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Interaction & IDENTITY

INFORMATION AND BEHAVIOR VOLUME 5

First published 1996 by Transaction Publishers

Published 2017 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

ISSN: 0740-5502
ISBN 13: 978-1-56000-191-1 (hbk)

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Preface

Brent D. Ruben

The idea for a series devoted to information and behavior first emerged in 1982. At the time, one could only imagine the significance and popularity that would come to be associated with the term “information” in the ensuring years.

In the first volume, as well as those published since, we have tried to resist the temptation to be directed by fad or fashion. Rather, our goal has been to examine the most fundamental aspects of information in relation to human behavior. Communication and the processing of information has been viewed as a basic life processes, ones which are necessary to the human behavior at all levels—individual, relational, group, organizational, and societal.

In this fifth volume of the series, the focus is on interaction and identity. Through his own writings and those of other contributors, Hartmut Mokros provides a broad-ranging examination into the linkage between two most important concepts, further extending the line of inquiry into relationship of information and behavior to which this series is devoted.

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Introduction: From Information and Behavior to Interaction and Identity

Hartmut B. Mokros

Scholarly interest in issues of self-identity has exploded across disciplines within the humanities and social sciences in recent years (e.g., Chames, 1993; Fitzgerald, 1993; Gergen, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Keith & Pile, 1993; Lorraine, 1990; Shorter & Gergen, 1989; Taylor, 1989; White, 1992). Common to this interest is the assumption that self-identity is not a priori, not given or fixed, but communicatively constituted. The "transdisciplinarity" (Rowland, 1988) characterizing this interest may itself be seen as reflective of concern and dissatisfaction with traditional disciplinary identities and the intellectual trade restrictions they have imposed. Hyper-specialization, methodological obsessiveness, and theoretical impotence are no doubt among the more visible disciplinary qualities to have stimulated desire for new looks and lookings. Within this climate the grounding of such traditionally important, and discipline supporting, oppositions as subject/object, body/mind, individual/society, male/female have been thrown into question. It is a climate within which communication has come to occupy notable centrality. This is particularly evident in contemporary writings, which share in their move away from developmental perspectives (e.g., Erikson, 1980) a view of identity as contingent (White,

1992), as discursively and interactively constituted (e.g., Gergen, 1991).

Interaction and Identity, volume five of *Information and Behavior,* aims to contribute, theoretically and empirically, to contemporary scholarly interests in issues of identity. Although the focus of contributions to this volume is on identity, its development and scope is embedded within theoretical discussions of communication that have been a concern of this series since its inception. It is within the context of such discussions that this volume was conceived and developed as a contribution to *Information and Behavior*.

From Information to Communication

Information and Behavior was inaugurated in 1983 to provide an interdisciplinary forum for examining the implications and increasing centrality of information in contemporary life and scholarship, in what has come to be called the "Information Age." The concept of information gained widespread currency and analytic clout with the rapid development and proliferation of information technologies during the later half of this century. The impact and opportunities that these revolutionary technological innovations pose for everyday experience— from redefinitions of the workplace and experiences of leisure, to the types of competencies and skills necessary to succeed in contemporary society— clearly motivated the founding of this series.

As the series has evolved, however, the concept of communication has become an increasingly explicit concern, from a focus on *Mediation, Information and Communication* in volume three (Ruben & Lievrouw, 1989) to a look at the relationship *Between Communication and Information* in the last volume, volume four (Schement & Ruben, 1993). With a stated aim "to map out the research front addressing the relationships between communication

and information" (Schement & Ruben, 1993, p. xi), volume four called attention to the conceptual inseparability of communication from discussions of information and behavior. But there is more at issue in discussions of the relationship between communication and information than claims of conceptual inseparability. Specifically, how concepts of communication and information relate to our understandings of everyday experience is of particular relevance.

Reading across contributions to volume four and earlier volumes of *Information and Behavior* reveals two distinct paths for discussing the linkage between communication and information, with the first emphasizing information and the second communication. While communication and information are commonly treated as interchangeable along the first path, there is, nevertheless, a clear distinction made, with information extended priority and communication subordinated to information. This priority would seem to be based in the idea of information as a representation of reality, as a representation of the object world in which human experience is situated. Information is seen to "stand for" *something,* that is, to represent reality out there. As a representation of things out there, information itself assumes the stature of thingness, becomes an entity, whose value increases the more so that it economically, parsimoniously, and objectively represents this reality or enables the reorganization of existing information so as to allow individuals to *cognitively experience* reality in a new way. Communication, within this framework, is the process by which representations are coined and ratified as information and, more visibly, the process by which information is *exchanged between individuals.* Underscoring this definition of communication in information terms is the common employment of efficiency and fidelity as criteria for the evaluation of this exchange process. Communication is thus treated as a tool for labeling reality and a tool through which access and ownership of information may be realized by individuals.

Along this first path information achieves priority through the implicit assumption that information enables the *cognitive capture,* organizationally and representationally, of reality out there. It is this assumption that is contested along the second, a path that regards communication as primary. To make communication primary for understanding behavior is to view communication as "constitutive" rather than as an exchange process between two information processors. When communication is viewed in this way, "known" properties of reality are assumed to be contingent upon, or only made possible by virtue of communicative action. This then implies that tokens of information are not simple representations of external reality that reduce uncertainty, or qualities of "the organizational work a message enables its receiver to perform" (Krippendorf, 1993, p. 488), but are instead embedded within communicative activity, and thereby sensible not in relation to some essential, objectifiable reality, but in relation to other informational tokens.

The relative value of any token of information (including the concept of information as a token) is thereby seen to not be a function of the economy, parsimony, and objectivity in its ability to represent external reality for "knowing" individuals. Instead its value derives from its preferential use, its currency in discourse. This then implies that information tokens are politically and ideologically laden and dependent, discursive realizations within the constitutive moments of communicative action. From this perspective, information tokens create the illusion of a singular knowable universe in so far as they are treated as representations and guides for knowing an assumed independent reality. Obscured thereby is a view of information tokens as effects of communicative action. Seen as effects, information tokens first and foremost reflect the reality of social organization and value that communicative action unavoidably reveals.

From Behavior to Identity

The distinctions between these approaches are not merely matters of intellectual debate or paradigm difference. They entail radically divergent conceptualizations of the nature of human experience and its adaptive and transformative course (cf. Benhabib, 1992; Deetz, 1994). The information path focuses on the role of information in relation to the behavior of persons (with institutions, organizations, and societies similarly personified), with persons assumed to be autonomous, rational, self-contained processors and producers of information (viz. behavior) within this framework. Information innovations are envisaged as potentiating greater autonomy and rationality, thereby furthering what has been called the modemist or enlightenment project of the self (e.g., Giddens, 1991). The principal experience of the self is conceived to be cognitive, in the Cartesian sense. This assumption of the primacy of cognition in lived experience makes the acquisition of information a morally progressive good in the service of the knowing self.

The communication path contests this basic assumption of the primacy of the knowing self and the privileged status that information derives from this assumption. Rather than being viewed as a tool or a process of message exchange, as is the case within the information approach, communication is viewed as a site within which experience achieves a sense of coherence, structure, and meaning. The communicative moment occupies the intersection of the psychological and the social, within always present, yet changing and socially modifiable, biological and physical environmental constraints. Within communicative situations and through communication practices, social institutions and values are produced and reproduced by individuals in interaction (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984). Just as communication practices inevitably produce and reproduce social institutions and values, they also produce and reproduce individual identities in terms of institutions and

values. Through interaction with others, persons derive a sense of identity, a sense of place. To then capture what is a person, what are the qualities of lived experience, how is change in a person and in social institutions possible, commands attention to the intersection of the social and psychological in communicative moments (of others).

Study of persons from the perspective of communication, at the intersection of the psychological and social, requires making problematic the linkages between, and concepts of, person and behavior. As a concept, behavior presupposes unilateral agency. By extension, it is then quite straightforward to treat behavior as information that is indexical of a person's competencies, beliefs, and desires; that is, of a person's "intemality." To emphasize instead a view of behavior as communicatively situated and thereby as communicative practice, is to see behavior as an expression of interactional contingency occasioned within a system of social constraints and enablements. This then directs attention away from behavior as indexical of a person, toward a recognition that what is regarded to be the behavior of an individual is a collaborative social sensemaking activity, within which statements of identity in relationship to others are continuously realized.

The Communicative Constitution of Identity

Identities of persons may be said to be communicatively constituted in two senses: discursively and interactively. The discursive constitution of identity references the impact of sociocultural knowledge or discourse on social practice. Discourse, from this perspective, identifies the expressive possibilities and permissibilities—that is to say, the systems of etiquette—that guide human agency and provide the parameters within which self-identity is constituted and evaluated. This framework has been by far the most active locus of scholarly interest in the study of identity as

communicatively constituted, particularly within the context of what has come to be called social constructionism (e.g., Shotter & Gergen, 1989, 1994). Within this framework social conditions, as these are reflected in discursive possibilities, are of primary interest, *not* "lived moments of social interaction" (Pearce, 1994). Thus, although social interaction is acknowledged as the site within which discourses and identities—as discursive expressions—are constituted as productions and reproductions, specifically how identities are constituted in lived moments of social interaction and what is entailed in an interactional analysis of identity has been largely underdeveloped.

One obstacle that has stood in the way of such interactional analysis is the failure to make problematic the concept of interaction. In its least productive, yet most common usage, the term *interaction* serves as a gloss for encounters between one or more persons or personified things. This is seen in studies that claim to be studying interaction for no other reason than because their data come from dyadic conversations, for example. Interaction in such cases is conceived in terms of an event (namely, social encounter) rather than as a process.

A second sense of the term interaction emphasizes process, in particular a process of mutual influence (e.g., Capella, 1981). McCall and Simmons (1966) provide a familiar statement of this perspective. They write, "Whenever a relationship of deterministic influence between two events cannot be resolved into a simple function of one but must instead be treated as *joint* function, as a mutual or reciprocal influence, we have a case of interaction" (p. 47). Events, and the agencies that give rise to events, are prior to interaction within this conceptualization. Social interaction is regarded as equivalent to the concept of interaction as an effect within the familiar analysis of variance model, an effect which accounts for some proportion of total variance unaccounted for (e.g., Kenny & Malloy, 1988).

Although these two senses of interaction appear quite distinct, they share in common an assumption of the primacy of persons and things. In both formulations interaction is regarded as a discrete entity. In the first sense, interaction is the event constituted by social engagements. In the second, it is a potentially emergent property that arises within social engagements. Conceptualization of interaction in these terms is antithetical to a constitutive perspective. A constitutive perspective rejects the priority of events and objects and instead posits the priority of an interactional system within which events and objects are achievements (of identity), not as stable entities, but as contingent realizations.

Contributions to Interaction and Identity

While theoretical discussions focusing on the discursive or textual constitution of identity have been many, empirical examinations of identity as interactionally constituted have been few. Contributions to this volume have been selected to address this imbalance and to thereby encourage empirical study of identity as interactionally constituted and theoretical implications of interactional perspectives on identity.

These contributions have been divided into five sections. Included are: (1) discussions of issues of theory and method relevant to empirical study of identity as interactionally constituted; (2) empirical studies of identity as interactionally constituted; (3) examination of interactional properties of enduring statements of identity; (4) considerations of the blockages, barriers, and potential consequences that the denial of a constitutive conceptualization of identity creates in interactional engagements; and (5) formulations that argue for the remaking of identity from an interactive stance.

Issues of Theory and Method in Interactional Study of Identity

Difficulties involved in conceptualizing data that capture the process of interaction while incorporating hierarchies of contextual parameters requires bridging the separation between theory and research, through a grounding of theory in concrete, well-described phenomena, with theory and data then entering into an ongoing dialogue. The chapters by Scheff, Bateson, Duncan and colleagues, and Bruneau each speaks to this issue.

"Contemporary scholars and scientists," writes Thomas Scheff in chapter 2 in this volume, "seem to have difficulty visualizing part/whole relationships. In the current division of labor, the organic connection between part and whole is lost…[as] theorists deal with wholes but not parts [and] researchers deal with parts but not wholes." This is in part a product, he continues, of artificially defined and rigid disciplinary boundaries which "make it practically impossible to generate and test general theories." Scheff offers an approach to analysis that he calls part/whole analysis, namely, "proceeding from the *smallest* possible minutia up to the *largest* possible theory," antecedents of which he traces to the writings of Goethe and Wittgenstein. Central to this approach is fine-grained "morphological" study of concrete phenomena. Although Scheff does not specifically concern himself with identity, the relevance of his analytic approach for the development of an interactional conceptualization of identity is obvious.

A similar theme is apparent in Gregory Bateson's chapter (chapter 3). This chapter, written as the introduction to a well-known interdisciplinary collaboration entitled, *The Natural History of an Interview*, has previously only been available on microfilm (McQuown, 1971).[1] Although completed more than thirty years ago, this chapter, by certainly one of the intellectual giants of the century, remains surprisingly timely and prescient with respect to the theme of interaction and identity. Bateson proposes

communication as the logical site and explanatory frame for the investigation of human experience. Theoretical developments, from information theory, psychoanalysis, linguistic anthropology, gestalt psychology, and learning theory to interpersonal interaction theory, all point, according to Bateson, to the centrality of communication. The availability of permanent recordings, in the form of film and videotape, makes possible, Bateson proposes, the "microscopic examination of personal interaction" within the stream of communication. It is through microanalysis that the constitutive nature of communication, "a sequence of contexts both of learning and of learning to learn," as Bateson puts it, may be empirically studied.

While both Bateson and Scheff offer important considerations for the interactional study of identity, they do not directly confront what this entails in the study of specific cases. Such an effort marks the concern of chapter 4 by Starkey Duncan, Barbara Kanki, Hartmut Mokros, and Donald Fiske. The chapter begins with the identification of two distinct directions in research of social interaction: one focusing on the process of interaction, "how interaction is accomplished by participants," and the other on the actions of participants in social interaction "as indices of the participants' properties, characteristics, or transient internal states," that is to say, on the study of "individual differences." chapter 4's major claim is that the uniqueness of an individual or of groups of individuals can not be studied through measures that only record the actions of that individual. This insight becomes clear when individuals are studied in interaction process terms. Duncan and colleagues argue that since a person's actions in social interaction are potentially contingent (that is to say, interactionally embedded), it then follows that inferences based on the rates of activity produced by a person, like the number or extent of time one looks at another person in interaction, are prone to an error they refer to as *pseudounilaterality*; namely, "the false assumption" that any action "is necessarily unilaterally determined by the actions

of the participant." In this chapter, and elsewhere (Duncan et al., 1985), Duncan and his colleagues grapple with alternative variables and alternative empirical approaches to the study of persons that capture the interactivity of social encounters.

One of the clear dangers of a constitutive or constructionist perspective is the knee-jerk dismissal of the potentialities and constraints that biology and physical environment impose. While it is certainly the case that the reduction of social and cultural forms to biological functionalism misconstrues the place of culture (Sahlins, 1976), to ignore biology outright is shortsighted. One need only consider how our evolved biological senses influence and structure the process of sense making. The centrality of visual metaphor ("I see what you mean") in discussions of thinking and knowledge provides one such example. chapter 5, by Thomas Bruneau, provides another. Bruneau argues that biological foundations of temporal experience are pervasive and yet have been largely ignored in studies of human communication. Because of the pervasiveness of temporal regularities in human experience, Bruneau suggests that study of the structure of interaction and of identity as interactionally constituted will remain incomplete if such regularities are not considered.

Identity as Interactive Construction

Although the chapters by Bateson, Scheff, Duncan and colleagues, and Bruneau clearly have relevance for the development of an interactive account of identity, they nevertheless do not directly address the issue. The subsequent chapters by He, Mandelbaum, and Roth do so as they offer empirical efforts to study the interactive constitution of identity. They do this through the study of talk in dyadic conversations.

The chapters by Agnes He and Jenny Mandelbaum (chapters 6 and 7) share a common research orientation in conversation analysis (CA). An offshoot of

ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), CA owes its development to the research and teaching of Harvey Sacks (1984). Ethnomethodology assumes that the perceived coherence and orderliness in everyday social encounters is a product of methodical social activities. The CA research approach relies on precise transcriptions of natural conversation that aim to capture the spokeness of talk. Paralinguistic qualities and especially accurate capture of the sequential unfolding of talk are key features that the transcripts aim to preserve. CA does not merely rely on these transcripts for analytic purposes but presents them in its publications, thereby allowing the reader to work through the analysis offered within data from which it emerged. The role of the analyst is to uncover methods by which the engagement between participants in talk may be said to be an achievement; that is, how talk as conversation is done so as to constitute the taken-for-granted notion of conversation, for example.

chapters 6 and 7 examine the constitution of identities in two real- world settings, within which individuals have real-world aims. What they each demonstrate is how “personal” identity is an “occasioned” and “collaborative” production of the participants in the conversations. That is to say, the achievement of what we might claim as an individual’s identity is shown to be relationally contingent. As He puts it in her study of the opening of academic counseling sessions, “[I]t has been difficult to discuss the construction of the student’s identity in separation from that of the counselor’s and vice versa. “Similarly, Mandelbaum concludes that “speech acts to get the job done, but *how* it is used to get the job done is replete with relational sensitivity. In this sense when interactants propose what to do next, their proposals appear to be shaped to indicate who they take themselves and one another to be.”

The final chapter in this section (chapter 8), by Nancy Roth, also examines talk, but does so quite differently from the approach used in CA, making no claims to transcribe or analyze talk as microanalytically or exhaustively as is true

in CA studies. Roth examines what she calls three aspects of the self (i.e., identity, subjectivity, and agency), as these are discussed by Goffman, Foucault, and Giddens, in a set of experimentally guided dyadic conversations. Each dyad was asked to read one of five stories that had supposedly appeared in a local college newspaper and to then use the story read as the basis of their conversation over the next ten minutes. These stories reported the case of a student afflicted with one of five diseases, including colds, cancer, syphilis, hepatitis-b, and AIDS. Of particularly interest in her data is how participants in conversation construct themselves in relation to these stories. Although she presents no effort at systematicity or synthesis in approaching her data from the perspectives of Goffman, Foucault, and Giddens, it is clear that she favors Giddens's theory of "structuration" because it addresses the interplay of interactive (Goffman) and discursive (Foucault) influences on the constitution of self.

Statements of Identity as Interactively Constructed

While illustrations of identity as interactionally negotiated are certainly important, to focus on identity as momentary, the product of interactive collaboration and negotiation, obscures the fact that individuals construct and may indeed be said to be socially (and personally) obligated to project statements of enduring or fixed identity. The chapters by Lederman, Lievrouw, and Pratt examine how individuals identify themselves to others (and themselves) as a specific type of person, as occupying a specific niche or role within society. What each of these chapters makes apparent is that statements of enduring or fixed properties of identity are no less interactive in their development than are those of immediate negotiation.

Strongly influenced by the conceptualization of the self developed by George Herbert Mead (1934), Linda Lederman (chapter 9, this volume) explores the

"communicative" relationship that a self has with itself. She calls communication of this type intrapersonal communication and aims in her chapter to examine its qualities. Clearly the generation of data is a tricky issue for the study of intrapersonal communication. Lederman's solution is to examine the accounts provided by participants in focus group interviews that targeted self-talk as their guiding concern. This approach generates a particular type of self-talk, namely, accounts about self-talk.[2] These accounts, she finds, characterize the self as a set of multiple relationships, as a conversational engagement among multiple persona. As an ongoing activity, this relational sense of self becomes the enduring background or context within which interpersonal encounters are situated, according to Lederman. She concludes by suggesting that "interpersonal communication is more usefully studied when the selves in interaction with one another are recognized as the presenting selves, the tips of the iceberg of self and the interaction of the presenting selves with other individuals is influenced by the relationships that any individual has among its multiple other selves."

This ongoing set of relationships, among multiple selves and presenting selves with social others that Lederman describes, suggests a view of an enduring sense of self as a storyline or narrative. Statements of self as narrative have been much discussed of late (e.g., Bruner, 1990; Ricoeur, 1992) and is the theme that guides chapter 10, contributed by Leah Lievrouw. In particular, Lievrouw examines the research narrative as a statement of identity. Research narratives, she writes, are statements of a "scholar's own 'story' of his or her professional life and work. It is a consciously constructed, strategic account that allows the researcher to communicate the value and necessity of his/her work to peers and other important audiences." The study of documents of this type is exceedingly important as they contain what might be called the "conventions of legitimation" employed by members of the scientific

community to argue for the worthiness of their enterprise and claim their identity as scientists. Lievrouw argues that the conventions employed by researchers are based in the properties of narrative more generally. From this perspective research narratives are not primarily motivated as descriptive statements of what a researcher does, as fixed statements of a researcher's identity through his or her activities. Instead, the research narrative is an interactive occasioning—situated first and foremost within the prevailing climate of public discourse—tailored for specific social audiences and purposes and expressive of its creator's sense of place: developmentally, socially, psychologically, intellectually, generationally, and geographically.

Research narratives are but one example of statements of identity. Statements of identity would seem to be pervasively mandated in everyday life as economical means to "define" who a person is and what might legitimately be expected of them. As such, these statements are about membership and thereby identity through social bonds (Scheff, 1990). Steven Pratt (chapter 11, this volume) discusses one such statement and how it is achieved. Working within the ethnography of speaking tradition (Hymes, 1962), he examines how a specific speech event, which he calls "razzing," is employed by Native Americans to interactionally test and affirm the "Indian-ness" of participants in interaction. Pratt claims that "Indian-ness, to the 'real' Indian, is not something that one can simply be, but is something one becomes and/or is, which requires the participation of other culturally competent members." Pratt shows how the communicative practice of razzing makes the concept of Indian-ness a matter of continual scrutiny, assertion, and affirmation even though participants in this process regard their Indian-ness as fixed and stable.

Although Pratt does not consider the significance of the relationship that specific qualities of razzing as a communicative activity and the category Indian-ness hold,

his chapter certainly raises this issue. The category “Indian” is one that has been imposed upon, and according to Pratt, accepted by Native Americans as an anchor around which a sense of self is constituted. It is then clearly not insignificant that this sense of self as Indian is affirmed and reaffirmed through practices, albeit they are regarded as humorous, that emphasize shame and humiliation. To be sure, razzing is a practice that affirms one’s membership and identity as an Indian but it weds to this affirmation statements of denigration and ridicule. The consequences of such practices for the broader social bond and the positioning of individuals within the social bond, within which they achieve a sense of self and self-worth, represents an exceedingly important nascent area of scholarship (Scheff, 1990; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991).

Barriers to Interactive Conceptualizations of Identity

The relevance of views of identity as contingent, as interactively achieved, is not merely a matter of academic exercise. Quite to the contrary, how identity is conceptualized discursively and reproduced interactively has direct bearing on personal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Constitutive perspectives on identity make apparent the repressive and restrictive consequences that views of identity as fixed potentially hold. They thereby also offer opportunities for personal liberation and social reorganization around principles of relational responsibilities (cf. Benhabib, 1992; Ricoeur, 1992; Taylor, 1989). As Judith Butler (1990) has put this:

> Paradoxically, the reconceptualization of identity as an *effect*, that is, as *produced* or *generated*, opens up possibilities of “agency” that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed. For an identity to be an effect means that it is neither fatally determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary.

> … Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible, (p. 147)

The chapters by Lorraine, Presnell and Deetz, and Carr examine situations that perpetuate notions of identity as fixed and singular and resist interactive understandings of identity. Each chapter argues for the liberating potential that interactive views of identity offer.

Tamsin Lorraine examines how efforts to achieve a coherent social and personal sense of self when presented with an ambiguously sexed body are consistently undermined. She does this through the analysis of the diary of a nineteenth-century hermaphrodite, Herculine Barbin, a person who eventually committed suicide. Influenced by the work of Judith Butler, which she further extends by drawing on the psychoanalytic writings of Jacques Lacan, Lorraine examines the conflicting discourses of self and body contained within this diary. Lorraine argues through her analysis that taken-for-granted views, of not only gender but of sexual assignment as foundational to experienced identity, are restricting and indeed enslaving. Her analysis suggests how social expectations of fixed sex assignment may have led to Barbin's suicide after years of torment at the inability to fix her/himself socially and psychologically. As she concludes '"pulling off' the performance of a self may involve rendering the chaotic material of living into some kind of coherence. That such coherence is often made impossible by the categories to which we are subjected and to which we subject ourselves, makes it all the more important to open up spaces for radical self-remaking." Recognition that categories of meaning are ideologically valenced is becoming increasingly apparent and accepted. This is particularly so with regard to the category of gender. Peggy Carr examines the relevance of this realization in the "self-remaking" context of psychoanalytic theory and practice, which she argues has

been want to ignore these constraints. Specifically, her chapter is concerned with the constraints that unacknowledged native gender ideology impose on the therapeutic process and how these constraints might be removed. She approaches this through the analysis of two "psychoanalytic encounters," examining in one a continuously reproduced pattern of self-other representation and in the second a brief therapeutic moment within which appreciation of otherness and the difficult struggle to achieve this are concurrently revealed. Through the analysis of these encounters she illustrates

> the centrality of the theoretical identity of the psychoanalyst for both patient and therapist. My identity, psychoanalytic and feminist, may be colored by the stereotypy of superficial knowledge or internal conflict but it is focal. And this theoretical identity, constructed within and against ideologically loaded prescriptions of psychoanalytic technique or up to the minute feminist conceptualizations constrain my interventions.

Native and privileged sociocultural categories impose models of coherence onto people, as Lorraine and Carr make apparent, and thereby front barriers to interactive conceptualizations of a coherent self. Categories of regard for others that individuals evolve through their relational histories provide another source of such barriers. This is the focus of the chapter provided by Mick Presnell and Stan Deetz (chapter 14). They examine the potential role played by remembered images, what they refer to as interpersonal icons, in the development of conversation and relationship. These icons once triggered, they argue, preclude the possibilities of productive conversation in that they fix perceptions of relational partners and thereby override or block possibilities of "seeing" the otherness of the other. Like Lorraine, Presnell and Deetz draw heavily on Lacan to theoretically ground the process by which such interpersonal icons freeze relational interactivity and how

this type of communicative blockage might be undone—through the "talking cure" of unbridled conversation. This requires recognition that these interpersonal icons are not to be regarded psychologically, but as elements of political struggle. "The difficulty in doing this," they write, "is not just a problem in theory but is the central problem for the resolution of the actual conflict, especially within a society that routinely provides personal rather than interpersonal accounts."

Remaking Identity Interactionally

The chapters by Lorraine, Carr, and Presnell and Deetz each offer a perspective on the remediation of conversational blockage. All three chapters strongly suggest that interactive conceptualizations of identity are healthier and more productive than essentialist notions. This theme is further developed in the final set of five chapters by Belay, Kim, Forward and Scheerhorn, Wittenstrom, and Kleinberg (chapters 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19, this volume). Each of these chapters explores opportunities and approaches to reconceptualizing or remaking identity within the contemporary global order. What this entails in each case is a stepping past assumptions of a self as enduring and fixed to a view of self as defined through the other and of the self as a multiplicity rather than a unity.

In certainly one of the more timely and innovative chapters in this volume (chapter 15), Getinet Belay examines "the challenges and opportunities which globalization presents to the construction and negotiation of cultural identities" with an aim of developing "an interactionist conceptual framework for the interpretation of identity shifts in the age of globalization." Toward this end, Belay first identifies a set of constitutive features defining cultural identity and follows this with the introduction of a conceptual vocabulary for discussing cultural identities. Through these moves Belay aims to offer coherence and

consistency for scholarly discussion of cultural identity, discussions which he argues have largely failed to appreciate the arbitrariness of such concepts as nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, social class, and the like. He next examines and critiques three interpretations of cultural change in response to globalization, these being the development of: (a) uniform human consciousness; (b) hegemony and homogenization; and (c) world metaculture. This is followed by an interactionist approach offered as an alternative interpretation within which globalization is regarded as an historically emergent "interactional context." As Belay puts it, within this interactional context, "the problem that both individuals and communities face today in interactional negotiations of identity is no longer merely how to handle the otherness of culturally Others, but also *how to handle the multiplicity of one's own cultural Self*"

Belay's chapter is followed by that of Yung Kim, who also concerns herself with the issue of cultural identity. She, however, suggests the concept of "intercultural identity" as an alternative to cultural identity because it "conjoins and integrates, rather than separates and divides." Whereas Belay focuses on the identification of parameters for discussing personal agency, Kim makes this her primary concern. She views intercultural identity as an adaptive and developmental course whereby individuals extend past the boundaries of identity provided by any given culture. She states this quite clearly when she writes, "as the 'old' person breaks up, new cultural knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral elements are assimilated into an enactment of *growth*—an emergent 'new' person at a higher level of integration." Kim illustrates and traces the development of "new" persons with the assistance of autobiographical sketches of individuals who have traversed this course of adaptation.

The inescapability of multicultural experience and multicultural membership in this age of globalization makes theoretical and pragmatic concerns with the negotiation and remaking of identity central to contemporary discourse. The

membership demands of modem organizations in which people are employed in this age of globalization have similarly brought to the fore issues of identity, as Gordon Forward and Dirk Scheerhorn discuss in their chapter (chapter 17). In the modem organization success and mobility, according to Forward and Scheerhorn, come with the price that "one conceal real intent and emotion in order to enact a self that reflects the values, priorities, and persona endorsed by a generalized organizational culture…. [T]his results in individual identities frozen within the various discourses of the corporation in ways that may enable the individual to 'succeed' but also stifle competing needs, identities, and interests." This, they claim, also stifles and deprives the organization of the full range of productive potentials of its employees. To move past this state of infelicities, according to Forward and Scheerhorn, first requires critical appraisal of the theoretical stance toward and the pragmatic course of "organizational assimilation." Problematic in theoretical accounts of the assimilation process is the treatment of individuals and the organization as fixed, stable entities. Individuals are regarded as types that fit into slots within the organization. In practice, problematic is the general lack of sophisticated concern with assimilation process and the development of simplistic one-track socialization processes that have as their goal organizational conformity. Denied is the inherent instability and interactivity of individuals and organizations, and thereby denial of identity as itself a type of work. "Identity work" involves the interaction of the individual and organization such that assimilation is not an entry process but an ongoing process in which identity is not achieved but continuously emergent. Through such a process commitment and responsibility come to anchor the relationship between the employee and the organization as each realizes the mutual contingency of their identity.

Work certainly represents one of the primary sites and processes within and by which individuals achieve a sense of identity. This clearly is what motivates Forward and

Scheerhorn's attention to "identity work" within the context of employment in modem organizations. Attention to the issue of identity work is, however, incomplete if the very concept of work is not itself problematized. Feminist scholars, in particular, have done precisely this in their challenge of work as a descriptive category of human activity. Central to this challenge is the claim that the "traditional" concept work is implicitly gendered and inseparable from the distinction between the public and the domestic sphere (Okin, 1989). Men "work" within the public sphere while women "care" within the domestic sphere. Certainly this equation has begun to erode as work in the public sphere has become a normative experience for women. However, it is clear that what erosion has occurred is largely superficial as women continue to find themselves responsible for the "not-work" activities of the domestic sphere, what Hochschild (1989) has called the "second shift." Additionally, if work represents an important influence on the formation and transformation of identity, and if work is equated with the traditionally male-dominated public sphere, it is then important to recognize that the impact on identity of work for females in the public sphere is defined and valued in terms of traditional male experience.

Writing from within this context, Kim Wittenstrom (chapter 18) examines the theoretical complexities involved in discussions of women's identification through their activities. In particular she critiques two prominent theoretical efforts to reconceptualize women's activities offered by feminist scholars. The first argues that women's activities within the domestic sphere are no less work than are the activities of men in the public sphere. The second advocates looking at women's own understanding of their activities rather than imposing on their activities the category work. Both approaches, Wittenstrom suggests, are problematic in that they presuppose a fixed, singular identification of women's activities: in the first as unacknowledged work and in the second as work of a different kind. In their stead, Wittenstrom proposes an

alternative, interactive conceptualization of women's activities informed by recent developments in the study of cognitive categorization. She develops this by examining family day care as an activity (of primarily women) that traverses the boundaries of the public and domestic sphere and thereby makes apparent the dynamic, polysemic, and situated qualities of the identification women achieve through their activities. In this way Wittenstrom offers empirical grounding for the development of an interactional perspective on the remaking of identity in contemporary society.

The final chapter in this section and volume (chapter 19), written by Ira Kleinberg, examines back-of-the-book indexes within the context of the interaction and identity theme in general, and the remaking identity interactionally theme of this section in particular. In a very real sense a back-of-the-book index may be regarded as "indexical" of a book's identity. While readers of this volume no doubt have had experiences of better and worse end-of-the-book indexes, it is unlikely that many have considered the theoretical assumptions involved in their construction (and use), let alone viewed the index as an expression of identity. How people make use of indexes and how this relates to the theoretical underpinnings guiding the construction of an index has remained largely unexplored. It is these types of concerns that Kleinberg addresses through the construction of and reflection upon the index to this volume.

Final Thoughts

Little has been said in this introduction (or in the contributions to this volume) about new information technologies and the information revolution in relation to the issue of identity. This is not meant to deny that interest in issues of identity has been stimulated by the profound influence that new information technologies have had on lived experience. To the contrary, it is clearly apparent that

the fluidity of movement and the immediacy of diversity that the technologically resultant shrinking of time and space axes has introduced (e.g., Gergen, 1991) is of enormous relevance for issues of identity. However, to have focused on information and information technologies in relationship to identity would have obscured the centrality of communication as a constitutive process for understanding contemporary interest in identity.

It would also have obscured the fact that the "transdisciplinary" interest in identity as communicatively constituted has apparently evolved by and large independently of the "interdisciplinary" interest in information. The distinction between transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity alluded to here is important. Interdisciplinarity is typically invoked when a phenomenon, such as information, is approached from multiple (disciplinary) perspectives. In contrast, the concept of transdisciplinarity is introduced to describe new ways of viewing phenomena that are not collaboratively or disciplinarily motivated. To put this another way, interdisciplinarity involves conscious effort, transdisciplinarity reveals emergent consciousness. The emergent consciousness that is at the core of interest in identity as communicatively constituted is based in the recognition of the repressive potential, if not inevitability, of essentialist ways of knowing.

I hope that the thoughts contained in this introduction and the papers included in this volume will stimulate further discussion of the relationship between communication and information and the relevance of this relationship for the lived experience and imagined possibilities of people *in interaction.*

Author Note

I wish to express my sincerest appreciation to my colleague Brent Ruben, the founder and series editor of *Information and Behavior,* for inviting me to develop this volume and for

the support and guidance he has extended me through the years. I would also like to thank Julie Billingsley, Stan Deetz, Michelle Dillon, Michael Huspek, Robert Kubey, Leah Lievrouw, Jenny Mandelbaum, Valerie Manusov, and Bill Solomon for assisting with the review of manuscripts; Ira Kleinberg, Shylaja Nukala, and Raul Goyo-Shields for assisting in the preparation of the manuscript; and especially my wife, Peggy Carr, for making a climate of intellectual stimulation and desire possible and only sensible in relationship.

Notes

1 Translations of some of the chapters of the *Natural History of an Interview,* including the Bateson chapter, have been published in French (Winken, 1981) and Spanish (McQuown, 1983). However, English publications have not previously appeared.

2 An alternative approach to data generation would be to examine naturally occurring talk for instances where a person commented on and/or made efforts to undo their prior talk treating that prior talk as if it constituted a failing or success of the self (see Goffman, 1981; Mokros & Lievrouw, 1991).

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Part I

Issues of Theory and Method in Interactional Study of Identity

2

Part/Whole Discovery: Stages of Inquiry

Thomas J. Scheff

This chapter outlines the idea of part/whole analysis, relating the smallest parts to the largest wholes. This procedure stands in stark contrast to the kind of specialization that characterizes most contemporary science and scholarship. It leads to two new steps in inquiry: morphology the detailed, microscopic study of single specimens, and part/whole theories, which are interdisciplinary and interlevel. Such theories require the specification of abstract concepts and the causal linkages between them.

In this paper,[1] I propose two new stages of inquiry, to form a bridge between quantitative and qualitative methods: morphology and part/whole theory. These stages depend upon and extend the scientific work of Goethe and Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy. I suggest that the separation between qualitative and quantitative work is a product of excessive specialization, and give examples of part/whole research that unifies disciplines, methods, and levels of analysis. I begin with a review of Goethe's approach to inquiry, which is little known in modem science.

Goethe's Approach to Inquiry

During his life time, Goethe (1749-1832) considered his scientific work to be as important as his poetry. Surprisingly, given the little attention that is shown to Goethe's science today, it was highly esteemed by the most eminent scientists of his day. Although his work is seen as important to many contemporary sciences, I will review only three fields: his contributions to botany and vertebratology, and his theory of color.

There is considerable controversy in the evaluation of Goethe's scientific contributions, with opinion polarized, for the most part, between those like Rudolf Steiner (1926), who argued that Goethe was one of the greatest scientists who ever lived, and the more common opinion, especially among contemporary scientists, which discounts his scientific work. More balanced views can be found in Magnus (1949), Vietor (1950) and Amrine, Zucker, and Wheeler (1987).

Most historians of science agree that Goethe made original scientific contributions, both theoretical and empirical, in many fields, but especially in botany, optics, osteology, mineralogy, philology, translation, geology, and meteorology. He is usually considered the founder of both the comparative morphology of plants and of comparative anatomy in zoology. His work on plants is of extraordinary interest because of the combination of bold ideas and detailed observations. His discoveries in osteology most clearly illustrate this approach.

In 1784, at the age of thirty-five, Goethe finished his first scientific paper, an extremely detailed study of the intermaxillary (the section of the upper jaw that carries the incisors) in humans and other vertebrates. His study illustrates the approach that was to characterize all of his scientific work: viewing a problem in a way that combines the largest outlook with the diligent pursuit of the smallest detail. He started on the track of the intermaxillary in response to what was considered the key finding of the then current work in osteology; that this bone was found in

all vertebrates, but with one great exception—human beings.

This “finding” offended one of Goethe’s basic beliefs—his sense of the unity of nature. Since this was almost a century before Darwin, Goethe’s idea was shockingly heretical. Instead of writing a speculative essay, however, Goethe began an extensive empirical investigation. He made extremely precise and detailed drawings of the skulls of animals and humans. His work showed that although the outlines of the human intermaxillary were usually subtle, it had exactly the same form as the more prominent ones in animals, such as the walrus and the elephant.

At first his report was uniformly rebuffed, much to Goethe’s chagrin. The work of the osteologists was influenced by the cultural frame, which supposed a special status for humans, separate from the rest of nature. Since the intermaxillary was usually vestigial, they were unable to see it. The generative idea for Goethe’s labor was the opposite; since he presumed that the bone must be present, it enabled him to find it, and to persist even though in some cases the outlines were barely visible. By 1791, most of the osteologists had accepted Goethe’s findings.

Goethe’s work in botany was much more wide ranging than any of this other investigations. As in his work in skulls, he made extremely detailed drawings of the form of thousands of plants. However, unlike Linneaus, who only considered form, Goethe’s studies concerned the relationship between form and function. From his observations of the immense variety that plants took, he sought to understand the generic or universal plant; the basic relationship between form and function in all plants. In some ways, his botanic work intimates a theory of evolution, since it considers the relationship between the development of the form of plants and their environment.

Like his botany, Goethe’s theory of color is currently little understood. Once again, this research is based on close empirical observations. In this case, his observations were of the afterimages after viewing colors. Goethe’s science

was based on what he called the morphological method: the close observation, in many instances, of the minutia that differentiated one instance from another. These minutia, he thought, provided the starting point for all science.

At the heart of his science, however, was a more complex notion he called *gestalten*, a word with no exact equivalent in English. It means shape or pattem, but in Goethe's usage, he emphasized a connotation, that of a *complete* pattem. What Goethe meant by complete pattern concerned the object under study, its environment, and the relationship between the object and the environment. This concept is important for the present discussion because it can be expressed in terms of part/whole relationships, which Goethe occasionally discussed explicitly. For example, here is one of his formulations, taken from his "Metamorphosis of plants" (1790):

> In every living thing what we call the parts is so inseparable from the whole that the parts can only be understood in the whole, and we can neither make the parts the measure of the whole nor the whole the measure of the parts; and this why living creatures, even the most restricted, have something about them that we cannot quite grasp and have to describe as infinite or partaking of infinity.

Goethe's usage is inconsistent, however. He never stated a clear part/whole formulation and its relationship to morphology and to the discovery of *gestalten* (complete patterns).

The idea of gestalten is further diluted in Kohler's (1929) formulations. His discussion does not emphasize the idea of complete patterns, as Goethe's did. Instead he defined gestalten as *organized* patterns. From my point of view, there was one serious flaw in Goethe's approach—his prejudice against abstract analysis, mathematics, and the need for verification. This flaw is apparent in his peremptory

dismissal of Newton's theory of light. Goethe never attempted to understand it, since it was not based on morphology, but was developed as an abstract theory. Goethe reasoned that since Newton's theory seemed to contradict his own, Newton must be in error.

Newton and Goethe were not in conflict because their theories refer to different data and, therefore, different aspects of light. Newton's theories concern the physical basis of light, Goethe's its human reception or phenomenology. What differentiates Goethe from most phenomenologists is that he was not content to point out the limitations of an analytical scheme; he also did a careful empirical study. Goethe's botany, and all of his other science, has this dual character: it was both theoretical and empirical. In my judgment, that is the secret of his astounding success as a lone scientist.

Wittgenstein's Approach to Inquiry

The work of Ludwig Wittgenstein is widely known and admired within the discipline of philosophy, but little known outside. Many philosophers think that he was easily the greatest philosopher in this century, and that his work established the foundations of modem philosophy. Wittgenstein's approach has some similarities with Goethe's, but also some key differences. I will introduce these ideas by first recounting some aspects of Wittgenstein's life. My account is based on several biographies, but particularly on Monk's (1990).

As a young man just out of college in Austria, Wittgenstein came to Cambridge to study with Bertrand Russell, at Russell's invitation. At the time of his arrival, Russell had just completed (with Alfred Whitehead) what he and Whitehead considered to be a complete foundation for modem mathematics *(Principia Mathematica,* 1910). In this work Russell thought he and his co-author had formulated, as a series of propositions, a structure that would serve as the basis of all mathematics.

Although only a beginning graduate student, Wittgenstein argued with Russell that the book was not what the authors thought it was. He convinced Russell that the formulation was not a foundation, but only one more conventional mathematical system. This exchange had the effect of putting Wittgenstein in the role of Russell's teacher, rather than vice versa. Russell was extraordinarily receptive to Wittgenstein's teachings, so long as the latter was attacking Russell's problem, the foundations of mathematics.

For may years, with Russell's encouragement, Wittgenstein sought to correct the flaws in *Principia.* The great shift in Wittgenstein's thinking occurred when he realized that the problem should be much broader than the one formulated by Russell: not just the foundation of mathematics, but of all inquiry. Most of Wittgenstein's life was spent wrestling with this larger problem. The shift to a problem larger than Russell's was fatal to their relationship. When Russell realized the implications of Wittgenstein's shift, he rejected him and his work.

In some ways Wittgenstein's later work is an application and extension of the approach to inquiry first developed by Goethe in his botanic studies. It is a morphological approach, as against the analytic one that is the basis for abstract theories. It focuses upon minute differences between phenomena, just as abstract theory glosses such differences. *Abstract theory can only be successful when it grows out of knowledge of minutia:* this knowledge enables the researcher to distinguish between the figure (a dynamic system) and the ground (all the minutia that are irrelevant to the dynamic system).

Although Wittgenstein had an instinct toward morphology, he was inhibited by his training as a philosopher to ever consider doing the kinds of studies with sentences that Goethe did with plants. I think that this inhibition is the principal reason that Wittgenstein was unable to formulate the underlying principles of his approach. In fact, he denied the possibility of such a

formulation. This denial is particularly clear in his simile comparing invented and natural languages:

> [Chemistry, calculus, and similar invented languages] are suburbs of our language. (And how many houses or streets does it take before a town begins to be a town?) Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses. (1968, p. 8; numbered remark 18)

In the simile of the side roads and the highway, Wittgenstein (1968) takes this image still further: “In the actual usage of expressions we make detours, we go by side roads. We see the straight highway before us, but of course we cannot use it, because it is permanently closed” (p. 127; numbered remark 426).

In my view, however, Wittgenstein overreacted to the excesses of the analytic method, somewhat as Goethe did. The trick is to combine the strengths of morphology and analysis. The highway may be usually, but not permanently, closed if we learn to use this trick. Newton, Darwin, Einstein, and Watson and Crick found open highways. How did they do it?

They combined morphology and analysis, at best, within a single person (Darwin). Newton’s Law of Universal Gravitation depended upon Kepler’s discovery of the orbit of Mars, which in turn depended entirely on Brahe’s precise sightings of Mars. In a similar way, Darwin’s theory of evolution was generated by his painstaking and voluminous observations of the minutia that differentiates members of the same species in different locales. Einstein depended on the minute discrepancies between recent physical findings and classical physics to overthrow the latter. Watson and Crick combined the precise observations of researchers like Rosalind Franklin and Erwin Chargaff with the abstract

theory of Linus Pauling. Advances in science occur most rapidly when morphology and theory are both practiced by a single person, as in the case of Darwin, and to a lesser extent, Watson.

Inquiry develops best if there is rapid movement between theory and data, between deduction and induction (Charles Peirce called this movement *abduction).* In actual practice, this movement means using top- down and bottom-up strategies, rather than the current division of labor between theorists and researchers.

The discussion of a combined method so far has been limited to physical science. In the move into human science, Wittgenstein's use of language games and metaphor becomes supremely important. I think that Wittgenstein's fury and scorn for modem philosophical analysis was based on an instinctual feeling that he was never able to articulate: that analysis that is oversimplified is premature and, therefore, virtually useless. Detailed observations of minutia are necessary to generate theories sufficiently complex to account for the important differences between instances.

Linking Abstract Concepts to Empirical Data

Durkheim (1897) sought to explain the constancy of suicide rates in religious and other groups in terms of the types of social relationships in each group. He showed, for example, that rates of suicide in predominantly Catholic regions in Europe were consistently and uniformly lower than rates in predominantly Protestant regions. He also considered variations in rates between nations and between occupations. These observations led him to formulate a cultural theory of suicide: differences in culture lead to variations in suicide rates, because culture influences the types of social relationships that prevail in a group.

At the core of Durkheim's theory of suicide is the distinction he made between two kinds of cultures. On the one hand, there are cultures that are suicidogenic because they give too much prominence to individuals (as against the group), characteristic of modem industrial societies. In his formulation, such cultures lead to egoistic or anomic suicide. On the other hand, there are cultures that give too much prominence to the group, such as the cultures of small traditional societies, which leads to what he called altruistic or fatalistic suicide.

Durkheim sought to explain high suicide rates in traditional groups (too little emphasis on individuals), leading to culturally prescribed forms of suicide (as in *hari kari* in Japan), and in groups promoting change and innovations (too much emphasis on the individual), like the most ascetic forms of Protestantism. Although Durkheim did not use the terms *solidarity* and *alienation*, his analysis is clearly focused on what would today be called social integration, of being either too loosely or too tightly bound to the group.

In his analysis, Durkheim took two important steps: he formulated an abstract theory of suicide, and he gathered data that supported his theory. In combining these two steps into a single study, he invented social science. It seems to me, however, that social science composed of only these two steps is not the last word. Durkheim's explanations of the link between his abstract concepts and his data are phrased in terms that are quite vague. The careful description of the process that links abstract concepts to empirical data would seem to be necessary for the formulation of a complete theory.

Explicit models that link concepts (names for precisely defined abstract classes) to actual data are characteristic of successful sciences. The periodic table, which classifies the chemical elements, is an example: its form is finished because it grows organically out of a micromodel of the atom. On the other hand, Linnaen classification in biology is a continuing embarrassment, because it is still an arbitrary

taxonomy: there is no underlying micromodel of the processes that lead to speciation to give it form.

Durkheim's classification of the types of suicide is Linnean since he didn't specify a precise model of the process through which types of social relationships at the microlevel lead to suicide rates at the macrolevel. His theory gives a bird's eye view of society, but suicide rates are discrete events. How can the two levels be connected?

The route proposed here is that we may be able to link micro- and macrolevels in social science by specifying precise models of causation at the atomic level, the actual events that make up social relationships. This method provides a morphological basis for what Giddens (1984) has called "instantiation," and Geertz's (1983) "thick description" of a single case (Scheff, 1986).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) have proposed an intermediate step toward grounding general theories. They show that most of these theories were generated from a single setting, which localizes them. Their method is to apply the theory in a variety of settings in order to seek general understanding. It is possible however, that theory generation requires an earlier step, the microscopic examination of single cases, the morphological method, the detection of minute differences that both general theory and Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory are tempted to overlook.

I am not arguing, however, that macro theories (such as Durkheim's) are unnecessary. I propose that theory construction at each level is equally necessary. By moving back and forth rapidly from the top down and from the bottom up, it may be possible to advance understanding much more quickly than isolated efforts in each direction. Elsewhere (Scheff, 1990; 1994) I have called this the method of *parts and wholes.*

My own interpretation of morphology brings what may be a new idea to the procedure: the most successful inquiries have involved proceeding from the *smallest* possible minutia up to the *largest* possible theory. This combination

of small and large is particularly exemplified in the work of Darwin. Since he was not a microbiologist, he took the smallest units of observation that were available to him, the tiny external variations in appearance and behavior among members of the same species. His thought, however, made use of the very largest ideas of system that were available to him, especially the ideas of Malthus. Darwin's constructed his theory by moving from the bottom up and from the top down.

Wittgenstein's use of language games, humor, and metaphor was a way of hinting at the extraordinary complexity of human societies, and availing himself this complexity. Many years before the failure of attempts at automated language translation, he realized that ordinary languages were open systems: all ordinary human expressions, each word, sentence, or paragraph, is profoundly ambiguous unless interpreted in *context*.

Since context contains voluminous detail, contextual interpretations call upon an extraordinary file of knowledge, knowledge of the whole culture in which an expression occurs (Wittgenstein's "mastery of practice"), and an extraordinary *method* of interpretation, the part/whole method (Scheff, 1990). All interpretations of natural language expressions require an enormous file of everything that happened before, during, and after the expression (Mannheim called it the prospective-retrospective method of understanding), as well as what didn't happen, but could have (counterfactuals).

The method of understanding naturally occurring human expressions seems to require the extremely large manifold of paths of association that is generated when there are a very large number of items (such as words and gestures in a natural language) to be interpreted, and each and every one of these items is ambiguous (i.e., it has more than one meaning). I call this method total association, to distinguish it from logical connections, which are based on unambiguous items, and from Freud's free association, which excludes logical connections (Scheff, 1990).

The part/whole method requires the inclusion of the smallest and the largest units, and the steps between them. In the human sciences, the smallest units that have been carefully explored are the words and gestures of naturally occurring discourse. In the various kinds of analysis of natural language in conventional scholarship, however, most researchers do not use the part/whole method; they restrict themselves to the parts.

The Part/Whole Ladder

So far I have argued that microanalysis of the smallest parts of a system is as necessary as macroanalysis in terms of abstract concepts for understanding social structure and process. To illustrate this idea, it is necessary to return to the concept of part/whole relationships. In an open system, any part implies a larger whole, which is in turn part of a still larger whole, and so on, up the ladder. Applied to human societies, this idea suggests a movement back and forth between small concrete parts, and even larger abstract wholes.

Concrete Level

1. Single words and gestures
2. Sentences
3. Exchanges
4. Conversations
5. Relationship of the two parties (all their conversations)
6. Life histories of the two parties

Societal Level

7. All relationships of their type: i.e., therapist-patient, man-woman, etc.
8. The structure of the host society: all relationships
9. The history and future of the host civilization
10. The history and destiny of the human species

Practical intelligence in the life world appears to involve abduction, that is, the rapid, effortless shuttling up and down this ladder. The system can be visualized as Chinese boxes, each box containing a smaller one, and nested within a larger one. Indeed the context of *nested contexts* is crucial for understanding discourse.

The distinction between topic and relationship hints at this larger system: the topic is at level two, since it involves sentences, the relationship, at level five. However, all levels are implied in the actual understanding and practice of discourse. The process is too awkward to describe in explicit language, but it takes place constantly, effortlessly, and instantaneously in discourse.

Contemporary scholars and scientists seem to have difficulty visualizing part/whole relationships. In the current division of labor, the organic connection between part and whole is lost in the division of intellectual labor: theorists deal with wholes, but not parts, and researchers deal with parts, but not wholes. The study of social and cultural systems is fragmented among disciplines, theories, methods, and schools of thought. The contributors to an interdisciplinary colloquium on parts and wholes (Lerner, 1963) seemed to have had difficulty in even approaching the topic. Only two of the papers convey some sense of the relationship: Roman Jacobson (natural language as an organic system), and I. A. Richards (poems as organic wholes).

Even Jacobson and Richards fail to give a minimal sketch, however. Both locate the system in the verbal parts rather than in the social-cultural whole. Richards discusses only the integrity of the poem rather than its relationship to social and psychological process in creator and audience. He sticks to a topic rather than commenting on relationships.

This same difficulty continues to haunt current discussion. Postmodernists have discovered the ambiguity of expressions: they show that various expressions are “undecidable,” and that translations may be “indeterminate.

Obviously when the social context is shorn away, as it is in most structuralist interpretation, all expressions become ambiguous. But in context, interpretive decipherment can result in consensual understanding.

A clear evocation of the contextuality of understanding can be found in Levine's examination of sociological theory (1985). By showing the contradictions that result from the attempt to eliminate ambiguity from expressions, he makes a case for the role of intuition (abduction) in understanding the relationship between parts and wholes.

Goffman's technique of "frame analysis" (1974) also can be used to focus on part/whole process. The frames that he refers to can be seen as contexts in the nested context structure of thought. Goffman, however, limits himself to the analysis of the social aspects of framing, missing the opportunity to connect the social and the psychological. His analysis of "frame breaking" nevertheless suggests an important issue. The framing structure itself, the particular set of Chinese boxes that is tacitly assumed in a group, however limited, takes on a sacred character. Under these conditions, frame breaking, the use of a different part-whole structure, may be taken as an affront.

The theorist who comes closest to the core of the part/whole approach is C. Wright Mills, with his idea of the *sociological imagination* (1959). At first glance at his book, one might think that Mills did not advocate the kind of analysis of systems and subsystems proposed here, one involving equity between microworlds and macroworlds. Mills certainly has no such reputation. He is seen rather as an analyst of the macroworld, like other sociologists.

A closer look, however, suggests a strong affinity between his view of the sociological imagination and the perspective advocated here. Mills (1959) suggested that the link between personal troubles and public issues, the intersection between biography and history, should be the core of the sociological imagination (pp. 11-20). He defined that imagination as

> the capacity to shift from one perspective to another—from the political to the *psychological;* from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from considerations of the oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the *most intimate features of the human self*— and to see the relations between the two. (emphasis added, p. 7)

His reference to the psychological perspective in the first phrase seems not to have been merely *pro forma*. In the next-to-last phrase, he proposes the importance of "the most intimate features of the human self." Mills (1959) enthusiastically subscribed to the potential of psychoanalysis (pp. 159-60) for understanding these intimate features. Although Mills himself never carried out any of the part/whole studies he seems to be advocating, it is obvious that he saw the potential.

To illustrate these abstract ideas, I call upon a part/whole analysis implied in a study of poetic form. Flexing part/whole muscles in her introductory comment, Smith (1968, p. vii) outlines a structure of nested contexts:

> The study is concerned with how poems end. It grew out of an earlier one that was concerned [1] with how Shakespeare's sonnets both go and end; and although the child has consumed the parent, it testifies to its lineage throughout these pages, where sonnets, Shakespearean and other, will be rather frequently encountered. In my earlier attempts to describe and to some extent account for the strengths and weaknesses of Shakespeare's sonnet endings, I found myself involved at almost every point with more general considerations of poetic structure and with what I finally recognized as a subject in its own right, [2] poetic closure. I also found that, although literary theorists from

> Aristotle on have been occupied with beginnings, middles, and ends, there had not been (aside from a brief and somewhat whimsical essay by I. A. Richards) any treatment of this subject as such. The questions and problems that pushed outward from sonnet endings to lyric closure in general continued to move out toward even broader considerations of closure in all [3] literature, in all [4] art, and finally in all [5] experience. Having bumped into a continent, however, and even having set a flag upon the shore, I realized that I was equipped to explore and chart only a bit of the coastal area. It seemed wise, then, to hold the line at poetic closure.

Smith locates her work within a larger structure. A part/whole ladder with five levels is implied:

1. Closure in Shakespeare's sonnets
2. In poetry
3. In literature
4. In art
5. In experience

She puts her particular study at level two, poetry, in a structure of nested contexts: it is broader than just Shakespeare's sonnets (level one), but not as broad as literature (level three). She does, however, make a number of significant comments about levels four and five. I will use one of these comments to show both the strength and limitation of her analysis.

The use of nested contexts, Chinese boxes, one within the other, involves *recursion,* as Hofstadter (1980) suggests. This kind of part/whole structure may be a way of giving concrete meaning to the abstract concept of reflexiveness, the kind of self-referencing that gives rise to selfawareness. A discussion like Smith's is reflexive to the extent that it locates its own argument within a part/whole structure, a total rather than a special frame of reference.


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verification, by delineating observable cues or markers for the phenomena they describe.

This strategy integrates morphological and analytical approaches: that is, it uses bottom-up (data-driven) and top-down (theory-driven) strategies. My study (Scheff, 1994) of the roots of violence provides an example. Retzinger and I (Scheff & Retzinger, 1991) developed a theory of social integration that proposes that destructive violence has its origins in alienation. My study begins with second-by-second analyses of social bonds in psychotherapy sessions and marital quarrels. I apply this approach to the origins of the First and Second World Wars, interpreting verbatim discourse (such as exchanges of telegrams between the heads of state immediately prior to the war) in their historical context. This study proceeds through only the first three stages of inquiry, so is still unfinished. The next step would be to verify the hypotheses that link protracted conflict to alienation.

Discussion

This paper is a review and new interpretation of morphology in its relationship to theory. My interpretation leads to a proposal for method in the human sciences. Effective inquiry may require four stages: subjective observation, precise morphology, part-whole theory, and verification. This sequence may resolve many of the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

As presently practiced, both qualitative and quantitative methods usually preclude intimate knowledge of the fine details of the phenomena being studied. Since most qualitative studies depend on uncorroborated observation, they usually exclude the fine details that do not fit into the researcher's viewpoint. Quantitative studies use precise instruments in order to catch some of the details. But the price they pay is to exclude most of the surround. Without close attention to the surrounding details, it is almost

producing the final index, almost since its first edition in 1906. (The most recent edition is the fourteenth.)

All that said, how does *Chicago* define a back-of-the-book index, specifically a "good" back-of-the-book index? Consider these words from the very beginning of its chapter on the subject (University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 703):

> Every serious book of nonfiction should have an index if it is to achieve its maximum usefulness. A good index records every pertinent statement made within the body of the text. The subject matter and purpose of the book determine which statements are pertinent and which are peripheral. An index should be considerably more than an expanded, alphabetical table of contents. It should also be something other than a concordance of words and phrases.

And how does *Chicago* describe the "ideal" back-of-the-book indexer? Consider these words, a few pages later, at the beginning of the section on "the indexer" (University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 710):

> The ideal indexer sees the book as a whole, both in scope and in arbitrary limits; understands the emphasis of the various parts and their relation to the whole; and, perhaps most important of all, clearly pictures potential readers and anticipates their special needs. An indexer must make certain that every pertinent statement in the book has been indexed in such a way that the reader can easily find the information sought.

Chicago considers both the "subjective" author (University of Chicago Press, 1993, pp. 710-11) and the "objective," "professional" indexer (University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 711) as potential indexers of the book, and ultimately ends up settling on the "professional" indexer. The computer, by contrast, is relegated to the role of helpful assistant, neither subjective nor objective (University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 712)—not really anything. To once again quote *Chicago* (University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 712):

> The printout [generated by some computer program] is thus indeed a concordance and cannot in any way substitute for a real index prepared with the aid of human intelligence. At present, indexes cannot be electronically made, for the decisions required are of a far higher order than computers are yet capable of.

Can any index or indexer come close to meeting these standards? More importantly, do the subject indexes and indexers for this volume come close to meeting these standards? Those questions—essentially, evaluating indexes and indexers for "goodness"—will be addressed in the next section of this essay. Before proceeding, and if the opportunity has not already presented itself, it may prove helpful to peruse the subject indexes to this volume.

"The Most Important Assumptions…May in Fact Be Incorrect"

How might one evaluate the "goodness" of a back-of-the-book index or a back-of-the-book indexer? One could compare an index to some standard, such as the definitions from *Chicago* presented in the previous section of this essay, the "official" indexing standard mentioned at the beginning of that section, or other indexes compiled to the same text. One could assume that the closer an index came to meeting the standard, the "better" the index and, by extension, the "better" the indexer who made it. One also could experiment with the index and decide, based on information sought and successfully found, that the index was "good" and, by extension, so was the indexer who made it. These comparisons or experiments could be done informally or formally, and pursued by themselves or in some combination.

While both comparative and experimental research has been used to investigate the back-of-the-book index, the former has been conducted much more frequently than the latter. In the related area of library cataloging and periodical indexing (both print and online), both comparative and experimental research has been conducted to a much greater degree, and some of the findings of this research does seem applicable to the back-of-the-book index. More recent results from some of this research is presented below, along with one example of how it could be used to evaluate the subject indexes to this volume.

Comparative research on the back-of-the-book index has found that:

- subentries in award-winning indexes to historical narratives were significantly different from subentries in "ordinary" indexes (Wittmann, 1990);
- in the indexes to a variety of different book types, almost 80 percent of the indexes examined used cross-references (Diodato, 1991);

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