2005:120). Finally, we have seen how these occasions, more than justify the abandonment of rationality in the social sciences, may serve to emphasize the need to know the magnitude of *controllability* that the sociological research has over the reality being studied. That is, it may serve to integrate in the research also the effects and limitations that accompany the interference of the social scientist over a specific context. The challenging interactive mode of recruiting interviewees in our research and the episodes that subsequently occurred are illustrative in this respect. If the misfortunes encountered do not necessarily lose their nature of "mistakes", at least they will be, henceforth, "controlled errors," (Sklar 2000: 56). The "errors" are, ultimately, unavoidable; the very nature of the scientific research is to explore their potential productivity as occasions to improve the existing theories and methods. So, to put the "errors" and other methodological misfortunes under scrutiny helps the researcher not only to confirm the already existing theories, but to reformulate them to unexpected and innovative aspects of the reality and, even, to open up new avenues of inquiry.

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Symbolic Interaction, Public Sociology, and the Potential of Open-Access Publishing

Abstract Symbolic interactionists can gain much by engaging more with public audiences. One way to do this is through open-access publishing, such that the content of interactionist research is freely available to the global public. We reflect on the issue of public sociology within symbolic interactionism, considering the recent impact of digital technology and social media. Within this context, we consider the rise of the open-access movement in scholarly publishing, and consider strategies to better realize open-access in the symbolic interactionist field. We argue that doing this will greatly benefit the development of a more public interactionism moving forward.

Keywords Symbolic Interaction; Public Sociology; Open-Access Publishing

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I should state simply that my vision is for open access in the social sciences...It is a broad field of inquiry having to do with the human situation and, as such, it strikes me that all of humankind has a right to this research and scholarship conducted in the interest of the greater good of humankind.

[Eve and Willinsky 2015:90]

Michael Burawoy's (2005) call for public sociology has had a wide influence, leading many to question the promise and perils of what a more public sociology might mean, and how it could impact our disciplinary theory and practice (e.g., Nichols 2007; Hanemaayer and Schneider 2014). In symbolic interactionism, there have been surprisingly few reflections on public sociology. Those that do

exist tend to converge on the point that the philosophical, theoretical, and methodological assumptions of symbolic interaction have many affinities with public sociology (Prus 2007), and particularly so in its "organic" form of close collaborations with local publics (Horowitz 2011; Adorjan 2012). Some scholars have considered the potential of new forms of social media to realize novel ways to present research (Vannini and Milne 2014) that might better connect with and engage public audiences. Social media forms such as Twitter, blogs, and videos could be creatively employed in what might be conceived as an "e-public" sociology (Schneider 2014).

Yet social media and new and diverse forms of communication are not the only outcome of the Internet and new digital technology. It is from this world of digital technology that the "open-access" movement in scholarly publishing was born (Willinsky 2006; Suber 2012; Eve 2014). Open-access is important for striving to share knowledge universally and enable access for those who have been traditionally marginalized or excluded from scholarly networks (Papin-Ramcharan and Dawe 2006; Foasberg 2015). Indeed, any argument for public sociology ought to consider the potential of open-access publishing very seriously, since it provides universal access to our research for the very publics we claim to serve. While open-access models enable the inclusion of much wider audiences, there are economic and intellectual challenges in trying to realize them. These challenges need to be addressed if the increasingly expensive and unsustainable subscription-based model is to be replaced. We argue that symbolic interactionists would benefit greatly from meeting these challenges and instituting more open-access

friendly policies, particularly if a more public sociology remains a genuine goal.

Our paper has three major aims. First, we consider the brief interactionist literature on public sociology (e.g., Prus 2007; Horowitz 2011; Adorjan 2012), and consider some of the arguments of how digital technology might help within this broader directive (Schneider 2014; Vannini and Milne 2014). Second, we review the theoretical literature on the rise of open-access publishing, and provide a brief history of its emergence, its potential and challenges, as well as the various institutional pressures that continue to shape it (Willinsky 2006; Suber 2012; Eve 2014). Building on this literature, we argue that open-access policies are a necessary requirement to realize the goals of a more public sociology. Third, we present some concrete ideas of how to achieve better open-access policies in the interactionist field. We conclude by considering how a better system of open-access publishing will help contribute to a more dynamic and robust public sociology for symbolic interactionism as we look to the future.

Symbolic Interaction, Public Sociology, and the Electronic Age

In his presidential address to the American Sociological Association, Michael Burawoy (2005) argued for a legitimate place for public sociology alongside other forms of research practice. While professional, critical, and policy sociology are well-established and rewarded, Burawoy argued that public sociology, the kind of sociology that connects with, serves, and informs everyday people in civil society, has unfairly occupied marginal spaces in the discipline.

Since Burawoy's call for a resurgence of public sociology there have been countless articles, special issues, and edited books that have weighed in on the issue, with contributors who have been both critical and supportive (Blau and Smith 2006; Clawson et al. 2007; Nichols 2007; Nyden, Hossfeld, and Nyden 2012; Hanemaayer and Schneider 2014).

While these debates have raged on, symbolic interactionists have had very little to say about the public sociology debate. This is somewhat odd given the fact that symbolic interactionists probably have the most longstanding record of working with, for, and alongside publics in an effort to understand, in a non-normative and non-judgmental fashion, their life-worlds in an intimate way (Blumer 1969; Prus 1996). Indeed, the early Chicago School, an important precursor to the development of modern symbolic interactionism, often utilized sociology to affect positive social and community change (see: Bulmer 1984; Fine 1995; Abbott 1999; Bowden and Low 2013). Jane Addams' important work at Hull House was very much aimed at ameliorating social ills while also gaining insight into the human condition (Deegan 1988; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 2007). Enacting positive social change was also a strong theme carried by other early Chicagoans, including George Herbert Mead, who often had active roles writing in public forums about various local and international political issues (see, for example, Shalin 1988; Deegan 2002; Huebner 2014).

These approaches to studying community life have often led to much more considerate treatments and depictions of diverse groups in society. These more sympathetic readings of various marginalized

publics led Howard Becker (1967) to famously ask "Whose side are we on?" and ultimately led him to the conclusion that by being fair to the underdog, we do, indeed, tend to be "on their side" in our narrations. Using the tools of the symbolic interactionist tradition, we now have insider understandings, and thus more fair and less stigmatic characterizations of deviant or under-privileged groups (see: Prus and Grills 2003; Kilty, Felices-Luna, and Fabian 2014). The interactionist tradition has gone a long way in reaching out to and helping diverse and oftentimes marginalized publics in civil society, making their lack of engagement with the theme of public sociology all the more surprising.

Having said this, the potential relationship of symbolic interactionism to public sociology has not been ignored entirely. For example, Howard Becker, Herbert Gans, Katherine Newman, and Diane Vaughan (2004) had a conversation that considered the potential of ethnography for public sociology. Each reflected on their careers of doing public ethnography, across a range of different topics and issues, to try and determine how to maximize public impact and engagement. What resulted was an inspiring statement that ethnographic approaches allow for (1) being close to and better understanding the meanings of the people (both perpetrators and victims) impacted in social issues; (2) translating complex problems into accessible language by using narratives and stories of experience; and (3) creatively redefining issues by thinking outside of the box and suggesting new alternatives and possibilities. Vaughan (2005; 2006) went on to publish other memoirs of her experiences with public ethnography, recounting how her examination of organiza-

tional risk at NASA was deemed more important to various stakeholders, as well as the wider public, after the 2003 *Columbia* disaster.

Robert Prus (2007) provided the first statement that linked public sociology to the symbolic interactionist tradition explicitly. He argued that those who want to contribute to an authentic public sociology should, indeed, turn to the basic tenets of pragmatist and interactionist approaches to the field, since only by learning from and studying publics directly can we truly know how to best understand and represent their concerns and ideas. Michael Adorjan (2012) considered the potential of social constructionism, a related tradition to symbolic interactionism, to contribute to public sociological work. If constructionists were to explicitly "take a side," Adorjan argued that they would be abandoning the core epistemological tenets (and strengths) of their tradition, which is to treat all social problems agnostically as putative claims. Instead of settling on issues once and for all and taking independent stands on public issues, constructionist scholars excel at providing maps of public discourse. They would be able to present the views of different publics, and how they relate to one another, in widely accessible forums, with the hope of determining not "who is right," but of advancing communication and understanding between groups. Implicit in this is that public dialogue, if maximized, has the potential to allow for useful social adaptations to evolve on their own. This is greatly preferred over the social constructionist playing conflicting roles of ontologically agnostic analyst and claims-making advocate all at the same time. Like Prus, Adorjan believes in a professional role for the sociologist in adhering

to a disciplined theoretical and methodological approach, which is most useful for public sociology.

Ruth Horowitz (2011) argued that the pragmatist and interactionist perspective often takes the form of "organic public sociology," since it has traditionally worked alongside communities in order to generate knowledge but also to bring about positive social change. In contrast to Prus and Adorjan, Horowitz argues that interactionists often find themselves as passionate members and useful advocates for human groups in the midst of their research engagements. In this way, Horowitz argues that public sociology is different than professional sociology. Public sociology is by definition a form of practice that reaches out to and strives for positive change with those groups under study. Horowitz reflects on her own history of being a participant on medical licensing boards, and how her activism in this realm usefully inspired her sociology, and vice versa. How can one analytically understand governance and advocacy roles sociologically without actively, and passionately, participating in them? And why would an advocate not make use of sociological insights to strategize best practices? Indeed, neatly dividing the world of active involvement from the world of sociological analysis is not always possible or desirable, as many of the earlier Chicago School sociologists were well-aware (Shalin 1988; Deegan 2002).

Some interactionists have begun to consider the potential of digital media to better engage the public. Philip Vannini's project of "public ethnography" explores how to communicate with publics by using new mediums of expression in digital spaces,

where the members of relevant publics can participate actively in an evolving dialogue with scholars. Vannini and Milne (2014) consider the potential of “multi-modal” forms of communication to reach out to and communicate with wider audiences, using combinations of movies, visual imagery, and traditional text to maximize reader (or viewer) engagement. With the increased popularity of “remixing” found in texts and other media online (Rainie and Wellman 2014:215), sociological work may be reformatted by users into audio, video, or other forms of media, which can effectively engage audiences who are otherwise not inclined to read traditional articles. Not only do multi-modal strategies increase engagement, they also communicate many important aspects of sociological phenomena that traditional text cannot capture. For example, in his recent ethnographic reflections of the tourist industry surrounding Mount Fuji in Japan, Vannini (2017) makes use of a short film clip that he recorded and posted on the Internet to better communicate the atmosphere, pace, and rhythm of the climbing experience.

Christopher Schneider (2014) also explores the possibilities afforded by Internet technologies for public sociology. Posting on blogs, vlogs, tweets, and communication forums in new digital spaces provides the potential for what he calls “e-public sociology,” which transcends the boundaries of traditional and organic forms of public sociology. In this sense, authors are now providing statements to wide public readerships *while also* engaging directly in communication with relevant publics first-hand. Using the technology of the Internet, sociologists can provide insights, whether as deliberate “public sociology,” or simply through engaging in civic debate on so-

cial events as private citizens (Gans 2015). It should be noted that many of the above forms of communication escape the requirements of peer review. This trade-off provides certain expressive freedoms, but jeopardizes credible, reliable knowledge. Thus, while such forms of communication ought to be encouraged, these cannot, and should not, replace peer-reviewed articles and books, which remain our core form of intellectual production. Further, digital Internet technology does not only allow for these alternative forms of communication. Rather, new digital media has enabled the possibility of what could be perhaps the most direct and powerful form of scholarly dissemination to the public while maintaining the rigor and standards of peer review: open-access scholarly publishing.

Open-Access Publishing and Public Sociology

Open-access is simple to understand in principle. Suber (2012:8) defines this as the effort to: “make research literature available online without price barriers and without most permission barriers.” Similarly, Willinsky (2006:xxii) explains the philosophy of open-access as “a commitment to the value and quality of research carries with it a responsibility to extend the circulation of such work as far as possible and ideally to all who are interested in it and all who might profit from it.” The principles of the open-access movement contribute to a democratic and egalitarian vision of science. Certainly, these ideals are not new in discussions of scientific and intellectual production, and resonate with Karl Popper’s (1945) vision of the open society and Robert Merton’s (1942) norms of “communism” and

“universalism” in science. Merton would consider the modern ownership of scholarly work by private publishing companies a direct violation of the scientific ethos; part of this is the free sharing of knowledge to any who are interested in learning from or contributing to this same knowledge base. While the upside of freely accessible knowledge for all is clearly desirable, realizing this ideal in the midst of the existing system of legal copyright protections and market-based subscription models is complicated. The following section aims to discuss the rise of the open-access movement, and consider its potential along with some of the obstacles and challenges in play.

Traditional publishing required a great deal of physical infrastructure, such as the printing press, book-binding, and the distribution of hard copies to libraries and subscribers around the world (Gans 2012). The digital age has made this requirement less important, as people are able to produce their own digital publishing projects by using the Internet, with little expense. As Suber (2012:1) puts it, “shifting from ink on paper to digital text...to a globe-spanning network of connected computers suddenly allows us to share perfect copies of our work with a worldwide audience at essentially no cost.” Since the relative costs are much lower for publishing academic work, it makes less sense to pay for-profit publishers to provide this service. For-profit publishers remain relevant by providing more professional publishing and advertising services, as well as generating and analyzing meta-data, and maximizing search tools. Only very well-funded open-access publishing initiatives would be able to compete on these grounds. Nevertheless, many

academics and scholarly organizations are increasingly adopting open-access publishing models as a way to enable new forms of scholarship without the costs to publishing companies. Another obvious benefit of this is that academic knowledge provided through open-access becomes a “non-rivalrous commodity,” entirely free for those who wish to obtain it (Suber 2012:58).

Despite these initiatives towards open-access, subscription models remain by far the most dominant, particularly in the social sciences and humanities (Eve 2014). The continual dependency of libraries on for-profit publishers to provide published academic research has developed into what is known as the “serials crisis.” As academic knowledge remains a rivalrous commodity, large publishing companies continue to increase subscription costs, such that even the wealthiest institutions in the world can no longer keep up: “the cost to academic libraries of subscribing to journals has outstripped inflation by over 300% since 1986” (Eve 2014:13). Even top universities such as Harvard University and Cornell University in the United States and University of Montreal in Canada, for example, have had to cancel their agreements with publishing companies for fiscal reasons, inconveniencing faculty by restricting their access to the newest research. Dutch universities have threatened to cancel their subscriptions with *Elsevier* unless the company enables greatly expanded open-access policies (Grove 2015). Obviously, these pressures are felt much more severely by smaller academic institutions, particularly those in developing countries. “In 2008, Harvard subscribed to 98,900 serials and Yale to 73,900. The best funded research library in India, the Indian Institute of

Science, subscribed to 10,600. Several sub-Saharan African university libraries subscribed to zero, offering their patrons access to no conventional journals except those donated by publishers” (Suber 2012:30-31).

The first open-access journals were not borne out of the serials crisis, nor the rise of the Internet. Early efforts to share academic knowledge freely date back as far as 1966 with the implementation of the *Educational Resources Information Center*, while the first open-access journals (e.g., *Electronic Journal of Communication*, *Postmodern Culture*) were launched in 1990, just before the world-wide web went live (Suber 2009). By the mid-2000s, as the Internet was transforming the publishing industry, and the serials crisis was becoming more of a reality, research groups across the world convened to discuss how to use Internet technology to improve access to scientific knowledge. The results of these meetings are encapsulated in the 2002 *Budapest Open Access Initiative*, the 2003 *Bethesda Statement on Open Access*, and the 2003 *Berlin Declaration on Knowledge in the Social Sciences and Humanities*. They express concern for the current state of profit-driven knowledge dissemination, and place faith in open-access. These statements, along with the active protests of librarians and researchers have reached a “tipping point” of consensus among implicated parties (Eve 2014:7).

Since this time, new policies have been implemented at the university and government levels across various countries, which mandate research findings to be available via open-access, either through green or gold channels (Eve 2014:79).

Green open-access means that some version of an article in a traditional subscription-based journal can be deposited in a freely accessible repository to get around the paywall. This might be in their home institution’s library archive, a subject-oriented collection, or a personal webpage of the author. Different policies of journals determine whether a pre-reviewed, post-reviewed, or post-formatted version of the article is permitted, and if an embargo period is required. Gold open-access is handled at the level of the journal itself. Some journals have all of their articles open to the public immediately upon publication, while others become open after an embargo period, and/or charge an “article processing fee” to provide free access to an article that would otherwise be locked behind a subscription paywall. These latter journals are best understood as “hybrid” journals that earn revenue both through subscriptions and by charging author processing fees. These are often criticized in that they “double-dip” by taking advantage of both revenue strategies at once, and that the majority of their articles remain closed-access, since most do not want to pay the rather high fees required to convert them to open-access.

In North America, the National Science Foundation (NSF), as well as the Canadian Tri-Council (CTC) Funding Agencies have recently adopted new policies to encourage more open-access publishing. For example, the NSF released a policy statement that all research receiving funding after January 1st, 2016 will have to be available via open-access no more than 12 months after publication. The CTC has a nearly identical policy, but begins earlier on, from May 1st, 2015. How scholars make their work pub-

licly available is up to them, whether they choose to pay author-processing fees to hybrid journals, choose a fully gold journal, or opt to publish in a journal with a green open-access policy that allows posting the peer reviewed article independently within 12 months. Critics argue that these policies do not go far enough in requiring immediate open-access, and that they lack real teeth, since the penalties for ignoring the rules are not clear. As well, the agencies involved tend to “individualize responsibility” (Beck 2006) for open-access to academic authors, who must now determine how to best adhere to the open-access requirements while also protecting their career interests. Many would risk a slap on the wrist from their funding agency in return for the prestige of landing a top-tier journal that may not conform to the policies in place. Still, the policies are real, and do carry possible penalties for those who do not comply with them. Many, if not most, North American scholars who receive major national funding after 2016 will choose only those journals that conform with the open-access policies in place.

The competing interests that arise in the emerging terrain of open-access publishing create somewhat of a quagmire for scholars, as pitfalls abound with different models and approaches. Green open-access seems to be a good solution, except that many journals prevent this with their copyright policies and embargos, and there is no way to be sure that all relevant articles will make it into these repositories, resulting in incomplete collections. Hybrid journals might seem open-access friendly at first glance, but they provide this only for a high fee, so the majority of articles are still left behind paywalls (Solomon

and Björk 2012). Fully gold open-access journals seem to be the best option, with all contents immediately provided openly upon publication, which, *ceteris paribus*, increases engagement with academic work, and boosts citation rates (Swan 2010), especially in the social sciences (Norris 2008).

Yet many of these fully gold journals struggle without backing from major institutions, organizations, or large publishing houses. New open-access journals have difficulty competing for good scholars and generating much impact on their field because they are typically assumed to have less than professional practices and standards of peer review.¹ Many of these journals are rightly considered “predatory,” printing virtually anything for a price, with clear economic conflicts of interest, and no honest peer review or copy-editing to speak of. Such journals lure in novice, naive, or otherwise desperate academics, who then generate dodgy research portfolios that border on the fraudulent (Xia et al. 2014). Even for those gold open-access journals that are honest, fair, and legitimate, economic challenges remain in providing free, consistent, and high quality academic work. For-profit publishers have taken advantage of this problem by offering fully gold journals, yet they often provide this service by charging high author processing fees, which some argue contravenes the very principles of open-access.² Nevertheless,

¹ One journal that has been able to attract good quality authors while maintaining sound peer review is *Sociological Science*, though this is largely due to its founding by sociological scholars at top-tier academic institutions in the United States.

² One example is *Socius*, published by Sage and connected to the American Sociological Association (ASA). This charges smaller author processing fees (\$400 for ASA members, \$700 for non-members). This is far more reasonable than many of the hybrid rates, yet critics would argue it still creates a financial boundary.

legitimate forms of low-cost open-access journals have soldiered on in spite of these problems, and academic perceptions of these open-access journals on the part of potential authors are beginning to change for the better (Nature Publishing Group 2015). Still, economic issues remain for independent open-access journals, as funds are required for website hosting, maintenance, copy-editing, and office space. If quality gold open-access journals are to be developed and sustained, much more stable funding from relevant scholarly organizations and government agencies is required.

Beyond open-access to journal articles, an especially important issue for social scientists is the accessibility of their monographs. Books are a major form of currency for academics in regards to both their public impact and their career prospects, and this has been especially true in the interactionist tradition. The dominant mode of sustaining open-access to books and book chapters has been through the use of author processing fees. These book processing fees pose problems for researchers without large amounts of funds for these purposes. Eve (2014:130) provides examples where costs were as much as \$2,450 for one chapter, and over £11,000 for one book. Other methods of sustaining a model of open-access book publishing have been put into practice such as subsidizing the fees for hosting a book online with the profits from print-on-demand services, sharing the hosting cost with libraries and other research institutions, or offering extra features beyond simply reading the book online for a price (see: Eve 2014:130-135 and Kwan 2013 for more thorough discussions of open-access monographs).

While there has been much discussion about the importance of opening access to published research for the sake of fellow academics, public audiences have been largely ignored. Open science, and by implication, public sociology, is important, since our relevance to the larger public helps instill legitimacy and garner support for our research (Voronin, Myrzahmetov, and Bernstein 2011). Embracing open-access can thus improve the status of symbolic interactionism by being more accessible, and providing more frequent insights to public debates. Instead of relying solely on short “translations” of academic work through op-ed pieces, magazine articles, or social media, open-access publishing allows the public to read sociology at the same level of complexity that is demanded in the discipline (Gans 2012). Making this work publicly available serves not only to increase a sociologists’ scholarly impact (Norris 2008), but also increases their exposure to the public, often through popularizers of academic findings (Foasberg 2015). Finally, it supports a more public and democratic form of scientific dissemination by allowing taxpayers and research participants to easily access the research they have supported. Can one have, or even encourage, public sociology while maintaining a system that hides the results of publicly funded research behind paywalls, accessible only to the privileged few in the ivory tower? To do so is a contradiction in terms. If interactionists have the will to foster a more public sociology for greater engagement and impact in the social world, we hope that open-access is understood as a quintessential ingredient for enabling this longer term vision.

Symbolic Interactionism and Strategies for Open-Access

It should be said that most of the discussion in relation to open-access presumes that the primary vehicle for scholarly publishing are journal articles. Of course, in symbolic interactionism, this has not traditionally been the most important form of scholarly dissemination, since many of its important contributions come in the form of books (Turner and Turner 1990). This, coupled with the pattern of utilizing past research more slowly, and over much longer periods of time, has meant that scholarly impact metrics often miss the true nature and long term importance of interactionist contributions. Certainly, book publishing will continue, and we encourage authors to consider and pursue open-access alternatives to publishing books as well.

Since there are no explicitly interactionist book publishers, it is much easier to focus on explicitly interactionist focused journals, and hence this is where we place our primary attention in this section.

Here, we present a brief survey of the different policies towards open-access held by interactionist-friendly journals, using this to identify how those most closely tied to symbolic interactionist scholarship compare (see Table 1). After discussing the current state of affairs in regards to open-access policy, we will recommend what we see as the most promising avenues for better realizing open-access in the symbolic interactionist field. These proposed strategies will improve the chances for a more relevant “interactionist public sociology,” increasing both scholarly and societal impact, by enabling wider, global access to research findings.

Table 1: Gold and Green Open-Access Policies across Interactionist-Relevant Journals.

	GOLD OPEN-ACCESS		GREEN OPEN-ACCESS	
Journal	Gold Status	Paid OA (Article Processing Fee)	Archiving Embargo Policy for Pre/Post-Refereed Drafts	Embargo Period (For Open-Access to Publisher Version)
<i>Symbolic Interaction</i>	Hybrid	\$3000	Pre-refereed copy allowed after 2 years	N/A
<i>Studies in Symbolic Interaction</i>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Ethnography</i>	Hybrid	\$3000	Pre-refereed and post prints allowed after 12 months	Requires permission from SAGE
<i>Journal of Contemporary Ethnography</i>	Hybrid	\$3000	Pre-refereed and post prints allowed after 12 months	Requires permission from SAGE
<i>Qualitative Sociology</i>	Hybrid	\$3000	Pre-refereed and post prints allowed after 12 months	N/A
<i>Qualitative Sociology Review</i>	Fully Accessible	No APC	Pre-refereed and post prints allowed	No embargo

Source: Self-elaboration.

As Table 1 shows, *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* (SSI) is the journal with the lowest level of accessibility, with no open-access policy. *Qualitative Sociology Review* (QSR) is best aligned to the ideal of gold open-access, since, by relying on volunteers, it charges no author-processing fee whatsoever and freely provides all of its content online, immediately upon publication. This journal only began in 2005, yet it is now indexed in many prominent databases and continues to gain ground, with many interactionist scholars supporting it. We thus need not consider improvements of the open-access policy for QSR, since it already meets the gold standard, and provides a useful ideal type for other journals to emulate. The hybrid status of the remaining interactionist journals attests to new strategies by large publishing businesses for heading off, as well as profiting from, open-access, issues we raised in the previous section. These hybrid journals all charge hefty \$3000 author processing fees for authors who want to publish their work as open-access, and have restrictive embargos for green archiving of at least 12 months.³ As such, none of these hybrid journals earn high grades for their open-access policies, but are representative of common trends. We now turn our attention to these core symbolic interactionist publications that lack strong open-access policies, and consider how these might be improved, before assessing some alternative strategies for improving open-access in the interactionist field.

³ This highlights a problem, since the NSF and Canadian Tri-Council policies require that work is archived within, not after, 12 months. Technically, then, none of these conform to the new policies—one would imagine that this minor breach is preferable over a policy that embargos for 2 years however. In either case, the pressure to use funds to immediately shift the article to gold access through a high fee is quite real.

Symbolic Interaction

Of the hybrid journals on our list, *Symbolic Interaction* will especially struggle to attract scholars with its current highly restrictive archiving policy. Any scholar with national funding from the *National Science Foundation* or the *Canadian Tri-Council* funding agencies will have no choice but to pay the \$3000 author processing charge if they wish to publish in *Symbolic Interaction*, since the two year embargo period is too restrictive. This means such authors will be forced to publish their work elsewhere, such as *Ethnography* or *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, if they want to avoid the processing charge while complying with the open-access policy of their funders. At the very least, *Symbolic Interaction* ought to improve its green open-access policy by reducing its embargo in order to compete for the attention of top funded researchers who might otherwise be lost to the competition.

Long term, we would like to see the flagship journal adopt a policy in line with gold open-access, which is primarily an economic problem. The journal's profits from subscriptions are used as the main source of revenue for the *Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction* (SSSI), supporting meetings, communications, and membership benefits. Flipping this journal to open-access would thus jeopardize all of this funding to the organization. However, it might be noted that the annual meetings for SSSI, as well as the Couch-Stone Symposium meetings have always been free to members, while only charging nominal fees to non-members. It could be possible to charge SSSI members fees that are used to cover the cost of conferences, as well as running an open-access version of *Symbolic Interaction*. Running the journal using an

open-access model would cost markedly less by not having to pay for profits to the publisher. We hope that governments begin to realize the potential of transforming subscription costs to university libraries into operating costs for open-access journals. If this money could be incrementally re-appropriated over the long term, hundreds of millions of dollars could be saved per year. The system of academic publishing would be every bit as scientific, with high quality standards, and fully open to the tax-paying public. With this type of public support for open-access, it would be much easier for *Symbolic Interaction* to jump on board. Until such a time, however, fixing the green policy in line with the major grant councils is important as an immediate first step, and will help attract well-funded scholars, improving scholarly impact.

Studies in Symbolic Interaction

New approaches to publishing academic work abound, and interactionists might consider new dissemination strategies that take advantage of the digital age and get ahead of these emerging trends. While *Symbolic Interaction* has slipped in its scholarly impact in the last decade or so, it still has an impact factor of .66 as reported by the ISI Web of Science in 2014. By comparison, *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* has an impact factor of 0.08, ranking it close to the very bottom of Sociology journals contained in the Thomson-Reuters database. This is even less impressive considering that 49% of this number (.04) is owed to self-citation practices (Cohen 2015).⁴ It is

⁴ These measures are not entirely fair since they assess impact over a very short time frame, while interactionist research tends to be incorporated over much longer time frames. A 5-year window might be more helpful.

hard to understand why the impact of this periodical is so low, since *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* has been around since the late 1970s and contains work by many of the more prominent names from the interactionist tradition over the years. Further, it is currently edited by Norman Denzin, who is not only a major name in the interactionist field, but also hosts the *Qualitative Inquiry* conference that attracts thousands annually. Certainly, the journal is not lacking in terms of institutional or charismatic backing.

The main reason for the low impact, we believe, is the fact that the journal is published as a hardcover book. It is available in print, but not electronically, to individual subscribers. It is possible to order copies of individual electronic articles, but this comes with a fee, and is only an option for more recent issues. Even for those who work at a university that has this journal available, the physical act of getting the book and photocopying the article means another boundary to access, particularly in the new world of instant, digitally delivered content. Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman (2014:224), for example, boasted that they wrote their book *Networked: The New Social Operating System* without once setting foot into a library. The reluctance to access print copies is heightened by the fact that *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* has a low impact factor to begin with, so the articles might be deemed expendable in a wider literature search.

For these reasons, we believe SSI would benefit from an immediate shift to a gold model of open-access. The publication clearly has little to lose in terms of impact, and certainly funds from the *Qualitative Inquiry* conference, or other institutional sources,

as well as willing volunteers, could make the publication a success as an open-access model, while saving on all the profits flowing to the publisher. Flipping the journal to open-access would likely improve visibility, use, impact, and global reach by encouraging easier access from users, particularly those in struggling institutions and the developing world. Since the publisher presumably owns the rights of much of the past content, agreements would have to be worked out to either break off or purchase the archived material. Nevertheless, turning to the gold model of open-access with a low-cost digital format seems like an exciting opportunity to bring this publication to a greater stature, which would be beneficial for the interactionist field as a whole.

Other Open-Access Alternatives for Symbolic Interactionism

Having considered how the existing journals might better adhere to open-access friendly policies, we now suggest new alternatives. These include (1) a new freely accessible magazine for public interest in Symbolic Interactionism; and (2) an online repository that serves as a freely available collection for interactionist research. Our first suggestion is that the *Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction* (SSSI) develop a freely accessible magazine that is intended to disseminate sociological research to the public, perhaps branding itself as the “public face of interactionism.” This would be a step up from the existing *Contexts* magazine for the ASA where they promise the “public face of sociology,” yet charge subscription fees for full access. The SSSI magazine could be created and maintained for little cost with

the help of a willing editor and some volunteer staffing, and could maintain its presence on the existing SSSI website.

The SSSI website could also be maximized to attract more Internet traffic, and be made more aesthetically pleasing to those visitors who are interested in learning more about the interactionist tradition and the kinds of research projects that are underway. This way, the magazine would not only be a dry reporting of research results, but also a place to discuss the experiences of community-research partnerships and organically developed projects that touch a diversity of public audiences. Such stories, combined with shorter, punchier, and more accessible versions of interactionist scholarship, might go a long way to forging and strengthening these ties. Further, participants who step forward to help interactionists with their research would have a source that might update them on future trends. Links could also be provided in such an electronic newsletter to multi-modal content (Vannini and Milne 2014) such as short documentaries, interviews, imagery, or reflections, by creatively using the technology of the Internet.

Our second suggestion is that SSSI develop its own open-access repository, creating an online space for interactionist research to be freely accessible to the public. This strategy could actually provide a relatively quick, if incomplete, fix to the problem of accessibility, while requiring a minimal number of policy and infrastructural changes from the two main journals discussed above. Enabling this sort of research repository would deliver both old and new interactionist work to researchers, scientific

popularizers, and the general public who are currently limited by existing paywalls. This is helpful in enabling access to articles otherwise difficult to find, but also in restoring and preserving interactionist work in whatever form it may take. This may involve curating articles, reviews, chapters, books, and public writings that may be rare, unpublished, or out of print, for scholars and the public.

If interactionists enact any of these open-access strategies, they would go a long way in promoting the relevance of their research in public discourses, and enable the possibility of wider audiences for their work, both within and outside of academia. Open-access can further the goals of the differing visions of public sociology by Adorjan (2012), Prus (2007), and Horowitz (2011). By publishing in ways that are more accessible to the public, interactionist research will be more likely to inform civic debates and reflections on social issues. On the other hand, having work accessible within the public realm makes it easier for interested parties to consult sociologists when their research is of some practical use. Open-access policies help to build a wider public audience across the globe, with the potential for more cultural impact and engagement (Foasberg 2015; Gans 2015). To ignore the seismic shift towards open-access in academic publishing due to infrastructural inertia would be detrimental to the growth and development of symbolic interactionism.

Conclusion

Is it possible for interactionists to pursue the goals of public sociology while utilizing a system of

publishing and dissemination whereby research results are restricted from the wider public? We think not. Scholars who value public engagement cannot claim to pay anything more than lip service to this goal if their most important research remains behind paywalls. By valuing the unhindered dissemination of knowledge, open-access has the potential to contribute powerful insights to civic movements. While open-access publishing continues to face an uphill battle in changing the infrastructure and practices of academic publishing, we hope that this piece inspires vision and practical solutions to this worthy and inevitable goal in our own scholarly circles.

Making interactionist work more available to citizens globally will maximize the public good, and if done correctly, minimize costs to universities, funders, and other knowledge stakeholders. Publics deserve to have access to cutting-edge academic work so that these insights can help contribute to informed civic debate. Open-access publishing is an issue facing all of academia, with different disciplines more invested than others. In the field of symbolic interactionism, we have an exciting opportunity to implement more public forms of research dissemination, and be a leader among our peers in the transition to open-access publishing. Interactionists would do well to get ahead of these trends rather than trying to react to the changing nature of academic publishing too late. If these new opportunities for open-access are embraced, the potential to reinvigorate interactionism by expanding public engagement and increase scholarly and societal impacts is evident.

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Book Review

DeSoucey, Michaela. 2016. *Contested Tastes—Foie Gras and the Politics of Food*. Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press

What can a sociologist actually learn by looking at *foie gras* lying on their plate? What can we say about culture, ethics, taste, relations, social movements, consumers, and producers, looking at food? To what extent can food become the object, the protagonist of sociological analysis? These are the questions which Michaela DeSoucey is attempting to address in her book reviewed here.

The book may be located within a broad interdisciplinary trend of research into social, economic, and cultural aspects of food. One of its poles is marked by economized, neo-Marxist analyses of industrial and alternative networks of food production (e.g., Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2014). The other trend, definitely closer to the author of the reviewed book, analyzes food from the perspective of anthropology and studies of culture (e.g., Ashley et al. 2004; Belasco 2007). The analyses from this circle treat food as a cultural phenomenon, an artifact which may be used to decode crucial phenomena, or processes occurring in a society. This is distinctive of anthropology of food which perceives food as a cultural construct (e.g., Couninhan and van Esterik 2013). Tracing food, we may get insight into the

universe of religious rituals, control, and individual identity (Douglas 2013), look at class divisions (Bourdieu 2013), the development of ethnic identity, the history of entire continents (Mintz 2013). In an engaged variety—these studies focus on the issues of citizenship (Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2015), social justice, sexuality, gender, and race (e.g., Alkon and Agyeman 2011).

Food is treated by the researcher as a mirror in which a reflection of the society may be seen, or a black box the decoding of which may disclose the way the social world is constructed. The author approached the issue of food in a similar way, building her story around *foie gras* mentioned in the title and attempting to describe the cultural and political controversies connected with food. The dish in question is the ground on the basis of which DeSoucey talks about the construction of controversy, morality of taste, nationalism and sense of national belonging, industrialization of production, social movements, and consumer activism. Looking at the dish made from fattened duck or goose liver, the author attempts to tell the reader how local and national identities are constructed and reconstructed, how the class indi-

cators of taste have been changing, and how consumer movements of protest are initiated.

From the formal angle, the book is divided into five chapters by subject matter. The first (“What Can We Learn from Liver”) briefly introduces the reader into the issues and specificity of food studies, describes the history of controversies around the product, and also uses the category of **gastropolitics** which is key to this work. Chapter two (“Vive le Foie Gras!”) provides the reader with the insight into the phenomenon of *foie gras*, accounts the history, and industrial transformation of the product, locates it within the national, cultural, and technological context. Chapter three (“Gastronationalism on the Ground”) focuses on local conditionings of production—refers to the role and meaning of identity, the construction of national idylls and political movements connected with them. The fourth part of the book (“Foiehibition”) takes the reader to Chicago and describes the conflict which exploded in this city around local producers and restaurateurs serving dishes from *foie gras*. This chapter supplements the publication with studies on social movements, consumer activism—it emphasizes the dynamic nature of the debate which erupted around the controversial technology of the production of *foie gras*. Chapter five (“Paradox of Perspective”) concentrates on the reconstruction of the perspectives of the two sides of this conflict, stressing the symbolic meaning of food.

The narration begins with a description of damages done by activists fighting for animal rights, who repainted the house of one of the most famous lawyers and restaurateurs serving *foie gras* in the American county of Sonoma. The author uses this event

and the description of the process of *gavage*, the process of force-feeding geese and ducks, to immerse in the considerations on the morality and taste. There appear threads pertaining to the class character of food, the construction of products, moral disgust and social movements developed around it, cultural anchors, and individual or collective identities accompanying the product. The framework overarching the chapter is the key notion of **gastropolitics** viewed and defined as one of the symbolic politics which specifies the authority of particular actors to define and construct the surrounding world. In other words, it is a fight for the opportunity to assign cultural meanings and enforce particular interpretations and behaviors of other people. This is highlighted by the dynamic and culture-bound nature of food. In a sense, the production and consumption of food is a social practice which can be defined, using the definition by Susan Mylan (2015), at the intersection of materiality, cultural meanings, and knowledge. The very notion of gastropolitics is yet connected with the concept of the politics of desires borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and by Melanie DuPuis and transformed by her (DuPuis 2006:124). Briefly, the politics of desires assumes that human desires and images form frameworks, maps which shape the world as a mirror reflection of unreal dreams. It seems that this metaphor well-illustrates the idea of both the first chapter and the whole publication being reviewed. It presents the conflict over the authority to assign meanings, define fragments of reality by the producers of *foie gras*, on the one hand, and the activists connected with the animal rights protection movement, on the other. The dispute exceeds the simple discussion on the way of feeding animals and

touches upon the fundamentally different visions of relations between the human being and nature. Likewise Mary Douglas (2008), DeSoucey treats eating and food as the field for activity, a medium by means of which other categories exert influence. By analyzing the conflict around the pate, the author tries to comment on a deep crack in culture. In a sense, the book reviewed is a story about wars occurring at the intersection between the countryside and the city, the state and social movements, the conservatives and the liberals, the market and the citizen society. Referring to the author's words: "Considering food through the lens of cultural sociology—especially how some foods become the foci of public sentiment—similarly sharpens our theories of how cultural categories are substantiated, and how cultural power is deployed, harnessed, suppressed, and contested" (p. 17). An opinion which seems to be close to the book under review is the one expressed by Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman (2011:2) who claim that for those involved the choice of dish has a deep political meaning; it is a choice of a particular construction of the world, a set of symbols which determines that group's vision of the world.

The author thus goes beyond the classic framework established by food studies; she does not focus on the deconstruction of industrial or alternative production systems. Also, she reaches beyond cultural anthropology, emphasizing the dynamic nature of eating. She treats the dispute around *foie gras* as a theatre play, analyzing the motivations, attitudes, and values of the actors engaged. In her work, she uses the term "performance"—treating the behaviors of producers and gourmets, as well as the opponents of

foie gras as a performance built around controversy. In the discussed chapter, DeSoucey describes how actors prepare to play their parts, what role scientific controversy and moral disgust play in this process, how particular groups of experts—scientists, cooks, ethicists, activists, consumers—are recruited. Describing this process, the author avoids simply supporting one of the conflicting sides, which is one of the characteristic elements of the engaged food studies (e.g., Lyson 2004). The described performance takes place in a triangle whose poles are marked by the market, the state, and social movements. According to the author, the symbolic food policy occurs within the framework determined by tensions and commonalities generated by those three types of group actors. Analyzing the controversies around *foie gras*, the author—anthropologist—refers to the classic definitions of political activities in social movements. She describes the process of industrialization and de-industrialization of food production and consumption, indicates the state as the regulator of both the law and the symbolic field where the production and consumption take place, and, finally, discusses how social movements are built and mobilized around controversy. The dialectic combination of taste and disgust is capable of generating institutionalized and informal loads of political activity in whose symbolic center the decoded food is located.

In the second chapter ("Vive le Foie Gras!"), the author takes the reader on a journey to the region of the French Strasbourg. This part contains the description of the significance of the dish and the changing process of its production. The author begins her story by deconstructing the myth being created around *foie gras*. She uses food to describe the retrospective

constructions of national identities. Food may be used to culturally strengthen the boundaries, to define members of the group and those who do not belong to it. Obviously, this is not the first attempt of this kind. For example, Mary Douglas (2013:48) described the religious meaning of selected eating habits in a similar way. Psyche Williams-Forsen (2006), in her brilliant study, describes how food (in this particular case, chicken legs) may be used to create, strengthen, and cross race barriers. Here, it is worth stopping for a while. In our view, food may play the role of a mediator—by means of symbols assigned to it, it may connect or divide within the same culture, gender, or ethnos. Symbols rooted in a society are embedded in food, as well as in the process of eating. This explains the Scandinavians' maniac attachment to pickled herring or the time spent selecting wine in the South of Europe. These are activities exceeding the physiological limits of taste—by choosing and eating we make ourselves assigned to a particular community and its traditions, we define our attitude to the dominant group or a minority. It is no chance that food was one of the key elements, or symbols around which affiliation to counter-cultures was built (Belasco 2007) or the most important consumer movements were built (Devltre and Pollet 2005). This is caused by the very essence, idea of eating with its intimate crossing of barriers between what is social and individual, between culture and the body, biology and sensuality. In this sense, food and its consumption are connected with individual and social identity. It is the sense of belonging and the construction of symbolic areas of reference that Marie DeSoucey describes. For her, *foie gras* is linked with the project of **patrimony**—the idealized vision of a French nation-

al community with its heritage and attachment to the *terroir*—the place the meaning of which reaches beyond the simple geographical conditioning. DeSoucey accounts the development of the myth around a national, patriotic sentiment. Describing a dream of the Breton countryside, an image of an old woman feeding geese, the author deconstructs origin stories which were initially transmitted orally, and later used by industry and advertising. This is a type of myth which leads to the rooting; which locates individual identity within the national symbolic field. In the case of the dish under analysis, these are respectively: territory, family celebration, the iconic image of grandmother, reference to rurality. These bind the consuming individual with the idea of the nation.

Foie gras becomes a tool in the fight for maintaining national identity. This is proved by one of the more interesting examples presented in the book. Expanding its outlet markets, one of the bigger companies producing liver pates decided to produce it so that it would be Halal—allowed to be eaten also by Muslims observing the rules of their religion. This triggered the fury of extreme national organizations which started the consumer boycott of this type of product. The coherence of the symbolic field was infringed, it was intruded by new actors inconsistent with the conservative idea of patrimony. This led to the establishment of a new reactive movement whose objective was to protect the "purity" of food and national values encoded by it.

DeSoucey also addresses the issue of the industrial transformation of the product. She describes an interesting combination of images pertaining to food

and the production mode which is inconsistent with it. For a very long time *foie gras* had been feast day food and connected with the upper class. As pointed out by Pierre Bourdieu (2013:32), this type of rich, expensive dish requiring sensory training were characteristic of the bourgeoisie. Industrial revolution changed everything. Food became commonly available, industrial techniques and tricks reduced production costs (Conkin 2008). Belt-system production, industrial techniques, equipment for birds mass feeding and processing led to the production of “Bloc de Foie Gras,” a modified molded block at a definitely lower price. Interestingly, in spite of disconnecting the product from the area and changing the regime of production, the set of symbols encoded by such food has not changed. Consumers of *foie gras* do not imagine the gloominess of factory, the system of pipes for force-feeding animals, the production belt, but still refer to the idyllic vision of patrimony. We consider it a worthwhile observation, as it indicates the disconnection of materiality and meanings. Despite the radically different mode of production, the values encoded by the product have not changed. Materiality and meanings, enframed by our desires get disconnected from the physical world. Looking at a tin of industrially processed pate, we still see a never existent imagined community. Industrial revolution caused the patrimony to lose its class nature, and at the supermarket shelf it has become available to all.

Chapter three (“Gastronationalism on the Ground”) is devoted by the author to the issues of shaping the imagined national community. DeSoucey uses the notion of **gastronationalism**. It implies that the production, processing, and consumption of food:

“create and sustain the emotive power of national attachment” (DeSoucey 2012:433). In the book, one may find two ways of understanding this notion. On the macro-scale it defines a set of symbols connected with a community; on the micro-scale it draws the line between the group members and strangers. Food is used in the fight for national identity as a symbol activating cultural script of affiliation to a community, but also as a weapon supposed to humiliate. It is worth mentioning some examples of using pork by national organizations—in the case of the Polish Defense League (Polska Liga Obrony), slices of bacon were sent to members of the Muslim Religious Association (Muzułmański Związek Religijny).¹ Pork is also frequently used in Europe as a symbol, for example, it is found at construction sites of new mosques.²

The example of *foie gras* described in the book is a little less extreme, but it refers to a similar phenomenon. The author describes the renaissance of the craftsman ways of the production of this food, analyzing how the symbols of attachment to the nation are constructed and strengthened. She mentions an interesting thread of cultural nostalgia, power of sentiment, and how this influences the specificity of the community, the economic potential of producers, or even space construction. The cultural reconstruction involves legal regulations; there are certificates to guarantee quality or regional

¹From “Gazeta Wyborcza” article “Polscy islamofobi mają nowy genialny pomysł” by Łukasz Woźnicki. Retrieved September 08, 2017 (http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,16020932,Polscy_islamofobi_maja_nowy_genialny_pomysl___Wysylamy.html).

² From news portal www.natemat.pl article “Podłożyć świnię muzułmaninowi” by Janusz Wójcik. Retrieved September 08, 2017 (<http://janwojcik.natemat.pl/86007,podlozyc-swinię-muzułmaninowi>).

origin. The connection between the *terroir* and patrimony is thus institutionalized and codified. What is more, this law becomes the weapon in the fight for the consolidation of cultural constructions and economic interests. The struggle to be listed among regional products certified by the European Union; using state institutions for protection by means of a certificate system (e.g., the famous French AOC, or the Italian DOC). An equally interesting thread, described by the author, is the creation of countryside idylls, neo-ruralism. *Foie gras*, together with other regional products, may be a powerful tool attracting tourists and consumers to the area. The thing is that what consumers find on the spot must correspond with their projections. If we speak about food, then it must be produced by an old farmer, processed by his wife, and the place where it happens must be a charming, small village somewhere in the provinces. Obviously, this is not a phenomenon limited to France. Similar processes are described by Fabio Parasecoli (2014:260) in the case of Italy arguing that what we define as Italian cuisine is in fact illusion, mirage basing on ephemeral national identity. Consumers’ visions and desires receive the power to transform the world by means of market mechanisms of supply and demand. Thanks to it, it is possible to move a highlander inn, which is a simulation itself, to the beach in Sopot. This phenomenon is analyzed by Brian Short (2006:143) in his study on the rural idyll. Referring to John Urry, he stresses that the society is being saturated with pre-industrial symbols attracting the middle-class who are willing to pay for such an illusion (Short 2006:143). The neo-ruralism and the rural idyll are approached similarly by David Bell (2006), who emphasizes the metropolitan source of symbols and

images referring to the countryside and food. This author also used the notion of gastro-idyll. It refers to the connection between food and consumer desires, and may have various facets: local, ecological, health-related. Coming back to the reviewed book, DeSoucey describes the process of the emergence of such idyllic visions. She analyzes the transformations of regions, their economies, or even the landscape which occurs around the cultural anchor of *foie gras*. Tourist routes, spots of tasting, restaurants, farms, or even art in the described regions are subordinated to a defined utopian vision of locality, one of the main symbols of which is *foie gras*.

In chapter four (“Foiehibition”) of the reviewed book, we leave the French province and move to Chicago. The very title of the chapter is a word-play joining *foie gras* and prohibition, which well-reflects the content of this section. The narration is built around the prohibition of producing and selling *foie gras* which for some time was in force in this U.S. city. The nature of the dish and the production technology based on force-feeding result in the fact that the goose or duck liver pate locates in the very center of cultural war. On the one side of the barricade there are representatives of the middle-class and cooks who value the patrimonial imagery and sensory qualities. On the other side, there are representatives of the same metropolitan middle-class yet engaged in social anti-consumer movements. For the latter group, *foie gras* has become the symbol of fighting cruelty and lack of transparent systems of animal production, or even broader—the contemporary capitalism. Using the range of direct and political activities typical of social movements, part of the activists contributed to the passing of the law

penalizing the production and selling of this type of food. In the chapter, the author describes the set of activities of consumer movements and counter-movements. From the analytical perspective, an interesting element is the emerging class threads. These types of cultural wars for food take place between people of similar backgrounds and cultural capital. Researchers investigating alternative food movements often point out that their mobilization potential may be limited to white metropolitan well-educated consumers (Goodman, DuPuis, Goodman 2104). Moreover, both the opponents and supporters of this particular technique of food production fight for the access to the same social niche. Using the language borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu, DeSoucey points out that: “taste is a ‘practical operator’ in this regard, transforming objects such as foods and culinary styles into distinct signs of class position. For the sociologist, then, contested tastes necessarily manifest, develop, and reproduce within the settings of classed social relations” (p. 139). One element of this chapter raises certain doubts—analyzing the behaviors of social movements, the author rejects consumer subjectivity—she considers their actual impact as minor. It is our conviction that the role of consumer’s agency should not be underestimated. There are studies proving that by empowering the buyers, it is possible to correct the functioning of a system to some extent (Bevir and Trentmann 2007). The example of the increasing popularity of vegetarianism or organic food shows that even a small group of consumers with a class-rooted persuasion potential may influence others even by establishing trends or fashions. In other words, in the long-term perspective, a small conflict of consumers in one American city may sig-

nal the changes in the approach to consumption, production standards, relations between the individual and the industrial complex.

In the last subject-matter chapter (“The Paradox of Perspective”), DeSoucey goes beyond the sociology of social movements or political activities—this conflict is analyzed from the perspective of an anthropologist of culture. For the author, it is most of all the fight for the possibility to define the symbolic field. An important mechanism to do it is moral disgust. The feeding and raising of animals play the role of a symbol, they allow one to focus their actions on one’s particular goal. Here emerges the phenomenon identified as the paradox of perception. The thing is that there is no clear information whether the process of production causes the suffering of animals, nor whether it negatively stands alone against the background of the industrialized agribusiness. Using different terminology—in order for materiality to take shape, it needs to be accompanied by meanings and context knowledge. However, the controversies around food show that even within the same class there exist completely dissimilar symbolic fields which construct the perception of materiality in a different way. What for some will be a barbarian manifestation of the human dominance over the animal, for others will be sanctified by tradition. Every group will have its advocates, experts, scientists. The controversial foods will be space for the symbolic tug of war, the fight for dominance over the field of symbols. Describing this battle, DeSoucey reconstructs an entire repository of “weaponry” used by both sides. Ranging from advertising campaigns, urban guerrilla, taking advantage of the media, lawsuits, and

institutional lobbying to attacks on property—the scope of activities of the participants in the conflict over food happens to be really wide. This does not refer only to bird liver pate—different kinds of conflict pertaining to the production of beef, whaling, seal hunting, shark fin soup provoke both sides to a heated debate. The arguments in these disputes are most often similar—one side of the conflict refers to the construction of patrimony, and the other to the social construction of suffering. Simultaneously, everywhere common, apparently trivial, problems lead to intensive clashing of particular consumer and activist groups. Considering the actual social potential of food, we have to agree with the statement by Charles Levkoe (2013:587) who argues that: “food can be a powerful metaphor for the way we organize and relate to society. Beyond subsistence, food is a social and cultural expression of individuals. It acts as an entry point into larger debates and discourses around a multitude of issues.” DeSoucey shows that looking at a plate with *foie gras*, listening to the voices of delighted consumers or outraged activists, we are able to notice serious social and cultural cracks.

Let us now proceed to the conclusions, that is the least pleasurable part of every review. The reader has surely noticed that the reviewed book has gained the approval of the authors of this review. Among other things, it has been facilitated by the construction of the book that relies on the description of one product. It is evident that DeSoucey has succeeded in her in-depth analysis, has immersed in the described world. At the same time, she has successfully avoided the one-dimension perception of the investigated world, typical of

food studies. The author attempts to reconstruct the motivations and the ways of thinking of both sides of the conflict. The applied perspective connecting anthropology with political studies is also interesting. The use of the theory of social movements and political activities enabled the author to create an original, and, more importantly, dynamic framework of studies on social and cultural importance of food. The sensitivity to notions is also impressive. DeSoucey applies a series of original or borrowed categories which enrich the toolkit of a food researcher. On writing these words, in the beginning, it seemed rather controversial to build the text based on the plan of the letter V—two extreme geographical and subject-matter cases were described. DeSoucey took the readers on a tour of France and Chicago, leaving out what lies in between. It has to be admitted, though, that being aware of the program simplification, we accept such a dichotomous comparison of the analyzed cases—it results in a more distinct outline of the phenomenon under study.

Obviously, the book is not error free; we are not entirely sure what research the author had conducted nor how; how the respondents had been selected nor what research techniques used; what the scheme and mode of analysis had been. The story, perhaps a bit methodologically disorganized, is based on an attempt to deeply investigate, to reflectively reconstruct the discourse, values, and tensions. DeSoucey swiftly moves between the French province and local food processors and a kebab bar offering *foie gras* sauce, which has become extremely popular in Chicago. Additionally, in this journey, besides the deep description of the very phenomenon, one may

also find a whole variety of notions, concepts, ideas aiming at the reconstruction of a fragment of the contemporary world.

The book is situated at the boundary between scientific books and the popular science ones, with all its consequences. However, this does not change the two most important advantages of this book. The first, significant from our research perspective, pertains to the quality of the work and its potential to attract researchers to studies on social and

cultural conditionings of food. In our part of Europe, it is still a new discipline, struggling to gain its scientific status, and every valuable published work deserves to be disseminated. The other advantage is a more down-to-earth one; the reviewed book is simply well-written and it engrosses the reader and draws them into the story about cultural and social functions of a plate full of *foie gras*. This is yet sufficient for us to recommend the book to readers interested in the political consequences of controversies in culture.

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Book Review

Brekhus, Wayne H. 2015. *Culture and Cognition: Patterns in the Social Construction of Reality*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Cognitive sociology is an approach already well-established in Western social science, but in Poland, it is not distinguished as a separate sub-field of social inquiry. This is not to say that problems and questions pertaining to “culture and cognition” are not explored by Polish scholars. Quite the opposite—there is a considerable body of research on cognitive aspects of social processes, but it is usually carried out under different labels, such as “discourse analysis,” “sociology of the media,” “research on social stereotypes,” and the like. A narrow research specialization, so pervasive in today’s academia, may prevent many scholars from realizing that there are some general features in cognitive phenomena across different social settings and that many valuable insights can be drawn from neighboring fields of research and applied to one’s own. The more useful are books like Wayne H. Brekhus’s *Culture and Cognition: Patterns in the Social Construction of Reality*, published in 2015 by Polity Press. What Brekhus aims at is precisely gathering diverse manifestations of cognitive sociology on a conceptual common ground and proving that they illuminate each other in many respects, even though this approach is far from reaching theoretical consensus, and its many internal debates are heated and unresolved.

Already at the outset, cognitive sociology proves to be a family of closely related concerns and problems rather than a unified theoretical stance. In the Introduction to the book, Brekhus outlines three general approaches to cognitive phenomena in social science, each one with its own founding father and a subset of distinct assumptions and research questions. The cultural approach rests primarily on Emile Durkheim’s concept of collective representations as an emergent force shaping individual cognition. Contemporary adherents of this Durkheimian approach are, among others, Eviatar Zerubavel and Jeffrey Alexander with his “strong culture” program. The second social approach draws extensively on symbolic interactionism, and especially on Erving Goffman’s analyses of how local settings and group processes determine individual perception and attention. Finally, the third approach is the most individualistic of all three and focuses on “individual cognitive processing of embodied experience” (p. 6). Here, the founding father is Pierre Bourdieu with his notion of habitus, but this approach is also based on cognitive neuroscience and developmental psychology. In the following section, however, Brekhus observes that this tripartite distinction does not do justice to the diversity in the field of cognitive social research. Therefore, he outlines five more specific “tra-

ditions,” three of which are mostly concurrent with the “approaches,” but additionally, Eviatar Zerubavel’s social mindscapes tradition and Ann Swidler’s cultural toolkit tradition are distinguished.

One might expect that the following chapters in the book would be organized according to the theoretical distinction outlined above, each chapter devoted to a specific approach or tradition. Brekhus, however, takes a different path—he chooses to focus on empirical subfields in cognitive social research, cutting across the theoretical perspectives. Thus, subsequent chapters cover topics of perception, attention, and framing (Chapter 1), classification, categorization, and boundary work (Chapter 2), meaning-making, metaphor, and frames of meaning (Chapter 3), identity construction (Chapter 4), and finally, memory and time (Chapter 5). Only in the Conclusion to the book does Brekhus return to theoretical issues, discussing an overarching controversy between the socio-cultural and neuropsychological models of cognition.

Chapter 1—“Perception, Attention and Framing”—deals with fundamental cognitive processes underlying much of the book’s content. Brekhus discusses basic rules by which people perceive some objects, qualities, and phenomena as important and worthy of their attention while ignoring or downplaying others. These processes may be analyzed in terms of the relationship between social figure and ground (based on the Gestalt theory of perception) or the socially marked and unmarked (a distinction borrowed from linguistic structuralists such as Trubetzkoy and Jakobson). This model is extensively employed by Brekhus to demonstrate how certain social groups (women, blacks, sexual and cultural minorities, etc.) are assigned the

status of “socially specialized” (or socially marked) against the “socially generic” (or socially unmarked) dominant groups. Another important distinction introduced in the chapter is between automatic and deliberate cognition. The former is a default mode of cognition in everyday situations based on habit and routine, while the latter is mostly activated when the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life is called into question (for example, when a socially marked element is introduced into an unmarked environment). Finally, Brekhus shows how different “cultures of attention” (at the macro-social or institutional level) determine perceptions of risk, for example, enhancing attention paid to “unusual” and grave dangers at the expense of usual and minor ones.

Chapter 2—“Classification, Categorization and Boundary Work”—addresses the question of how people “establish similarities and differences between phenomena” (p. 60). Brekhus draws on anthropological works by Durkheim, Mauss, van Gennep, Turner, and Douglas and Zerubavel’s sociological theory to show how discontinuities or “discrete breaks” may be introduced in continuous features, such as racial characteristics. Constructing “race” is discussed in a comparative perspective, for example, in the United States, the “one drop rule” was adopted by which people with black ancestors in whatever proportion were considered “black,” while in South Africa, the race categorization system included the separate “colored” category for all interracial children. Furthermore, various characteristics may enhance each other as category-markers (for example, being unemployed and having residence in inner city areas increases the likelihood of being categorized as a black person). The final part of the chapter deals with objects, individuals, and groups which do

not belong to any of the established categories, transcend them, or move between them. Here, the concept of liminality developed by van Gennep and Turner and the notions of purity and contamination analyzed by Douglas are applied to the social perception of various cross-category groups, such as strangers, commuters, and trans-gender persons.

Chapter 3—“Meaning-Making, Metaphor, and Frames of Meaning”—brings a discussion of semantic devices employed to make sense of various social phenomena. This chapter is the most difficult to summarize as it covers a vast array of empirical research fields with a very general conceptual axis (even more so than in the rest of the book). Two central concepts—“metaphor” and “frame”—are mostly based on the works of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Gabriel Ignatow, and Erving Goffman. However, both are only sketched in theoretical terms, and Brekhus quickly turns to demonstrate how specific metaphors and frames structure cultural experience of various groups and audiences. The general notion of “cultural frames of meaning” is applied to different aspects of money economy—wealth itself (difference between “old money” and “new money”), consumer goods, mortgages and tax policy. A more thorough consideration is paid to spatial metaphors (“life is a journey,” “moral growth is physical growth”) and nature/culture metaphors, where social phenomena are represented in natural terms (“immigration is a flood”) or the other way round—nature is “humanized” (ants depicted as “soldiers” and “colonizers”). Moving beyond metaphor, Brekhus discusses analogy as a more narrative device of framing. As an example, he cites Jens Rygdren’s work on how analogies are drawn between present and past ethnic conflicts. Contrasting example is Jeffrey Alexander’s analysis of

the social process whereby the Nazi mass murder of the Jews, originally conceived of, by analogy, as a war crime, after some time was singled out and renamed as “Holocaust” to emphasize its incomparability with other war atrocities.

Chapter 4—“Identity Construction: Identity Authenticity, Multidimensionality, and Mobility”—seems to be the closest to Brekhus’s own research interests. Constructing individual and social identities is described as a form of “boundary work”—defining oneself against a “marked other.” Brekhus shows people “craft symbolic boundaries against others,” as evidenced by cultural omnivores with high cultural capital or different kinds of abstainers (vegans, straight-edge persons, members of the voluntary simplicity movement, and the like). Subsequently, three basic dimensions of identity—its authenticity, multidimensionality, and mobility—are discussed. Brekhus draws on his own research on gay communities to show how the recognition of an authentic gay identity is differently accorded depending on its duration (how much of an individual’s time is devoted to performing the identity) and its density (how adequate are the performances). The question of identity multidimensionality pertains to the fact that nowadays most people maintain many intersecting identities and often have to put an extra effort in retaining the sense of a coherent self. Identity mobility, in turn, is the phenomenon of “code-switching” by people who are able—and often willing to—perform different identities in various spatial and temporal contexts. These may be “nocturnal selves” of young urbanites, “vacation selves” of tourists, et cetera.

Chapter 5—“Memory and Time”—focuses on the temporal dimension of cognitive processes. As various re-

searchers cited by Brekhus have demonstrated, memorizing and forgetting past events—and also meanings attributed to these memories—is strongly dependent on many social factors, including one’s generation, race, and ethnicity. This is convincingly shown in studies on the collective memories of World War II, the Vietnam War, and the civil rights movement, remembered more vividly and in a more individualized manner by those who were in their teens and early twenties when these events occurred. Other studies prove that in mutually conflicted race or ethnic groups, the memories of negative encounters and events (cases of racial discrimination, ethnic cleansing, etc.) often crowd out the memories of more peaceful moments of coexistence. In the following part of the chapter, focus is shifted to timing frames and time sequencing—social rules by which some narratives (e.g., talk shows) are temporally organized to fit in a certain moral framework. Finally, Brekhus discusses ways of “doing time” or “sociotemporal orders”—forms of structuring and experiencing time by members of different occupational groups, such as truck drivers or kitchen workers, and subcultural groups, such as inmates or queers.

In Conclusion, Brekhus returns to the theoretical level of cognitive sociology to review the controversy between the “traditional” cultural approaches to cognition and the “new” embodied/neuropsychological approach. Proponents of the latter—Omar Lizardo and Stephen Vaisey, among others—claim that the culturalists overemphasize the role played by conscious, discursive cognitive processes, and thus also the weight of socialization and internalization as the—allegedly—principal forces shaping individual cognition. This criticism has been metaphorically expressed in the figure of a rider on the back of an el-

ephant, where the rider—symbolizing conscious cognitive processes—for the most part only “pretends to be in control” of the elephant (automatic cognitive processes or “practical consciousness”). The culturalists, such as Ann Swidler, respond to the criticism by stressing that “cultural meanings are organized and brought to bear at the collective and social, not the individual level” (p. 176). From this it follows that whatever are the mechanics of individual cognition and the balance of power between conscious and unconscious processes, the content of individual beliefs and intuitions cannot be derived from neurological facts only. Other scholars, such as Alison Pugh, criticize the embodied neuroscience for overstating the divide between the conscious and the unconscious cognitive processes, whereas in reality, the two are in a constant interplay. In concluding part of the chapter, Brekhus outlines three research areas in which the cognitive approach may be of particular importance to social scientists, namely, the theory of social action, studies of power and social inequalities, and research focused on detecting general social patterns across many specific cases and contexts.

The decision to withhold from analyzing subtle theoretical differences and focus instead on empirical richness of cognitive sociology pays off in many ways, but it is also one of the book’s drawbacks. It is quite clear that *Culture and Cognition* was meant rather as an introductory reading for all those who would like to get (more) acquainted with the cutting-edge research in the field and develop an accurate picture of how far this approach may lead. In this respect, the book does its job marvelously—one can hardly think of any important topic which has not been covered here (perhaps apart from the question of causality and its

social construction). Also, Brekhus does not limit his discussion to the “big names,” such as Goffman, Alexander, or Zerubavel, but introduces many exemplary pieces of research carried out by less known scholars. However, this richness comes with a price. Clustering so many references, often following each other in a kaleidoscopic manner (few of them are paid more attention than a paragraph or two), may sometimes overwhelm the reader, especially when he or she is not so familiar with cognitive sociology. The book reads much better when Brekhus takes a longer (and closer) look at some particular study and considers its deeper implications. Moreover, subsequent examples of cognitive social research are often introduced without explaining how they relate to each other (if at all). Thus, the book sometimes turns into an enumeration of excellent pieces of scholarship, Swedish buffet style, but an underlying narrative is wanted.

As I have already mentioned, such structure is probably understandable and (to some extent) defensible, if we keep in mind the purpose of the book. But, another objection is more difficult to refute on purely technical grounds. Cognitive sociology, as Brekhus depicts it, seems closely bound to the traditional understanding of sociology as a science of modern or industrial societies. Even though two of three founding fathers of cognitive social science (Durkheim and Bourdieu) were anthropologists at some stages of their careers, and some of their most valuable insights were drawn from studying pre-modern societies, social or cultural anthropology is largely excluded from the picture. Of course, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, as long as one assumes that subject matters of cognitive sociology and cognitive anthropology are in fact separate, and discov-

eries made in both subdisciplines do not really pertain to each other. This assumption may seem quite reasonable in some empirical areas (such as framing news in contemporary mass-media), but it is just as reasonable to maintain that all cognitive processes in humans—be they hunter-gatherers, horticulturalists, or television viewers—are to some extent similar, and thus cognitive sociologists and anthropologists have many common topics to talk about.

Especially in the neurologically-informed tradition it is quite impossible to delineate sociology from anthropology, as some scientists (Barkow, Cosmides, and Tooby 1992; Boyer 2001) claim that the human brain and its cognitive capacities have not changed significantly since the Pleistocene, and whatever “modern” phenomena we study, they are at least partially based on these fundamental structures. But also in other research traditions, anthropological data might prove quite useful to make a point. This is probably most evident in the Durkheimian tradition, and here Brekhus indeed makes some excursions into the territory of cultural anthropology. As I have already mentioned, they are mostly concentrated in Chapter 2, where influential works of van Gennep, Turner, and Douglas are discussed. [However, any reference to Marshall Sahlins (1985) and his account of how cultural structures shape individual thought is sorely missing.] Other chapters have much less anthropological content, even where it could easily complement more “sociological” observations. To name just a few: the discussion of metaphors in Chapter 3, where nature/culture metaphors are considered, does not acknowledge many contributions made by anthropological structuralists, such as Claude Levi-Strauss (1991) or Edmund Leach (1976). In Chapter 4, the analysis of

identity mobility could be further illustrated with Tom Boellstorff’s *Coming of Age in Second Life* (2008)—an anthropological study of “persona-playing” in one of the (once) most popular virtual worlds on the Internet. Finally, the considerations of memory and time in Chapter 5 would benefit from a brief glance on the classical studies by Edward Evans-Pritchard (1940) or Benjamin Whorf (Whorf, Carroll 1956).

Quite ironically, on the second page of the book, Brekhus mentions the “cultural bias” inherent in many experiments in cognitive psychology where the results obtained from specific populations (mostly Westerners, foremostly Americans, quite probably psychology undergraduates) are taken to bear on humans as such. Cultural variance in such experiments is one of principal arguments for the existence of

a comparative, intercultural cognitive science, taking into account not only mental attributes, structures, and processes shared by all humans, but also the variety of socio-cultural forces at work, from local settings and group idiocultures to macro-scale discursive formations. Obviously, individual scholars may and will focus on different loci, not only in a metaphorical, but also geographical sense. However, there remains the task of integrating knowledge from all these settings, and to this end a more interdisciplinary approach is needed. Therefore, I would recommend books like Brekhus’s *Culture and Cognition* not only to sociologists, but also to anthropologists, and the other way round: sociologists interested in “culture and cognition” would greatly benefit from incorporating anthropological knowledge into their modern-oriented theory and research.

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